CLAIMING OUR ANCESTORS’ LAND

An Ethnohistorical Study of Seng-oi Land Rights in Perak
Malaysia

Juli Edo

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
of the Australian National University

March 1998
Except as noted in the text, this work is the result of research carried out by the author

Juli Edo
Department of Anthropology
Division of Society and Environment
Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies
The Australian National University
ABSTRACT

This study concerns indigenous land rights in Malaysia, focussing on the Seng-oi in two villages, Perah and Tangkai Chermin, both of which are in the State of Perak. I examine this subject by employing an ethnohistorical approach, a combination of historical and contemporary ethnographic field research.

An important aspect of the discussion throughout the thesis is its examination of how specific Seng-oi communities have lived under the changing conditions that have affected them.

State intervention and the expansion of capitalism have had a great impact on the Seng-oi’s perceptions toward land. Prior to colonialisation, the Seng-oi adopted usufruct concepts of land rights within their territory, or dengri’, and this was recognised by the ancient Malay state of Perak, which also recognised the existence of tribal areas. When the British intervention began in 1874, however, the colonial power introduced land laws based on the Torrens system. All land came under the control of the Queen, vis-a-vis the colonial government. Seng-oi areas (dengri’) were converted under various legal titles to Forest Reserves, Water Catchment Reserves, Game Reserves, agricultural areas, and mining sites. The British restricted the Seng-oi from encroaching on these newly-created reserves for their traditional practice of shifting cultivation. These conversions and restrictions resulted in the Seng-oi losing most of their traditional land. Many of their leaders were detained and fined for intruding on their own dengri’. The Seng-oi ignored these laws and restrictions adopting a form of peaceful resistance, which finally led the British to recognise their land rights by granting them Occupying Permits. These rights were later granted by the provisions of the Aboriginal Ordinance, 1939.

British colonialisation also accelerated the expansion of capitalism into Malaya, whose influence penetrated to Seng-oi communities. The Seng-oi became involved in rubber cultivation and in the labour market by working in the mining sector. Of these two economic activities, Seng-oi involvement in rubber had a major impact on changing their perceptions toward land. Rubber fields came to be regarded as belonging to families rather than being communal property.

The post-independence era witnessed the indirect role of the state in strengthening this emerging concept of land ownership. The state introduced various agriculturally-oriented projects into the community, each of which involved the distribution of land to families. None of them were communally oriented.

This study examines the Seng-oi conception of land rights. It shows that a lack of land has brought about a change in Seng-oi attitudes: they have become more aggressive in their struggle to maintain possession over their remaining lands. In preserving these rights, compromises made by the Seng-oi, particularly in obeying
government rulings, appear to be a form of indirect struggle. This indirect struggle has also been demonstrated through their involvement in *Persatuan Orang Asli Semenanjung Malaysia* (Orang Asli Association of Peninsula Malaysia) and their support of the opposition party. Direct struggle is less common; it takes the form of a few court cases, protests, and clashes with outsiders who have encroached on their land. These cases add a new dimension to Orang Asli (including the *Seng-oi*) struggles, which are mainly brought about by the discretionary provision of land rights granted to them in Act 134. Despite the rights gained by the *Seng-oi* through this Act, the Malaysian government has continued the British land policy of retaining ultimate control over the land where the *Seng-oi* live and work. So, although the right to occupy and cultivate reserve lands has been given to the *Seng-oi*, the state still retains absolute ownership over the land.
I began my graduate programme at the Australian National University (ANU) on 25 March 1994. A few weeks later, the Department of Anthropology organised a graduate 'orientation' meeting. In the self-introduction session, almost all the students showed a kind of intellectual reproduction since their parents were school teachers, academics, artists, high-ranking officers, diplomats, or farmers, etc. Such backgrounds contrasted with mine: "My family is a hunter-gatherer and swidden farmer!" Everyone laughed as they probably thought I was joking. "I was born on a swidden farm," I continued, telling them about the background of my family. I describe this to indicate that Seng-oi is my first language, while English is my third, which became the main obstacle in pursuing my study in Australia. I was brought up in a Seng-oi society, and then went to a Malay primary school. When I was about to enter secondary level in 1972, I was interested in going to one of the English medium schools, but the Education Officer for the Perak Branch of the Jabatan Hal Ehwal Orang Asli (JHEOA), Enchik Hassan, told me that the department would only give fee assistance to those who were going to a Malay medium school. If I wanted to join the English medium, I had to pay myself. Since my family lived under the poverty line, I had very little choice but to join the Malay medium secondary school. I then pursued both my undergraduate and graduate programmes at the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), in which Malay is the medium. Such educational background indicates that I have adapted to Malay as a second language throughout my learning process, which took more than 20 years, beginning from January 1966, when I first entered primary school, until I obtained my M.Phil. degree in August 1988. When I joined the academic staff of the University of Malaya (UM) in 1989, one of the preconditions was the ability to deliver lectures in Malay, which I have easily fulfilled. At that time I just spoke broken English!

Pursuing further studies in Australia never came into my mind until I met Dr. Vivienne Wee in 1993, while we were attending an international conference on indigenous people in Pekanbaru, Riau, Indonesia. Prior to this conference, I was...
keen to work with Professor Robert K. Dentan at the SUNY at Buffalo. However, I did not obtain the TOEFL score required by this American university. SUNY then suggested I undertake an English course. They would accept me into the graduate programme if I managed to obtain the required score in the IELTS. My sponsor, the UM, disagreed with this and would only grant the scholarship if I were accepted directly into the graduate programme. While negotiating this with SUNY, Dr. Wee advised me to explore another opportunity at the ANU, as she viewed the kind of work I was interested in suitable to be carried out at the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies (RSPAS). Apparently, Dr. Wee was about to go to the ANU, and picked up the application forms and sent them to me in Malaysia. Later, she and her husband, Dr. Geoffrey Benjamin, invited me to visit Singapore, where they arranged a brief meeting with Professor James J. Fox at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS). Professor Fox’s strong recommendation (supported by Dr. Gehan Wijeyewardene and Professor Clifford Sather) led the ANU to waive its English requirements and accept me into the programme. However, Professor Fox still required me to undertake the 20 weeks English programme at the ANUTech in order to improve my English.

This acceptance entitled me to obtain UM’s scholarship under the Academic Staff Training Scheme, but this did not cover the fee for the English course. It was rather expensive (AUD4,500 or about MYR9,000) and I was unable to save such an amount in a short period of time. I then started ‘begging’ around Kuala Lumpur, which took about five weeks. I approached every available resource in the city, including individuals, government agencies, organisations, corporate bodies, foundations, and political parties, such as the Parti Gerakan (through one of its members, the late Datuk Ong Tin Kim) and the MCA (through its Secretary General, Datuk Dr. Ting Chew Peh, a former colleague of mine when I was tutoring at the Jabatan Antropologi dan Sosiologi, UKM), but none of these was successful. As a last resort, I met with YB Senator Itam Wali Nawan, seeking for a short term loan from his company, Konsortium Orang Asli. Unfortunately, his business was quite slow at that time, and he was unable to help me. A few days later, I received a phone call from him, asking me to see Mr. Anthony Ratos, who, according to the Senator, has many wealthy friends and was willing to help the Seng-oi. I met Mr. Ratos the next day, and he told me that he would first approach Tan Sri Dato’ Dr. Ani Arope, who at that time was the Executive Chairman of the Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB). Mr. Ratos took me to visit the
Executive Chairman’s residence, where an open house party was being held in conjunction with the Hari Raya Aidil Fitri. The TNB’s financial assistance allowed me to undertake the English course for the remaining 15 weeks. With this limited English preparation, as well as kind assistance from fellow students and academics, I managed to get through the pre-fieldwork programme in November 1994, and continued with 20 months field research until September 1996. I took 18 months to write up this thesis, which I submitted in March 1998.

III

I acknowledge my appreciation of, and at the same time reveal the relationship with, numerous people in assisting me during this study. First, I would like to express my warm gratitude to Professor James J. Fox for his efforts in bringing me into the ANU, and his willingness to be my supervisor. Professor Fox has given me a good working discipline: “Write three pages a day, seven days a week. After finishing those three pages, stop writing and go anywhere you like, to a movie, to do window shopping, or perhaps go home and have some sleep!” I followed this advice, which resulted in my writing 170,000 words. Since the ANU’s regulations are strict about a 100,000-word limit, I had to reduce it, which took me months after consultation with others. Nevertheless, Professor Fox has supervised my study very well, despite his deep concerns about my financial situation. I extend my gratitude to my advisers, Dr. Patrick Guinness and Dr. Nicholas Peterson, who have guided me in a clear direction concerning the main aim of this study. To Dr. Patrick Guinness, I appreciate his critical comments, particularly during the early stages of my work. Similar appreciation is addressed to Dr. Penelope Graham, who advised me about the appropriate data to be dealt with during the fieldwork. I owe a great debt to Dr. Amanda Scott who excellently corrected my first and final drafts, and to Dr. Andrew Walker for his willingness to read the second draft. To others: Dr. Gehan Wijeyewardene, Dr. Michael Young, and Raden Fernando (now in Universiti Sains Malaysia), I thank them for all the kinds of assistance they offered me.

I especially thank the departmental staff members—the Departmental Administrator: Mrs Fay Castles (and Susan Toscan); General Staff: Ria Van de Zandt; Research Assistants: Dr. Barbara Holloway and Ms Judith Wilson; Divisional Administrator: Mrs Ann Buller; and Kay Dancey and Ian Heyward
from the Cartography Laboratory—for their excellent services and kind assistance.

I want to acknowledge the value of companionship from fellow students and former students. To the Australians: Dr. Richard Eve, Alex Leonard, Alison Dundon (and Charles), Aleanna Raissis, Bill Kruse, Brad Armstrong and Gustina, Carlos Ramirez, Damon Parker, Derek Elias, Dianna Glazebrook, Don Cameron, Ian Scales, Jason Price, Jeff Kinch and Janine Conway, Jennifer Vermeij, Julia Byford, Katie Willis, Klara Hansen, Micheal Ward, Nicole Haley and Rabbecca Robinson, Peter Raftos and Karen Westmacott, Philip Taylor, Salome Zhimomi, Samantha Bricknell, Sophie Creighton and Tim Curtis. Thanks for introducing me to the Australian way of life. To other friends: Halim Gadji (Algeria); Dr. Andrea Molnar, Alec Saucy, Kevin May, and Sheree Ronaasen (Canada); Dr. Nils Burbandt (Denmark); Christine Boulan-Smit (France); Susanne Kuehling and Leon, and Claudia Damhuis (Germany); Dr. Tom Therik, Dr. Yunita Winarto, Pitana I Gde, Jamhari Ma’ruf, Dedi Adhuri, Daud and wife, Jeanny Dhewayani, Lamtiur and husband, Tito, and Philipus Tule (Indonesia); Dr. Eriko Nakagawa, and Minako (Japan); Dr. Kim Hyung-Jung (South Korea); Thongsay Sayavongkhambdy (Laos); Greg Rawlings (New Zealand); Mei Hui-Yu (Taiwan); Dr. Niti and wife, Dr. Lek (Thailand); Tim Denham (UK); and Sallie Anderson (USA). Thanks for offering me help and deep friendships. The same gratitude is extended to fellow Malaysians: Haji Adi Taha, Anizah; Azami and wife, Su; Carol Leon; Cory; Hafiz; Mohd. Nor and wife, Normah; Mokhtar and wife, Suzanna; Norlin; Rahmam Bibi; Kapten Riduan and wife, Yam; Roslan and wife, Annoy; Shah and Azleem; Susan Ajah Subah; Suseela; Welyne Jeffrey; Zaimah and husband, Shukri; and staff members of the Malaysian High Commission: His Excellency Dato’ Adnan Othman, the High Commissioner for Malaysia; Puan Halimah; Enchik Khairani; Enchik Aziz Yusak; Enchik Nasir and others. Thanks for kind advice, excellent services, and for making me feel at home.

IV

My study at the ANU became possible through a scholarship awarded by the University of Malaya under its Academic Staff Training Awards. I cherish the University of Malaya for this award. I also thank other contributors: the Department of Anthropology, Division of Society and Environment, RSPAS; Tenaga Nasional Berhad; Yayasan Perak; and the group of Dr. J. Malcolm
Bolton, especially its Australian member, Kathleen McIntyre, who was concerned about my living in Canberra while I was undergoing my study. This appreciation is extended to Dr. Tan Chee-Beng and Puan Suzie Arif for their willingness to be my guarantors.

I owe great a debt to Dr. Vivienne Wee (Engender, Singapore) and her husband, Dr. Geoffrey Benjamin (NUS), for their effort in making my study at the ANU become a reality. Similar gratefulness is directed to Professor Robert K. Dentan (SUNY at Buffalo), Dr. Alberto G. Gomes (La Trobe University, Melbourne), and Professor Clifford Sather (University of Oregon), for providing me with secondary materials related to my research and with great encouragement. To my colleagues: Professor Datuk Dr. Zainal Kling, Professor Dr. Fauzi Yaacob, Professor Dr. Azizah Kassim, Professor Dr. Rokiah Talib, Associate Professor Dr. Hadi Zakaria, Associate Professor Razali Agus, Associate Professor Roziah Omar, Jas Laile, Zainal Abidin Borhan, Associate Professor Dr. Norazit Selat and wife, Lin, Wong Khek Seng, Professor K.S. Jomo, and others, thank you very much for your support. To the UM’s Department of Anthropology and Sociology staff members: Joosie, Faridah, Puan Leong, Jasmin, Niza and Kak Jah, thanks for everything.

I acknowledge JHEOA, especially its Perak Branch staff members: Haji Ismail Abdul Aziz (Director), Enchik Marzuki Khalid (Deputy Director/Head of the Division of Development), Enchik Nordin, Enchik Abu Othman Abdul Karim (Head of Central and Southern Perak District), for allowing me to carry out my research in the Seng-oi villages, and giving me full cooperation to get access to all unclassified data. I extend my acknowledgement to my friends who gave me assistance and encouragement: Colin Nicholas, Anthony Ratios, Patrick Ko, and the late Datuk Ong Tin Kim. Their concern about Seng-oi issues and problems is very much appreciated. To my Seng-oi friends: Anthony Williams-Hunt, Itam Wali Nawan and wife, Puan Elan San Fok, Majid Suhut, Suki Mee, Achom Luji, Andry Ariff, Long Alang Chukas, thanks for giving me innovation and moral support.

To my adopted parents, Derboh and Uda; my adopted sister, Andak and husband, Pakyan; Bibah and husband, Bek Dayu; Hasnah and husband, Nan; Pak sofee and wife, The; Itam Hasrayati; and other members of the family: the late Andak
Jameah, the Late Itam Langsat, Anjang Sadang, Ajemi, Long Dahaman, Enchorn and her mother, Ken Esah, thanks for accepting me as a family member. To others who helped me in my research: Ata’ Bek Makar, Ata’ Bek Tambun, the late Mara’ Semae, Long Apon, Bek Tambun, Pertel, Alang Rindang, Ken Entiing Bek Diah of Perah; and Pandak Basri Kana, Keling Nawan, Panjang Long, Bek Lin of Tangkai Chermin, as well as all villagers of both Perah and Tangkai Chermin, thanks for giving me full cooperation, and accepting me as one of the villagers.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude my wife, Lipah Anjang, who looked after our children, Lilie, Xavey and delivered my son, Ruwhy Lujch, while I was in Canberra. To my father, Edo; my brothers: Joget, Mastam and Ujang; my cousins: Mahat, Teh, Mariah and husband, Yet, Wa Sa, Wa Hami, Wa Na-ey, Wa Liza and husband, Chuping, Wa Midah, Wa Ira, Wa Nimah, Wa Jan, Wa Miha, Wa Arga, Bah Lanun, Bah Kalo, Ka’ China’, Labu, Labi and Bakhil, Wa Anis Naen, Dr. Ayob, Juria, Bah Iyan, Wa Ika; my nieces and nephews: Sudin, Eja, Sisin, Piat, Ika, Atok, Liza, Awong, Amoi, Agik, Yus, Mani, Sures, Achai, Abby; my uncles and aunts: Bah Anyeng, Apak Adi, Apak Hami, Apak Apok, the late Apak Angah, Saayah, Ame’ Hami, Ame’ Ka’ China’, Ame’ Lanun, Ame’ Ira and husband, Enchik Raman; my mother-in-law, Teh; and all family members for supporting my ambition, and taking care of my family back in Malaysia, may God bless you!
CONTENTS

Abstract iii
Acknowledgments v
Contents xi
Glossary xvii

Chapter One INTRODUCTION 1

Preamble 1
Aims of Study 1
 Seng-oi Cultural Concepts of Rights (and its Historical Accounts) 3
Precolonial and Colonial Situation 3
Japanese Occupation and the Malayan Emergency 4
Present Situation 4
Research Approaches 4
The Orang Asli 6
Selected Reading 14
Community in Focus 15
 The Orang Asli in Perak 15
The Seng-oi 17
Field Work 22
Theoretical Considerations 22
 The Concept of Indigenous 22
The Concept of Rights 23
The Orang Asli Concept of Land Rights 24
Importance of Study 27
Endnotes 27

Chapter Two THE ETHNOGRAPHIC SETTING 38

Introduction 38
Kampung Perah 38
 Location and the People 38
Infrastructure 41
Economic Activities 43
Leadership 49
Kampung Tangkai Chermin 52
 Location and the People 52
Infrastructure 54
Economic Activities 55
Leadership 56
Conclusion 57
Endnotes 58
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Three</th>
<th>THE BASES OF INDIGENOUS (PASAK) IDENTITY: Belief System</th>
<th>62</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Shaman</td>
<td>62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categories of Spirit and of Being</td>
<td>67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The <em>Nyenang</em></td>
<td>67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Helpers</td>
<td>68</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The <em>Keramat</em></td>
<td>69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The <em>Penyakit</em></td>
<td>72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supernatural Beings and Land Rights</td>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Components and Land Rights</td>
<td>78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endnotes</td>
<td>82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Four</th>
<th>THE BASES OF INDIGENOUS (PASAK) IDENTITY: Cermor Tradition</th>
<th>86</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The <em>Cermor</em></td>
<td>87</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Creation of Earth and Human Beings</td>
<td>88</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The First People of Peninsula Malaysia</td>
<td>92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Malay State of Melaka</td>
<td>95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The First Lowland <em>Seng-oi</em> of Perak</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Ancient Malay State of Perak</td>
<td>103</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Life in Perak Lowland</td>
<td>106</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Shifting after Lambor</td>
<td>108</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>113</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endnotes</td>
<td>114</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Five</th>
<th>HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS Pre-Colonial and Early British Era</th>
<th>120</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>120</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perah in the Transition Period</td>
<td>120</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Jeroneh and Andak Jameah</td>
<td>121</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mat Melaka and Ata’ Bek Makar</td>
<td>124</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Apon</td>
<td>129</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perah in the Early British Era</td>
<td>133</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gumpei Luas in the Transition Period</td>
<td>145</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Tanjung and His Origins</td>
<td>146</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Tanjung and Gumpei Luas</td>
<td>147</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gumpei Luas in the Early British Era</td>
<td>150</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pengkalan Jering</td>
<td>150</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sungai Galah</td>
<td>156</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Generalisation on the Pattern of Settlements and its Maintenance</td>
<td>160</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>171</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endnotes</td>
<td>172</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

xii
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Six</th>
<th>HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS</th>
<th>182</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td></td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perah in Two Eras</td>
<td></td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese Occupation</td>
<td></td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Malayan Emergency</td>
<td></td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sungai Galah in Two Eras</td>
<td></td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese Occupation</td>
<td></td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Malayan Emergency</td>
<td></td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td></td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endnotes</td>
<td></td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Seven</th>
<th>POST-INDEPENDENCE AND POST-EMERGENCY</th>
<th>218</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td></td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in Land-rights Policy Affecting the <em>Seng-oi</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life in the Early Reoccupation in the Village</td>
<td></td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land and Socio-economic Developments</td>
<td></td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubber Planting Projects</td>
<td></td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubber Replanting Programme</td>
<td></td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing and Fish Farming Projects</td>
<td></td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubber Mini-Estate</td>
<td></td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Developments</td>
<td></td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Developments</td>
<td></td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Development Projects</td>
<td></td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sungai Galah and Tangkai Chermin:</td>
<td></td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land and Socio-economic Developments</td>
<td></td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Seng-oi</em> Reservation</td>
<td></td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wage Labourers</td>
<td></td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tapioca growers</td>
<td></td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move to Tangkai Chermin</td>
<td></td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubber Replanting Project</td>
<td></td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Development</td>
<td></td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Proposal</td>
<td></td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td></td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endnotes</td>
<td></td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Eight</th>
<th>LAND TRANSACTION</th>
<th>259</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td></td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Transaction in Perah</td>
<td></td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Late Andak Jameah’s Family</td>
<td></td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Late Itam Langsat’s Family</td>
<td></td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Apon’s Family</td>
<td></td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bek Tambun’s Family</td>
<td></td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Nine</td>
<td>SENG-OI LAND RIGHTS IN GENERAL PERSPECTIVE</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>288</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land in the Seng-oí Cultural Context</td>
<td>288</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition in Idea about Land Rights</td>
<td>299</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Interests and the Indigenous Rights</td>
<td>311</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compromise as a Form of Struggle</td>
<td>321</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>326</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endnotes</td>
<td>326</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Ten</th>
<th>CONCLUSION</th>
<th>331</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendices</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A</td>
<td>Additional Information on the Area of Fieldwork</td>
<td>335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B</td>
<td>A Brief History of British Intervention in Perak</td>
<td>358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C</td>
<td>Additional Informations About People’s Life During Japanese Occupation and the Emergency</td>
<td>363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D</td>
<td>Laws Pertaining to the Orang Asli</td>
<td>380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix E</td>
<td>Surat Kuasa</td>
<td>403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix F</td>
<td>Biography of Key Informants</td>
<td>404</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bibliography</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of Charts</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chart 2.1</td>
<td>Leadership Succession in Perah</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chart 5.1</td>
<td>Andak Jameah’s Family Members</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chart 5.2</td>
<td>Mat Melaka and Long Apon’s Family Members</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chart 5.3</td>
<td>The Descendant of Long Tanjung</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chart 8.1</td>
<td>Land Inheritance Among Andak Jamaeh’s Family Members</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Maps</td>
<td>Following page</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map 1.1 Orang Asli Groups of the Peninsula Malaysia</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map 1.2 Seng-oi Territories in the State of Perak</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map 2.1 Perah Area</td>
<td>38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map 2.2 Sketch Map of the Perah Village</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map 2.3 The Area of the Tangkai Chermin</td>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map 2.4 Sketch Map of the Tangkai Chermin Village</td>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of Plates</th>
<th>Following page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plate 2.1 Primary Economic Activity</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate 2.2 A Secondary Source of Income</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate 2.3 The Penghulu'</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate 2.4 The Rakna' Adat</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate 2.5 Feasting Day</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate 2.6 Dancing Girls</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate 2.7 The Pawang of Tangkai Chermin</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate 2.8 The Penghulu' Adat of Tangkai Chermin</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate 2.9 Community Leaders of Tangkai Chermin</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate 2.10 A Political Leader</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate 2.11 House of the Poor in Tangkai Chermin</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate 2.12 Community Development</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate 5.1 The Pioneer of Perah</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate 5.2 The History of Teaw Batu'</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate 5.3 The Collapse of a Royal Palace</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate 5.4 The Destroyer</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate 5.5 A Damaged Landscape</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate 6.1 A Memory of Friendship</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate 7.1 A Dying River</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate 7.2 A State Development Project</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate 7.3 A Trial Project</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate 7.4 The Failure of a Project</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate 7.5 The Rumah Melati</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate 7.6 A Rural Development Programme</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate 7.7 A Rubber Mini-Estate</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate 7.8 The Manau Rattan</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate 7.9 The Chenan Gungke</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate 7.10 A View of the Surrounding Area</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate 7.11 A Historic Moment</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate 8.1 Inheritors of the Family Land</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate 8.2 The Living Generation</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate 8.3 A Great Loss</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate 8.4 A Sharing of Emotions</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Plate 8.5 The Boundary 282
Plate 8.6 A Vision of a Leader 282

List of Sketches
Following page

Sketch 5.1 Pattern of Migration of the Gu of Long Jeroneh 166
Sketch 5.2 Pattern of Migration of the Gu of Mat Melaka 167
Sketch 5.3 Pattern of Migration of the Gu of Long Apon 168
Sketch 5.4 Pattern of Migration of the Gu of Long Tanjung 168
Sketch 5.5 Pattern of Migration of Other Gu 169

List of Tables

Table 1.1 Orang Asli Classification and Distribution 8
Table 1.2 Orang Asli Population in Perak 16
Table 7.1 List of Participants in the RISDA Rubber Mini-Estate 232
Table 7.2 The Dividend Obtained From the RISDA Rubber Mini-Estate of Perah for the Months August and September 1995 233
Table 7.3 The Committee Members of the UMNO Perah Branch 235
Table 8.1 Pattern of Land Inheritance in Perah 272
Table 8.2 Pattern of Land Inheritance in Sungai Galah 275
Table 9.1 The Seng-oi Leader’s Titles During the Ancient Malay State of Perak Prior to and Within the Transition Period 304
Table A.1 Adat Payment in Seng-oi Marriage System (Perah) 337
Table A.2 Adat Payment in Seng-oi Marriage System (Tangkai Chermin) 352
GLOSSARY AND ABBREVIATIONS

Abad  Cloth
Abah  Uncle (younger brother of father or mother)
Adat  Native customary law; natural law
Adeh  This
Adort  Great grandparent (also pronounced as adorn)
Agu’  Do not (don’t): agu’ raknyah - don’t make noise
Ajiih  Grandmother
Akonj  Uncle (elder brother of father or mother)
Amek  Mother
Amen  If; supposing that...
Amo’  Aunty (elder sister of father or mother)
Apah  Towards (to describe direction)
Apak  Father
Asal  Root; origin (for people)
Ata’  Grandfather
Awai  Aunty (younger sister of father or mother)
Ayat leui  Among us; belong to our people
Ba’  Paddy; rice in the husk
Ba-al  Hate; anger
Ba-aq  Flood
Bakau  Tobacco; rolled tobacco
Batin  A title for Orang Asli headmen: this term is used in the states of Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Melaka, Johor, Pahang and Terengganu, while in Perak, Kedah and Kelantan, the headmen are referred to as Penghulu’
Bareh  Low and flat land
Batang Ari’  Big rivers
Baworr  Fishing rod
Bedah  Lie
Begeil  Broken (for wood)
Begeh  Like: begeh adeh - like this
Behejh  Itchy
Beliib  Blood
Behumi’  Earth, soil
Bejuku’  A species of water-tortoise (Notochelys platynota)
Bek  A pronoun for the father of
Bekenah-ngensir  Getting married; married
Bekett  Hot; warm
Bel-ag  Blue
Bel-al  To sulk; to hate; to arouse hatred in another
Belajau  Catching fish with an iron spear
Belap  Sour
Belok  Father-in-law
Beramors  Shortly; for a while
Berchet  To cook (for rice)
Berenggas  Tiger
Ber-erl  Green
Berlah  Very loud thunder and bright lightening, which can cause electric shock and fire
Bernor  Real; true; genuine
Besendap  Beautiful; handsome
Betuah  Lucky; people with extra-ordinary characteristics: superhuman
Beul  Drunk; high
Bidat  Midwife
Bidat Asal  The soul of the first midwife, which is believed to live in heaven. This supernatural being guides the midwife and looks after the ruwai of the children on earth
Biras  The relationship between two men who have married sisters or two women who have married brothers
Bisat  The relationship between people whose children have married
Bleg  Blunt (for knife, machete, axe, etc)
Bleq  Areca-nut or betel-nut (Areca catechu)
BMA  British Military Administration
Bor  Good; healthy; well; beauty
BR  British Resident
Buru'  Find; meet
Byeq  White
Cha'  Eat
Chachoh  Defecate
Chadak  A ritual song, sung by a pawang while performing the Ngenggulang
Chagoh (cenagoh)  Charms; curse
Chakak  The human chin
Chana'  Rice (cooked)
Chap  Catch; hold; brand
Chas  Smoke
Che'  Mite; bug
Che' Berenggas  A general term for animals
Che' Terkaij  Insects, animals, and reptiles which can cause terlaij disaster. If people make fun of an insect, the terlaij would be a thunder storm. The terlaij caused by animals and reptiles would be a disaster which causes the people to be attacked by the animals themselves. The meat of animals categorised as che’ terlaij is not edible
Che’ Teaw  Dangerous animals and reptiles which live in the water or river, such as crocodiles, snakes, etc
Che-et  Sweet
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cheb</td>
<td>Bird</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheba'</td>
<td>Estuary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chebeur</td>
<td>Rubber, latex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chekna'</td>
<td>Food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chekcha'</td>
<td>Eating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheleh</td>
<td>Get down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chenan</td>
<td>Hill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chener</td>
<td>Brink; edge; side</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chengloi</td>
<td>A bridge connecting one tree to another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chengroi</td>
<td>Rice (without the husk, but uncooked)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chengros</td>
<td>Nail; claw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chenok</td>
<td>Grandchildren</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chenol</td>
<td>Pillars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chereck</td>
<td>Squirrels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chereq</td>
<td>Long (for rope, string, and thinking); high (for people, trees, hill, river, etc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cherleh</td>
<td>Passed-down to; bequeathed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chermor</td>
<td>Myths; oral history; tales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chet</td>
<td>Grow; plant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiq</td>
<td>Elephant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiip</td>
<td>Go; walk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choq</td>
<td>Rattan; rope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chuwai</td>
<td>Grow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chuwag</td>
<td>Hungry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dak (dekdak)</td>
<td>Sleep; lying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damar</td>
<td>Resin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danui</td>
<td>Evening; nightfall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAP</td>
<td>Democratic Action Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dat</td>
<td>Die</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dekarr</td>
<td>Lucky (in hunting or fishing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dengri' Adeh</td>
<td>This homeland; another way of referring Peninsula Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dengri'</td>
<td>Homeland; village; territory; state; country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deq</td>
<td>Move away; get away; leave behind; no: deq, agu' chiip - no, don't go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deurg</td>
<td>House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DFO</td>
<td>District Forestry Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dijiis</td>
<td>Mid-day; afternoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direh</td>
<td>Down; lowland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ditah</td>
<td>Up; highland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DO</td>
<td>District Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dock</td>
<td>Pig-tailed monkey (<em>Macacas nemestrinus</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ech</td>
<td>Filth; dirt; droppings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empoj</td>
<td>Salt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enchees</td>
<td>Shallow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edn</td>
<td>Me; I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empag</td>
<td>Mouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empal</td>
<td>Vegetable (including yam, maize, etc) gardens</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Enay  They (for more than three people or animals)
Engku'  Thunder (and lightening)
Engra'  Old (for people); mature (for fruits)
Engkap  Among; together with
Englarg  Half (used in dividing things like game, fruits, etc.); beside; next to
Engleq  A quarter (use in dividing game); related (for people)
Englang  The other side (of the river, road, hill, etc)
Engrat  Lure
Engrok  Sound (like the sound of an engine, call of a bird, etc); voice; told; said; according to (eg. engrok mai engra’ - according to the elders)
Engsah  There (for the direction of upper area or up-river)
Engreh  There (for the direction of lower area or down-river)
Entag  Ears
Enteh  Chest
Enteq  Food cooked for consumption with rice (meat, fish, vegetables, etc)
Entoi  Big; large
Gab  To boil (water); to cook with much water (porridge, tapioca, etc.)
Gah  News
Galaajh  Stubborn; difficult to persuade or deal with (also pronounced as genalaajh and genaleh)
Gerag  Salty
Gars  Ringworm
Gaw  Pig; boar
Gecheq  Moon; month
Gek  Little; few (geknek - very little; very few)
Gerl  Drift
Gempis  House’s wall
Gengsaq  Dance (ngengsaq - dancing)
Gerayag  To awaken, to startle
Gerpal  Shoulder
Getak  Fall
Geui  Sit-down (also another way of saying married: He geui her - He married her)
Geul  Depth (under the water)
Gop  A term which is used to refer to the Malays
Gotak  Bridge
Gu  Group (bigger than pitak)
Guul  Pounder
Gunig  Spirit guides
Hajab  Poor; hardship
Hala'  The shaman who own spirit guides
Hala’ Asal  The soul of the first Shaman, who is now believed to live in heaven. This supernatural being guides the hala’ on earth
Hanojh  Drought
Harok  Chase to make them, or it, dissapear or run from one area
Harr  Us (for two persons)
Herb  Fart; break wind
Herl  Gibbon (Hylobates lar or H. agilis)
Herr  Melt
Hiik  Us (for more than three person); we
Hingar  Making noise
Houl  Getting out
Hord  Want; Keen
Huad-jeh  These days
Hubi'  Tapioca (borrowed from Malay word, ubi)
Hujh  Climb
Hunen  These days
Huperr  Morning
Huperr-doh  Tomorrow
ie  (A derivational affix: ie itself has no meaning, but when it is added to another word, it can change the meaning of that word. Eg: gah means news, ie gah means the news; hurperr means morning, ie hurperr means in the morning.)
Ilok  Good
ISA  Internal Security Act
Ja-ag  Bone
Jab  Cry
Jajaq  A term used to address old women
Jajaq Bidat  Another term for Bidat Asal
Jamborr  Shelter
Jampi' (jemanpi')  Spells
Jar  We (for two persons)
Jarr  Run; run away; escape
Je-er  Coconut
Jehuk  Wood; stick
Jena' (nyena')  Mother-in-law
Jengkah  Charcoal
Jengleed  An ‘area’ located at the direction of the sunset
Jeng-oi  Many; a lot (for people)
Je-oi  Many; plenty; several
Jeq  (Another way of saying married. Eg: he jeq her - he married her)
Jerengkeh  A scale of a fish, etc; a symbolic way of describing money (because the coin looked like a jerengkeh or jerkeh)
Jereq  Deep
Jeres  Deep jungle
Jerik  In, inside
Jerkeh  The scale of a fish (armadillo, dragon)
Jeuq  Move (house, village, etc)
Jeur  Fall (for the natural way fruits fall)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jeut</td>
<td>To pick up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JHEOA</td>
<td>Jabatan Hal Ehwal Orang Asli (The Department of Orang Asli Affairs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jiik</td>
<td>We (for three persons or more)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jinjab</td>
<td>Crying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jinjeuq</td>
<td>Moving (house, village, etc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jirat</td>
<td>Grave; graveyard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JKKK</td>
<td>Jawatankuasa Kemajuan dan Keselamatan Kampung (A Committee for Village Development and Security)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JRTSB</td>
<td>Jawatankuasa Rancangan Tanam Semula Berkelompok (The Committee for Group Replanting Project)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JS</td>
<td>Jungle Scouts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jug</td>
<td>Go home; foot (leg)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julat</td>
<td>Push</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ka'</td>
<td>Fish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kab</td>
<td>Bite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kachar</td>
<td>Wood-sticks used for building mining houses (it is smaller than lungkut)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kado'</td>
<td>If; supposing that...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kajeg</td>
<td>Small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kajeq</td>
<td>Ankle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keb</td>
<td>Get; find</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kebut</td>
<td>A Seng-oi healing ritual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ked</td>
<td>Stomach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kedei</td>
<td>Shop; Do not know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kedeq</td>
<td>Fishing-rod (complete with line and hook); fishing hook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keed</td>
<td>Buttock; the anus; bottom part of thing such as bottle, pot, wok, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kek-kab</td>
<td>Quarrel; fighting; arguing to one another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelamin</td>
<td>Married couple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelap</td>
<td>Dark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelarg</td>
<td>Birds (from the species of hawk or eagle)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelit</td>
<td>Small scale mining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KEMAS</td>
<td>Kemajuan Masyarakat (Community Development)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kembeq</td>
<td>Outside; Outsider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kemel</td>
<td>Correct; true; right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kemoij</td>
<td>A term used to address dead people: kemoij Andak Jameah - the late Andak Jameah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kemel</td>
<td>True; right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kemil</td>
<td>Above; on, eg: on the table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kemung</td>
<td>Leg (between knee and ankle)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ken</td>
<td>A pronoun for the mother of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenah</td>
<td>Wife (bekenah - to marry a wife; married)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kendei</td>
<td>Stupid; stupidity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kendrat</td>
<td>Energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keneh</td>
<td>Pestle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keneng</td>
<td>Mother; tree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Kenglap: Darkness
Kengsig: On; above
Kenog: Back; behind
Kenoon: Childern; can also be used to describe things (eg. knoon teaw - creek)

Keq: Looking for or after; find out
Kerakme': Happy; glad; delight; enthusiasm
Keramat: A kind of high-ranking supernatural being, but not regarded as maklikat (God helpers)
Kerarl: Male; boy; man
Kerdol: Female; girl; woman
Kereh: Turbid (of water); also use to describe the eyes of the Mai

Byeq: mad kereh (borrowed from Malay word, keruh)
Kerekjeut: Shock; startle
Kerjak: Job; work (kerekjak -working)
Kerme': To adorn; to decorate
Kichek: Lies; cheat; deceive; deception; ruse; trick; fraud
Kikmoij: Human’s ghost
Kloog: Human’s spirit (heart-soul)
Kob: The lime eaten with betel-nut and sirih
Kroob: Under; underneath
Kubog: A small area of swamp
Kui: Head
Kuncha: A bad penyakit. It looks like a human being, is active at night, and eats human’s ruwai

Kurol: Knee
Kusa': A chain used to tether an elephant
La-ap: Cool; cold
Lajau: Iron spear (including its handle): made from an iron stick.
Layerr: Spread (like spreading seeds while drying them in the sun)
Le': Another term for wild boar
Legos: Rambutan
Lel: A term used to refer to Indians
Lempaq: The thigh of a man
Lemug: The top-edge of the tree
Lemuinj: Teeth; Tooth
Leng: Short
Lengwiq: Dizziness
Lentard: Tongue
Liew: Old (for things, eg: chekna' liew - old food); long time
Liib: Swallow
Lintau: Young men
Loi: Arrive; reach
Lo-ob: Shady; Cloudy
Lout: Mountain; hill
Loy: Swim
Ludart A kind of ghost (*penyakit*), looks like the *Seng-oi*, wearing bark-cloth, carrying basket on its back, and holding a blowpipe

Luluk Mud; swamp

Lungkut Wood-sticks used for piling and building a mining house (it is bigger than *kacar*, and is used for pillars)

Luq Laugh

Luwig Dizzy

Mad Eye; seed

Mad-jiis Sun

Mai Others

Mai Betuah Angels (men)

Mai Byeq White man

Mai Dengri' Land Guardians

Mai-tlo (tengloh) New comer; immigrant

Makgat Different; isolated; non-relative

Maklikat God’s helpers; shadows

Mako’ Pregnant

Malip The shaman who is master of spells

Man Play; toys (muman - playing)

Manah Old (for things and time)

Manah entem Long time ago

Manik Rain

Manug Chicken

Manau A species of rattan

Mara’ Source of danger; a term to address old men (short for *mai engra’*)

MCA Malayan Chinese Association

MCP Malayan Communist Party

Megam Fishing at night

Mem Breast

Menaleh Young girls

Menang Younger brothers and sisters

Menghar Meat (for games only)

Mengkah Mecca; an ‘area’ located in the direction of sunrise

*Mengkah Sagarr* A part of heaven inhabited by the soul of children and *Jajaq Bidat*

Mengort Night time

Mengsaw Children-in-law

Merlong Clear (for water)

Menur Words from *kikmoij* which are addressed to living people. These words are believed to transform into a disease, which infects the people who were being asked, or talked to, by that *kikmoij*

Mimang Correct; right; true; of course; as a matter of fact; indeed

Ming Cheek

Moh Nose
Moral
MPAJA
Muh
Mujh
Mukim
Mutong
MYR
Nanek
Nanorm
Nar
Narik
Nejh
Ngar
Ngarah
Ngenggulang
Ngengsir
Nguud
Nik
Niknejh
Nirok
Norm
Nung
Nurs
Nyaab
Nyam
Nyaniik
Nyaq
Nyarm
Nyeb
Nyekniik
Nyeh
Nyenang
Nyenang Raq
Nyik
Nyinyui
Nyui
Nyuluh
OCPD
OSA
Orr
Ors
Oug
Pa-az
Padeh
Padeq

Edge or end of things
Malayan Peoples Anti-Japanese Army
Bath
Get in
A Malay word, means sub-district or territory
Tap (for rubber)
Malaysian Ringgit
One (for number)
Passing urine
Two (for number)
Jungle tracks (also pronounce as nung narik)
Bad
Front; infront; future
In hurry; impulsively; hastily
A land ritual performed after harvest seasons (also pronounced as ngenulang)
Husband (also pronounced as gengsir: begengsir or mengensir - to marry a husband; married)
Drink
Three (for number)
Ugly; bad (for behaviour)
Fishing using a spear
Urine
Road; track
Heart; heart feeling
Twilight
Young (for people); immature (for fruits)
Supernatural being; ghost
Far
Chewing; ruminating
Disappear; lost
Sickness; illness, painful
Heavy
God; grandparents; owner
The first human being created by Nyenang (Nabi Adam)
Sick; ill; unhealthy; pain
Lips; kissing
To smell; to kiss
Hunting at night
Officer Commanding Police District
Official Security Act
Ask to do something or some work
Fire
Give
Fresh water turtle
Here
Inside; middle; centre
PAG  Police Aboriginal Guard 
Paham  Custom; way of life; way of practice; habit 
Pai  New; recent 
Palei  The soft heart of the upper portion of a palm: palm-cabbage 
Panei  Know 
Pangkal Tiik  Another term for land guardians 
Pantel  Another term to refer to the Indians 
Papat  Plank (borrowed from Malay word, papan) 
Pasak  Indigenous; Native 
Pasak Tiik  Another term for land guardians 
Pasal  Tell; about 
Passar  Abandon (for people and animals) 
Patiik  On the ground 
Pawang  The shaman who own spirit guides, are masters of spells 
and able to perform land rituals 
Pawang Tiik  Another term referring to land guardians 
Paya  A general term for swamp (borrowed from the Malay word, paya) 
Peed  Beat (with wooden stick, or hand) 
Pek  Not (and should be added to another word, eg: pek panei - do not know; pek bor - not good) 
Pekput  Hunting with blowpipes 
Pemporm  A method of fishing: catching fish just using hands 
Penasal  News; a story based on true events; oral history; told (eg. penasal mai Perah - told by the people of Perah) 
Peneb  Another term for grave and graveyard 
Pengham  Accustomed to 
Penghulu  Title for headmen (borrowed from the Malay word, penghulu) 
Penglai  Medicine 
Pengliiew  Too or so long (for length of time) 
Penyakit  Another way of describing supernatural beings; diseases 
Perahu  Wooden boats 
Perengyos  Delivering a baby 
Perjug  Returned to; passed to 
Perloi  Deliver; give 
Perloy  Stars 
Pers  Sweep 
Pesok  Leaky (for drum, roof, etc) 
Pess  Typhoon 
Peteri  Angels (women); dancing girls 
Petukal  Pumpkin 
Pinoi  Wind 
Pitak  Groups; extended-family groups (smaller than gu) 
PKNP  Perbadanan Kemajuan Pertanian Negeri Perak (State Agricultural Development Corporation [Perak SADC]) 
Ploq  Roof.
POASM

Persatuan Orang Asli Semenanjung Malaysia (The Orang Asli Association of Peninsula Malaysia)

Pohog
Yellow

Poi
Blow by mild winds

Poj
Wait

Porm
Checking or feeling about with the hand (palm)

Praq
War

Proq
Mouse

Puhtan
An injury or death which happened to someone who failed to fulfil his/her desire

Ra'
Old (to describe houses or buildings: eg. deurg ra' - old house)

Ragi'
Colour; pattern

Raib
Mystically disappeared (for human beings and animals, to become supernatural beings)

Rakna'
Elder (head of the community, institution or organisation); huge; big: ie rakna' - very big or huge (for size of things such as houses, animals, ships, etc)

Raknyah
Making noise

Ramu'
Building materials; materials for performing rituals, such as flowers, leaves, wood, etc.; things

Ran
Tree-huts

Randuk
Go across the shallow river or swamp (or walk across the people who are sitting, or the plates of food which have been served on the floor)

Rangkal
Stairs

Raw
Long-tailed monkey (Macacus cynomolgus)

Reb
To burn the feather of the games

Redang
A huge area of swamp

Re-ez
Root (for trees)

Rehoi
Yellow

Rehoj
Pink

Reis
Floor; liver

Reknaab
Leaning to one side

Remeh
Very naughty (behaviour of children or monkeys)

Renganch
Red

Rengeh
Black

Renyah
Very noisy

Req
Near; close

Ress
Go across the river or swamp

RISDA
Rubber Industry and Smallholding Development Authority

Rima'
Secondary jungle; land that has been cleared, but is reverting to jungle; land long abandoned and overgrown, though not like real jungle

Rojh
Straying from the right path; mistake (in speech or way of life); error (in counting); confused

Runggin
A dancing party (borrowed from a Malay word, ronggeng)
Human’s spirit (head-soul)
State Agricultural Development Corporation
Family property which is inherited by later generations
Children
Special Air Service
Special Constabulary
Call (also sembout or serembout - to be called)
A general term for meat (including fish); also refers to soil - sech tiik
Lazy
Difficult
Leaf
Paddy fields; vegetable gardens
Former or abandoned paddy field
Absorbed; mixed
Asking for
Durian
Beat (with rattan or rope)
Heart feeling; think
Human beings; people; also the way the Semai and Temiar describe themselves
Rope, string, line, thread; yarn
Feather; the hair of the body
Cool; cold
Blurred
Forest; inland
An accident which happened to someone whose friend broke his/her promise to go somewhere together, such as fishing, hunting, etc
Opinion
Think; feeling
Wrong
Remove
The betel-vine (Piper betle)
Hair
Recede; ebb-tide (for water); dry (for laundry)
To cook (for dishes); vegetables (also pronounced as senubai)
Wash
Incest taboo; a name of a penyakit, which looks like a cat, and causes a disease described in modern medicine as leprosy
Heaven
To skirt; to hug (the river bank)
Visit; to check things such as trap, level of water, fruits, etc
Sky
To grow or plant (for plants)
Taderr  The crowing of a cock; to laugh loudly (cackle)
Takok  To cut
Tangen  The neck
Tari'  Tomorrow
Taw  Get down; jump down
Te  Tea
Teaw  River; water
Tebeq  Full
Teg  Hand
Telars  Escape; released
Telei  Isolated; separated
Teley  Banana
Teloh  Leaky
Teluei  Isolated (for people); stand on their or its own (independent)
Temagi'  The brows
Tembeq  Immersion in water
Teneq  Elder Brother and Sister
Tengor  Ache (just for headache)
Tengroij  Fishing
Terbor  Repair
Terlaij  Thunder storm and flood disasters; a disaster caused by the attack of animals or reptiles
Tiik  Soil, land; still available; still around; still going on
Tikong  anchor man or leader of the group
Tloh  Trance
Tok (tektok)  No; nothing
TOL  Temporary Occupational Land
Tutaw  Run away; get away from a problem, eg: a woman who leaves her home and asks for a divorce from her drunken husband
UMNO  United Malays National Organisation
Undi  Election; vote (borrowed from Malay words)
Unjeh  These days
URI'  The afterbirth
Waris  Close relatives
Warl  Kitchen
Wes  Leave
Weir  Avoid
Wek  Go
Wiswes  Separated; divorced
Worg  Shadow
Yah  Day; daytime: yah-dui - yesterday
Yarl  Busy (eg. not concentrate on study)
YB  Yang Berhormat (His/Her Excellency)
Yoj  Knife; machete
Yos  Born
Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Preamble

The special position of Aborigines in respect of land usage and land rights shall be recognise (sic). That is, every effort will be made to encourage the more developed groups to adopt a settled way of life and thus to bring them economically into line with other communities in this country. Aborigines will not be moved from their traditional areas without their full consent.¹

Aims of Study

Land rights will always be a leading concern among indigenous people throughout the world. A range of issues arise from this concern, impelling the indigenous people to engage in struggles to regain their rights. One such issue is the transition from traditional perceptions of and relations to the land, to perceptions and use of land as a commodity. Such change has been ignored by the state, as well as by the dominant society. Another issue that is a source of conflict is the state’s reluctance to recognise indigenous people’s rights over their traditional lands. In Malaysia, in particular, this issue is demonstrated by the changes over time in the state’s intepretation of the Orang Asli relationship with land. During the ancient Malay state era, the Orang Asli land rights were recognised by the rulers. As well as regarding the Orang Asli as an important ally, the sultan and his sub-ordinates gave the Orang Asli authority to govern their land by awarding their leaders letters of authority, or surat kuasa (see Edo, 1997). However, this recognition was drastically undermined during the British colonial period when the Orang Asli were labelled as intruders.² The British viewed swidden activities carried out by these people as destructive to the forest, which means government property. This intepretation was perpetuated in the post-colonial era as the Malaysian government inherited British policy. The Orang Asli were then regarded as squatters on state land (see Edo, 1994). This study therefore attempts to focus on such issues among the Orang Asli in Malaysia.
Discussion with some of the Orang Asli ethnic groups indicates that there are changes in their concept of land ownership. But the legal status of their land remains uncertain. Orang Asli specialists such as Means (1985), Gomes (1986, 1990), Hooker (1991), Nicholas (1994), Williams-Hunt (1995) and Dentan et al (1997) have remarked that the indigenous system of land rights is not recognized by the Malaysian state. The state is more interested in looking for reasons for not gazetting Orang Asli land. Among those reasons, the Orang Asli are termed nomadic, backward and uncivilised people. And as it is understood in Act 134, The Orang Asli Act 1954 (Revised 1974), the Orang Asli do not have absolute rights to their land. Normally, most of their land, including those areas where projects, especially agriculture, have been developed by the government for them, still does not belong to Orang Asli, but is considered state land, forest reserve, game reserve, river reserve and so on. According to Malaysian Law, the state owns all land not legally titled, and the Orang Asli’s customary lands rights have not been recognised in law (Hooker, 1976; Roseman, 1982). For the Orang Asli, the loss of their land means the loss of their ways of life. Convincing the state government that Orang Asli communities need title to much more land than they are cultivating at any time has been particularly difficult: land for hunting—their main source of protein; for collecting forest produce—their major source of cash; and for clearing future swiddens is also needed (Roseman, 1982). In spite of not gazetting the Orang Asli lands, the state government has sold logging permits for most of the areas the Orang Asli inhabit and has later turned over the logged-out land to federal or state agencies, or private companies for settlements or commercial agriculture (Endicott, 1987). The Orang Asli gain no benefit from the projects and sometimes are forced to resettle in another area.

Considering these issues, the main purpose of this study is to examine the changes in ideas about land rights and the consequences of these changes among the Orang Asli sub-ethnic Semai, referred to as *Seng-oi*. The ideal concept of land rights will be examined by considering *Seng-oi* cultural concepts and notions regarding land. Regarding the question of land holding in particular, changes are taking place in economic, social, political and religious terms. There are also changes in the concept of landholding and its uses. This study will, then, explore the factors influencing or accelerating these changes. The impact of changes within the community will also be examined.
Another aim of this study is to evaluate the problems faced by Seng-oi regarding their land rights, in dealing with the state and the legal system. Gomes (1990) remarks that Orang Asli rights over their land have been ignored by the legal system and politicians. The actions undertaken by the community in order to protect their land, and responses from the state regarding this matter will also be examined.

The changes in the Seng-oi concepts of land rights from an idealized past to current practice will be presented according to an historical chronology, including the people's struggles, agreements, and situation during the British colonial and post-independence era. Specifically, this study will be divided into four sections: cultural ideas of land (and its historical accounts); the precolonial and colonial situation; the situation during the Japanese occupation and Malayan Emergency; and the present situation.

_Seng-oi Cultural Concepts of Land (and Its Historical Accounts)_

This part will investigate carefully how these people perceive land from the perspective of their culture and belief systems. To achieve my aims, Chapters Three and Four will cover the following cultural ideas: the idea of earth and its creation; the idea of land and its relationship with human beings; the spiritual aspects of land and its rituals; the idea of land rights; and the concepts of areas, homeland, and boundaries. In this regard, key informant field interviews will be analysed. This section will focus on the oral tradition, rituals and other aspects of the Seng-oi.

_Precolonial and Colonial Situation_

Chapter Five will focus on the early struggles and problems faced by the communities of Orang Asli as described by G. B. Cerutti (1908), Mikluho-Maclay (1878), Wray (1890; 1903) and others. The following issues will be explored: the concept of land rights held and practiced in the past; the time over which changes in the concept have been taking place; reasons for change (factors influencing these changes); responses from the 'ancient' rulers and the relationship between Seng-oi and the rulers of the ancient Malay kingdom; the coming of the British and the introduction of new laws and policies, and their effects on the Seng-oi; and Seng-oi forms of reaction and struggle. To gain insights on these
matters, key informant field interviews will also be discussed. Some data will be
obtained from oral traditions. Data from the archival records and published
works will be gleaned to counter-check the data produced orally by the
community. The main aim of this part is to investigate factors influencing
change and its consequences, including struggles and displacement from Seng-oi
areas.

Japanese Occupation and the Malayan Emergency
Chapter Six will examine Seng-oi life during these crises, and their effects on the
people's rights in general. The following issues will be explored: life during the
Japanese occupation and during the Malayan Emergency (1948-1960); the
struggle against the Communists, and the meaning of independence (1957). This
data will be drawn from oral traditions and the experiences of members of the
community.

Present Situation
Chapters Seven and Eight will focus on the problems faced by the Seng-oi
regarding their land rights after independence and after the 1990 peace
declaration by the communists. The issues to be examined will be as follows:
present ideas of land rights and patterns of land use; the impact and problems of
change in land holding within the communities; problems with the state and
outsiders; action taken by the people to resolve these problems; government
attitudes towards these problems; new options to maintain social relationships
within the community; and changing attitudes in response to lack of land. To
obtain these data, close observation and field interviews were conducted and
written documents examined. The main aim of this part is to evaluate the impact
of change, and the resultant problems among the community and with the state.

Chapter Nine draws together the strands of my argument to focus on my main
concern in this thesis—the issue of Seng-oi land rights.

Research Approaches

The major approaches used in this study are ethnographic and ethnohistorical.
The ethnographic approach is employed to examine the concepts of land rights
among the *Seng-oi* as reflected in their cosmology, values, and cultural ideas. The same approach is employed to consider such concepts as held by the community today. I assume that there have been changes as a result of the influences of modern values. This method will then be used to examine the factors influencing these changes.

This study employs ethnohistorical data to highlight the *Seng-oi* perspective about their struggles over their land, especially concerning rights to resettle and to cultivate in certain areas, and their involvement in nation building. These events have, either directly or indirectly, contributed to the transition in ideas of land rights. A change from an ideal concept of indigenous land rights to the present one has taken place over a long period of time. A historical account must be given to examine this: to evaluate the causes, issues and problems that have taken place within the period during which this change has occurred. The importance of history is great. Past experience shows that history has a significant role in nation building and nationalism, including defining attitudes to land rights and ownership. On this basis, there is a need to include hunter-gatherers and swidden cultivators, who have never been acknowledged, in the perspective of the modern history of the nation state, so as to preserve and protect local rights. Therefore, a new history needs to be constructed.

History, in general, is a study of change through time. In particular, the word ‘history’ means (see Parmentier, 1987):

1. What happened in the past, that is, historical events;

2. Records from the past surviving into the present that are necessary for reconstructive knowledge, that is, historical evidence; and

3. Narratives or other representational vehicles constructed in the present about the past, that is, historical discourse.

However, in the context of hunter-gatherers and swidden cultivators’ historical construction, the definition of history needs to be redefined to include both social and cultural processes and a consciousness of their society. These facts have been ignored by the historians and anthropologists in their studies. In the case of the Ilongot of Northern Luzon in the Philippines, for example, their local histories are structured differently from Western histories because they are based on space, stories and biographies of members of that society. Rosaldo (1980)
gained access to Ilongot history by piecing together the oral narratives of the people themselves. Ilongot history may simply list a lifetime of place names where people have gardened or erected their houseposts. These narratives appear to be the ‘tree trunk’, the physical support for the upper limbs and top, that of the establishment of an historical dimension (see Parmentier, 1987). This dimension seems to be very important in the discussion of cultural transition among the Seng-oi, particularly their notion of land.

In Malaysia, the involvement of the Seng-oi in historical events has not been seen as valuable in the process of nation building. Given this situation, one of the objectives of this study is to focus on an analysis of the oral histories of the Seng-oi. Oral histories, I believe, reflect historical values and provide an understanding of the past, including relationships with outsiders. Historical insight is important as a foundation for people-centred development. As Attwood (1989) has remarked, the past can be used as a way of reaffirming or even changing the present.

By employing these methods, supported by archival and library researches, this study attempts to examine issues regarding Seng-oi land rights.

The Orang Asli

Orang Asli is a Malay word referring to the indigenous people of Peninsula Malaysia. This term derives from a combination of two words: Orang means people, and asli means original, genuine, and indigenous. The term, therefore, translates loosely as ‘original people’, ‘first people’, and ‘indigenous people’. Perhaps this is why the Malay equivalent—“Orang Asli” (after the more correct “Orang Asal”)—came to be easily accepted by these people themselves (Nicholas, 1997). This term was introduced in 1960 to replace other terms which were previously ascribed by anthropologists and administrators, such as sakai, orang asal, and aborigines. The Orang Asli were previously known by a variety of terms in the literature. According to Nicholas (1997):

Some were descriptive of their abode (Orang Hulu, Orang Darat, Orang Laut), others were descriptive of their perceived characteristics (Besisi, Mantra, Orang Mawas). Still others were derogatory and reflected the assumed superiority of the “civilised” speakers (Orang Liar, Pagan, Orang Jinak, Blandas).
The British adopted the term “Aboriginal” as an official reference in its Enactment No. 3 of 1939, the Aboriginal Tribes Enactment, for the State of Perak. In accordance with this enactment, the term aboriginal was used in all official documents. (This lasted until 1960 when the term Orang Asli was introduced by the independent government to replace aboriginal, which appeared to be more suitable for Australia than Malaysia.) The British further classified the people they designated as aboriginals into sub-groups for purposes of administration. There were, however, problems and inconsistencies in distinguishing these sub-groups according to any absolute characteristics because these people were mixed. A former Director General of the Department of Orang Asli Affairs (or JHEOA, short for Jabatan Hal Ehwal Orang Asli), Iskandar Carey, gave a few examples related to this problem. According to him:

This tribe, the Semok Beri, is of a very mixed origin racially, and many of these people have the typical appearance of a negrito, that is to say, they have woolly hair and a skin of a darker colour than that of the other Orang Asli. ... In terms of both language and material culture, the Semok Beri are, nevertheless, much more like the Senoi than the Negritos, and for this reason they are usually regarded as a Senoi-type of people. (Carey, 1976: 33).

In another example, he also pointed out that:

The Semelai therefore remain somewhat of a mystery - they are Proto-Malay as far as culture and social structure are concerned, but linguistically very closely related to some of their Senoi neighbours [Mon-Khmer speakers]. (Carey, 1976: 251).

Similar considerations apply to another Proto-Malay sub-group, the Temok, who are linguistically very closely related to the Semelai, but are almost completely nomadic, cultivating only very small fields, and making a living by the sale of jungle produce and collection of wild fruits and vegetables (see Carey, 1976). The classification is therefore more concerned with convenience than genuine differences, as pointed out by Nicholas (1997: 3):

Apparently, for convenience, the 19 official Orang Asli Groups have been reduced to 18 so as to have exactly six sub-ethnic [groups] under each major classification of Negrito, Senoi, and Proto-Malay.

The classification of the Orang Asli and its distribution is shown in Map 1.1 and Table 1.1:
Map 1.1: Orang Asli Groups of Peninsula Malaysia
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Major Groups</strong></th>
<th><strong>Sub-groups</strong></th>
<th><strong>Population</strong></th>
<th><strong>Locations</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Semang-Negrito</strong></td>
<td>Batek</td>
<td>958</td>
<td>Northern Pahang; Southeast Kelantan; and Northwest Terengganu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jahai</td>
<td>869</td>
<td>Southern Thailand; Northeast Perak; and Northwest Kelantan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kensiu</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>Southern Thailand; and Eastern Kedah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kintak</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>Southern Thailand; Southeast Kedah; and Northern Perak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lanoh</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>Northern Perak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mendriq</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>Northern Pahang; and Central and Southern Kelantan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>2,442</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Senoi</strong></td>
<td>Che'wong</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>Southwest Pahang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jah Hut</td>
<td>2,879</td>
<td>Central Pahang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mah Meri</td>
<td>1,778</td>
<td>Coastal Selangor and Carey Island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semai</td>
<td>19,744</td>
<td>Southern Pahang; Eastern, Central and Southern Perak; and Eastern Selangor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semoq Beri</td>
<td>1,080</td>
<td>Central and Northeast Pahang; and Southwest Terengganu.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Temiar</td>
<td>12,949</td>
<td>Northern Perak; Southern Kelantan; and Northwest Pahang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>38,726</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proto-Malay</strong></td>
<td>Jakun</td>
<td>11,163</td>
<td>Southern Pahang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Orang Kanak</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Southeast Johor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Orang Kuala</td>
<td>2,389</td>
<td>Western Johor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Orang Seletar</td>
<td>1,006</td>
<td>Western Johor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semelai</td>
<td>3,256</td>
<td>Southern Pahang; Northwest Johor; and Northeast Negeri Sembilan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Temuan</td>
<td>12,361</td>
<td>Selangor; Negeri Sembilan; Melaka; Southwest Pahang; and Northeast Johor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>30,212</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Orang Asli</strong></td>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td><strong>71,380</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Official Census, 1990. JHEOA Head Quarters, Kuala Lumpur.)

### Table 1.1: Orang Asli Classification and Distribution

Since the 1990 census on which the above table is based, however, the state, through its National Bureau of Statistics, has not produced any updated figures about the number of Orang Asli. Most of the figures were provided by the JHEOA, and there appears to be some inconsistency between figures provided by the federal, or Head Quarters, and the state branches. Nevertheless, the 1988 JHEOA’s census shows that there were 22,620 Orang Asli in Perak. In 1993, this number increased to 26,772. This means that the Orang Asli have grown at the rate of about 3.67 per cent per year. Based on this 3.76 per cent growth rate,
the total number of Orang Asli might now be more than 90,000, and probably approaches 100,000.

According to the 1990 census, about 3.42 per cent of the Orang Asli population are Semang-Negrito. The people of this group have officially been classified by the JHEOA as Negrito, which originally meant “Little Negro”, because many of them are short; have broad noses, round eyes and low cheek-bones; are very dark skinned and have woolly hair. Such features resemble those of the people of East Africa and Papua (see Carey, 1976: 14-15). This classification, however, is objected to by anthropologists, such as Rambo (1985: 32), who writes:

> From a scientific standpoint, however, application of a racial term to a cultural category is undesirable since, as anthropologists have recognized since at least the time of Boas, race, language, culture, and ecological adaptation are not necessarily covariant. Many individual members of Semang bands do not have the physical attributes associated with “Negritos” while many Temiar and Semai swidden agriculturalists display Negrito racial characteristics. Hence, in the present work, Semang will be used for lack of a better substitute.

Due to problems in ethnic classification, this group was later referred to as Semang-Negrito. The Semang-Negrito, regarded as the earliest inhabitants of Peninsula Malaysia, are nomadic forest foragers of the lowland forests of North and Northwest Peninsula Malaysia and Southern Thailand.

These people speak Austroasiatic languages. Since their homeland was located on the Malaysia-Thailand border, however, these people have borrowed Thai and Malay words. In addition, they also speak their neighbouring Seng-oi languages, such as Temiar, Semai, Jah Hut and Semoq Beri. Today, most of the Semang-Negrito people are resettled in various settlements established by the government, among which are Banun of Perak, Lubok Legong of Kedah, Sungai Kuching of Pahang and Jeli of Kelantan. This programme led the people to abandon their nomadic way of life although a semi-nomadic life style is still practiced due to lack of economic support from the government.

The Senoi represent 54.25 per cent of the total Orang Asli population. They live in the central part of Peninsula Malaysia, especially in the Main Range areas. The term ‘Senoi’ comes from a Semai and Temiar word, Seng-oi or sen-oi, both of which mean people. The Semai and Temiar used this word to identify themselves: Edn Seng-oi seraq (in Semai), or Yek sen-oi beq (in Temiar) means, I
am a forest person. The Senoi people have no clear characteristic in regard to their physical appearance. In general, it falls in between the Semang-Negrito and Proto-Malays, depending on where the Senoi live. If they live in the northern or eastern part of the Senoi region, they are more likely to look like the Semang-Negrito, with darker skin and woolly hair. The Senoi who live in the lowlands of the western and southern part of the Senoi region, on the other hand, are more likely to look like Proto-Malays. This is probably due to mixed-marriages, with the Semang-Negrito people in the former case and the Proto-Malays in the latter.

Traditionally, the Senoi were swidden agriculturalists. Among the Orang Asli, the Senoi was the most dominant group involved in swidden farming (Majid, 1983: 187). Cultivating rice was the main economic activity, while hunting and fishing were carried out to complement this main activity. They moved from one paddy field, or selai, to another in groups called gu, each of which comprised one or two extended families (see Dentan, 1968). Later, especially in the period between the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, these gu established their own permanent settlements and began to recognise the area around them, referring to it as or dengri' or lengri' (see Gomes, 1990), and defining it as belonging to one individual gu. As a result, the Senoi have long been settled in permanent settlements, known as dengri' or lengri' (see Edo, 1990). Lack of land led the Senoi to abandon shifting cultivation. Most of them are now involved in peasant type economic activities. They grow all kinds of cash crops, such as rubber, palm oil, cocoa, fruits, and other short term crops, i.e. maize, vegetables and tapioca; and most of these crops are for sale. As far as the Semai are concerned, their mode of economy has changed from 'looking for food' to 'looking for money' (see Gomes, 1990).

The Senoi were believed to have come to Peninsula Malaysia later than the Semang-Negrito, though there is considerable debate about their origins (see Rambo, 1988; Solheim, 1980; Bellwood, 1985). Linguistically, they speak several different Austroasiatic languages. Among the six Senoi sub-groups, Semai and Temiar languages are fairly similar. If these two largest Senoi sub-groups are combined, their population becomes more than half of the entire Orang Asli population, which also means that the Semai-Temiar language is the most prominent among the Orang Asli languages. The Senoi nowadays have,
however, unintentionally borrowed Malay, Chinese, Indian and English words, and these have contributed to the enrichment of the Senoi vocabulary.

The Senoi have sparked a great interest among researchers for their non-violent image and of total sharing practices (Schebesta, 1928; Dentan, 1968; Wazir-Jahan Karim, 1981; Gomes, 1986), their harmonious rhythm of ritual songs and uniqueness of dream theory (Stewart, 1948; Faraday and Wren-Lewis, 1984; Roseman, 1993; Jennings, 1995), and their courage in fighting the Communist guerillas (Noone, 1972; Leary, 1995).

The Proto-Malays represents 42.33 per cent of the Orang Asli population, and primarily live in the central and southern part of the peninsula. Before the term Proto-Malay was introduced, these people were often called Jakun, which literally means “inland people” (see Williams-Hunt, 1952: 15). In the literature of Orang Asli, however, these people called themselves orang dusun, orang dalam, orang hulu, or orang darat, which mean “people of isolated villages”, “inland people”, “up-stream people”, and “people of the interior” respectively. At various times, they were also called ‘savage Malays’, ‘wild Malays’, ‘pagan Malays’, and ‘heathen Malays’, all of which are misleading and unsatisfactory. Later, the government introduced a more appropriate term, ‘Aboriginal Malays’. This term has, however, developed undesirable connotations, at least from the Malaysian point of view, and was later replaced by Proto-Malays (see Carey, 1976: 22).

In appearance, the Proto-Malays generally look like the ordinary Malays, and they have adopted Malay culture. However, there are three distinct ethnic categories within this group, as Carey (1976: 23) writes:

First, we have the pure Malay type of people, such as the Temuan, who speak only Malay, and whose customs are very similar to those of the Malay population. Second, there are other tribes such as the Semelai who speak languages which are at least partly Senoi and who may be regarded as a racial and cultural mixture between the Proto-Malays on the one hand and the Senoi on the other. Third, the people living on the west coast of Johor are in a category by themselves. All of them are Muslims, speaking a type of Sumatran language, who have, in fact, emigrated only recently to Malaya.

In addition, Carey also points out that these people vary a great deal in their way of life. According to him:
Some of them, living in the remote areas of the jungle in Pahang, lead a semi-nomadic existence, and these people are much poorer and more backward than a majority of the Senoi. Other groups lead a completely settled existence, and their way of life is very similar to that of the Malay villagers. The coastal people are fishermen, and their way of life is not any different from that of the Malay fishermen, except that they tend to be poorer (Carey, 1976: 22-23).

According to most authorities, the Proto-Malays are the last of the immigrant groups among the Orang Asli, and it is thought that they came to Malaya some 5,000 years ago (Carey, 1976: 220).

Since these people speak an Austronesian language, they are believed to have originated from Sumatra and Kalimantan. Unlike the Negritos and Senoi, Bellwood (1993: 54) points out that:

The Malayic, on the other hand, have clear and unequivocal culture and linguistic origins in the Austronesian world of Island Southeast Asia, despite varying degrees of genetic and cultural interaction with earlier peninsula populations.

From the research point of view, the Proto-Malays have attracted historians because of their role during the period of the ancient Malay kingdom. The Orang laut, for instance, played a significant role in the establishment of the ancient Malay states of Peninsula Malaysia, including the state of Melaka and the Johor Kingdom (see Andaya, 1975; Wheatley, 1964). The Temuan had a similar role in the establishment of the State of Negeri Sembilan (see Gullick, 1949). During the British colonial period, particularly in the year 1948, the Temuan once again became Malay allies in resisting the Malayan Union (see UMNO, 1956). In the later periods, however, both Orang Laut and Temuan were alienated from their political roles, as this agenda was controlled by the dominant groups, and also because of colonialism.

As an indigenous group, the Proto-Malays, like the Semang-Negrito and Senoi, are marginal. Such marginalisation is reflected in government policy, which aims to develop the Orang Asli and to integrate them into the mainstream society. This kind of statement makes the Orang Asli seem like a purely isolated people, who never participated in important alliances during the ancient Malay state, the British colonial period, or the post-independence era (especially in fighting the Communist insurgents).
Applying the term Orang Asli to these people gives the impression that they are a homogenous group, which is incorrect. They are, in fact, composed of various ethnic backgrounds, who, for the purpose of administration, have been loosely classified into three major groups, which are themselves varied. The people, however, accept this term as it does not carry a negative connotation like others, especially sakai and pagan. Moreover, the term Orang Asli carries the understanding that they are the original people, which is a source of pride, since it associates them with the indigenous people of Peninsula Malaysia. This acceptance is demonstrated when these people object to other terms proposed by the state, i.e. Saudara Lama and Bumiputera Asli. In 1974, the state introduced ‘Saudara Lama’ (which literally means, old relatives) to replace Orang Asli. This was probably to complement another term, ‘Saudara Baru’ (meaning new brothers/sisters), a term which particularly refers to non-Malays who converted to Islam. In 1995, the Sultan of Johor declared that the Orang Asli should be referred to as ‘Bumiputera Asli’, arguing that the only reason that they are not Malays is that they are not Muslims (Nicholas, 1997). The Orang Asli, including those who have converted to Islam, objected to both of these terms, and maintained their acceptance of the term Orang Asli. In addition, there have been government efforts to regard Orang Asli as Malay, which began in 1989 and have continued in news reports until 1992. Nicholas (1997) pointed out that this effort was also emphasized by the Malaysian Representative at the United Nations, now the General Assembly President, in the launching of the International Year of Indigenous Peoples in December 1992, who revealed the government views of the Orang Asli by stating that: “The Orang Asli are our Malay brothers who have chosen to remain behind while we progressed”.

In addition to its meaning, ‘original people’, these people have accepted the term Orang Asli for other reasons. The first is due to political consciousness. The term Orang Asli has united them into a larger group, which can produce a stronger ‘voice’ than if they are split into small groups making them politically ‘weak’. They have all experienced similar problems, especially regarding land, so they try to unite to promote a common struggle to preserve their remaining traditional areas. The second reason relates to their pride, as these people do not want to see their identity manipulated by the dominant groups for their own interests and political survival. The Orang Asli would rather maintain the existing term because, according to them, better terms alone will not help to improve their life if not accompanied by serious efforts to help them, and to
assist them with development. Finally, the term Orang Asli is regarded as the best option these people have to overcome the complexity of ethnic classification arising from mixed marriages between members of different sub-groups.

**Selected Reading**

The study of the Orang Asli began in the mid-1880s and focussed on cultural aspects. Logan (1841; 1847; 1848; 1850) was one of the first scholars to include the Orang Asli in his work on the ethnic and language classification in Southeast Asia. He was followed by Favre (1865) and Mikluho-Maclay (1878a; 1878b), who explored the social and physical aspects of the people. The focus on physical and cultural aspects of Orang Asli life, and on language was then broadened by other scholars such as Clifford (1891), Schmidt (1903), Mills (1925), Cole (1945) and later expanded by Skeat and Blagden (1906), Evans (1914), Schebesta (1928), Williams-Hunt (1952), Endicott (1979a) and Howell (1984) to name just a few. Cerutti (1908), Dentan (1968), and Benjamin (1966; 1968; 1980) have shared this same interest in culture and religion but later have been concerned about current issues and problems faced by this society. Cerutti (1908) and Dentan et al (1997) describe the complaints of the Orang Asli regarding their displacement from their ancestral land by the Malays and by the state. Maxwell (1880; 1890), Gullick (1958), Baki (1966), Endicott (1983) and Sullivan (1982) referred to the Orang Asli in their studies on slave practices among the Malay rulers. Another aspect exposed by Dunn (1975) in his study is that trading is not a new activity for the Orang Asli since it has been widely practiced since the fifth century.

Noone (1936), a remarkable field ethnographer of the Perak Museum at Taiping, was concerned about Orang Asli land issues during British colonial rule. He called for the establishment of large Orang Asli land reservations where the people would be free to live according to their own traditions, customs and values. He was also assigned by the government to draft the policy of the Perak government toward the Orang Asli. This was then gazetted as Enactment No. 3 of 1939, State of Perak. This enactment was then revised and regazetted as Act No 134—the Orang Asli Act, (1954), and again revised in 1974 by the independent Malaysian government.
Kirk Endicott (1974; 1977; 1979b; 1983; 1983) was among the first scholars to delve into ‘developmental issues’. In his analysis of the impact of economic modernization among the Orang Asli, he stressed that logging activities and large scale land development projects have had a large impact on the Orang Asli communities who live in the area. These activities and programmes have reduced the forest area and at the same time reduced the sources of the people’s livelihood. It became worse when the activities or projects were not implemented for the benefit of the Orang Asli.

Dodge (1981), Means (1985) and Hooker (1991) have emphasized policy and legal aspects. Hooker, in his profound analysis of the Orang Asli land position from a legal perspective, concludes that there are no strong provisions in either the current state land law, the National Land Code or Act 134, to preserve or to secure Orang Asli land rights. Williams-Hunt (1991) urged the amendment of the present land laws in order to provide legal rights which more concretely protect Orang Asli interests. Hasan (1989) also feels that the current laws are not strong enough to protect Orang Asli land.

Other writers such as Couillard (1980), Mohd. Salleh (1974; 1978), Fix (1971), Robarchek (1979), Diffloth (1968), Wazir-Jahan Karim (1981), Morris (1983), Gomes (1986), Nicholas (1985), Chee Beng (1973; 1993), Edo (1990), Gianno (1990) and many others have shown the same concern for Orang Asli issues ranging from change, development, ethnic relations, to land rights, with cultural issues still remaining the most popular ones.

**Community in Focus**

**The Orang Asli in Perak**

I chose to study the Orang Asli in the State of Perak for the following reasons. British colonialism began in Perak, bringing on a period of political transition which resulted in the people, including the Orang Asli, experiencing hardship in regard to land rights. The first law for the Orang Asli, Enactment No. 3 of 1939, was enacted in this state, and the Malayan Emergency, the crisis which badly affected the Orang Asli, was declared here. Finally, in the post independence era, the State of Perak was the first of the states controlled by the dominant political
party, *Barisan Nasional*, to introduce a land policy for the Orang Asli. The Orang Asli of Perak were, therefore, among the first to experience all of these events.

According to the Department of Orang Asli Affairs, there are five Orang Asli sub-groups in the State of Perak, namely, Semai, Temiar, Jahai, Lanoh and Kintak. As shown in Table 1.2, the total population of Orang Asli in this state for the year 1988 was 22,920, and consisted of 4,865 families.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Groups</th>
<th>Sub-groups</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senoi</td>
<td>Semai</td>
<td>14,561</td>
<td>2,977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Temiar</td>
<td>7,462</td>
<td>1,678</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semang-Negrito</td>
<td>Jahai</td>
<td>580</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kintak</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lanoh</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orang Asli</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22,920</td>
<td>4,865</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: HQ, Department of Orang Asli Affairs, 1988.)

Table 1.2: Orang Asli Population in Perak (1988)

This population lives in 195 villages scattered all over the state. The land status of the villages is either “Orang Asli Areas” or “Orang Asli Reserves”. The difference between the two is that the Orang Asli Reserves are areas which have been gazetted by the government as reservations for the Orang Asli, while the Orang Asli Areas are areas which belong to the Orang Asli but have not yet been gazetted as Orang Asli Reserves. The difference also appears in their uses. In an Orang Asli Area, a wider range of activities can take place, while on reserved land, activities are limited to the traditional pursuits of Orang Asli. The land area occupied totals 41,175 hectares. Of that, only 6,219 hectares are gazetted as Orang Asli Reserves; 8,471 hectares are approved to be gazetted but have still not been implemented; and application has been made by the Orang Asli through the Department of Orang Asli Affairs for the remaining 26,485 hectares to be made a reservation, so far without the approval of the state government. About 30 per cent or 40 per cent of the area, however, is not economically viable because it is too steep, swampy, rocky, or infertile (JHEOA, 1990). These official data show that most Orang Asli land, as much as 85 per cent, has not been gazetted and still remains Orang Asli Areas, which are not secure and therefore subject to outsiders’ interests. Most of this area has been occupied for many generations.
and definitely for more than a hundred years. Unfortunately, this fact is still not recognised by the state. The problem is basically that Orang Asli have no political power and no written historical evidence of their existence in the area to support their claims. A major aim of this study is to highlight the historical background of the Orang Asli in relation to their land rights.

The *Seng-oi*

Out of the five sub-groups listed in Table 1.2, I chose to study the Semai because they represent the largest proportion of the Orang Asli in the State of Perak. Recently, they have also become vocal in voicing their problems and disadvantages. According to the 1988 census produced by the JHEOA, there were 14,561 Semai, consisting of 2,977 families, in Perak. They live in 92 villages, and are scattered from the central to the southern part of the state. According to Diffloth (1968: 65, cf Gomes, 1994: 178-179):

Semai is a term used by the Jabatan Orang Asli [Orang Asli Department], probably following H.D. Noone, to identify the Senoi aborigines living in an area roughly circumscribed by a line joining Ipoh, Teluk Anson, Tanjung Malaim, Raub, Kuala Lipis and by the Kelantan-Pahang boundary to the north. The origin of the term ‘Semai’ is rather unclear. It probably comes from a Temiar word, *seman*, a term used by these people to refer to their neighbours, the ‘Semai’ people, of the southern hills of their region (Noone, 1936). The term Semai first appeared in a book published in German in 1928, entitled *Orang Utan* (meaning “forest people”), by Paul Schebesta. These people were known by various names, such as Central Senoi (Clifford, 1891), Central Sakai (Blagden, 1903), and *Mai Darat*, which means “people of the interior” (Annandale and Robinson, 1903; Cerutti, 1908). From the people’s point of view, however, the term ‘Semai’ is not their word and has no meaning, either good or bad. They refer to themselves as *Seng-oi*, which means people. Since the term ‘Semai’ has been introduced by the state without any specific meaning, this study will employ the term *Seng-oi* to refer to this people.

Dentan (1968; 1992) described the *Seng-oi* people as peaceful and non-violent, in the sense that they rarely express their worries through aggressive struggle or other types of retaliation. They have engaged only in forms of silent protest.
Map 1.2: Seng-oi Territories in the State of Perak
Dentan (1968) also divided these people into two: East and West Semai. These groups are loosely divided by the Main Range of Titiwangsa, which runs down the middle of Peninsula Malaysia from north to south, and divides the peninsula into East and West coasts. Based on this boundary, the East Semai refers to the Seng-oi who live in the State of Pahang, while West Semai refers to those who are in Perak and Selangor. In the State of Perak, in particular, the East Semai are referred to as the highland people who live in the eastern part of Seng-oi region on the slopes of the Main Range of Titiwangsa. West Semai, on the other hand, refers to those in the lowland areas of the western side of the Seng-oi region.

The Seng-oi have their own ideas about their region. Parallel to the classification made by Dentan (1968), the Seng-oi divide their region into two: ditah (upper side or areas) and direh (lower sides or areas). The basis of this division is, however, according to the direction of the sun. The analogy is that the direction of sunrise, which is east, is regarded as the upper area, or ditah, while the direction of the sunset, which is west, is regarded as the lower area, or direh. There is, however, no clear boundary which separates these two regions, and it only exists at the level of mutual understanding between these people. The people of the upper areas, in the direction of sunrise, are referred to as mai ditah (meaning people of the upper areas), while those toward the sunset are referred to as mai direh (meaning people of the lower areas). Nevertheless, this classification still implies the significance of geographical landscape since the eastern part of the State of Perak is hilly, where the Main Range of Titiwangsa is located, while its western part comprises lowland and coastal areas.

Generally, the Seng-oi do not identify themselves according to this classification, but after the name of their own village or territory. For example, Edn mai Warr means “I am a Warr person”. Warr is a region’s name. Edn mai Menchaq means “I am a person of Menchaq”. Menchaq is a village’s name. People are only referred to by their ‘regional’ labels, either mai ditah or mai direh, by their neighbours in the other area. For example, the Seng-oi of the upper areas will refer to their neighbours in the lower areas as mai direh. In the same respect, the mai direh will refer their neighbours in the upper areas as mai ditah.

However, there are other ‘sub-divisions’ within each of these regions. Among the mai ditah, for instance, there are three sub-divisions based on the location of living
area, i.e. *mai bareh* (flat land people), *mai cenan* (hill people) and *mai kui teaw* (up-river people). *Mai bareh* refers to the people who live in the low and flat lands in the *ditah* region, especially in the foot hills, such as Menchaq and Chengriq. *Mai cenan* refers to the people who live in the hilly areas, such as Gorl people, while *mai kui teaw* refers to the people who live in the most remote areas, where rivers ‘originate’, or ‘head of rivers’ are located. Some of the *mai cenan* and *mai kui teaw* have established close relationships, or even family links, with the *Seng-oi* (Semai) of Pahang and the Temiar of central Perak. The *Seng-oi* of Gorr, whose territory adjoins the Temiar region, are one such group.

There are also sub-divisions among the *mai direh*: *mai direh* and *mai bareh*. Although the term *direh* generally means the lower side, when it comes to the term *mai direh*, it only refers to the people who live in, or originate from, the oldest *Seng-oi* village in the *direh* area, named Temboh Bekett (now Bota). In addition to Temboh Bekett, there are a number of *Seng-oi* villages in the *direh* area established by the people of Temboh Bekett, such as Denak, Bekau and Perah, Air Hitam, Sungai Galah (now Tangkai Chermin) and Kelubi. The people of these villages are also considered to be *mai direh* due to their origin. These people speak a slightly different dialect, or even use different vocabulary, from the *mai ditah*. For example, the *mai ditah* refer to chicken as *puq*, while *mai direh* refer to it as *manuq*, an Austronesian term. In another example, the *mai ditah* refer to ‘go’ as *chip*, while *mai direh* say *wek*. In addition, the tone of the languages differs, the *mai direh’s* dialect is more melodious, and sounds like the language of the Perak Malays, while the *mai ditah’s* does not. Some elders of the *mai direh* claim that their ancestors came from Melaka, and presume that they were the ‘products’ of a mixture between the *Seng-oi* and the Temuan. This is demonstrated in some of their customs, or *adat*, such as their marriage and naming system, which are similar to the Malay. Similar customs have also been borrowed by Proto-Malays. (This claim, however, needs to be researched further).

Among *mai direh* villages, however, the people of Kelubi and Sungai Galah (Tangkai Chermin) are somewhat exceptional. Although the majority of both populations originated from Bota, from the *adat* point of view, they are not considered ‘purely’ *mai direh* because some of their previous leaders were *mai ditah*, who imposed the *adat* of *mai ditah* on these people. As a result, the people have their own version of *adat*, especially marriage *adat*, which derives from a
combination of the *adat* of the *mai ditah* and of *mai direh*. Since their position is neither *mai ditah* nor *mai direh*, these people are more comfortable identifying themselves with the name of their village, i.e. *mai Kelubi* (the people of Kelubi) and *mai Tangkai Chermin* (the people of Tangkai Cermin). From the *mai ditah* point of view, however, they are still considered to be *mai direh*. In a similar way the *mai direh*, i.e. the Bota people, regard the people of these two villages as still part of them, the *mai direh*.

There are other *Seng-oi* villages in the *direh* areas, such as Langkap, Stet, Kurug (Sungai Kurung), Bendang (Pengkalan Daun), and Redang Punggur, however, which are not regarded as villages of the *mai direh* because they were established by *mai ditah*, or a combination of a majority of *mai ditah* and a minority of *mai direh*. The people of these villages speak *mai ditah* dialect, or a combination of *mai ditah* and *mai direh* dialects, and practice the *adat* of either *mai ditah* or a combination of both *adat*. Since these villages are inhabited by a majority of *mai ditah*, they are referred to as *mai bareh*, instead of *mai direh*, because only their location is in the lowland, or *direh* areas.

There is another category of *Seng-oi* referred to as *mai bernem*. This term refers to those who live along the Bernam River, including those in the northern part of Selangor. These people are among the Orang Asli sub-groups who do not ‘display’ a distinctive physical appearance or cultural elements, and are ‘situated’ in between the Semai and the Temuan. British administrators, such as Williams-Hunt (1952), first faced this problem, and finally classified them as Semai. Goulbury (1955) trapped in similar confusion, first regarded these people as Temuan, but then changed her mind and reclassified them as Semai. Edo (1993) presumed that these people are a mixture of *Seng-oi* and Temuan because they live along the border between these two sub-groups, *Seng-oi* on the north and Temuan on the south, with the Bernam river becoming the boundary between the two. In this mixture, however, it appears that the *Seng-oi* cultural elements are stronger than the Temuan. This presumption is based on the case of the Erong people, where a Temuan, named Aki Diriik, came to marry a *Seng-oi* girl of Bidor in the late nineteenth century. He then led a group, most of whom were his wife’s family members, to flee from Bidor and hide in various areas in the south along the Bernam river, as they were being tracked by slave raiders. When slave raiding activities were banned by the British in the late nineteenth century,
Aki Diriik and his people established a village called Gunung Payung (now Erong) near the Bernam river. As a leader, Aki Diriik was responsible for imposing the Temuan *adat* on the *Seng-oi* of Erong. Since the *Seng-oi* were in the majority, however, the *adat* of the *Seng-oi* became dominant in this mixture.

In terms of physical appearance, the *mai bernem* people seem to be varied. Some of them look like other *Seng-oi* people, while some look like the Temuan *vis-a-vis* Malays. Among *mai bernem*, the division into upper and lower areas has also been adopted, and referred to as *katah* and *kareh*, respectively. This regional idea is adopted even though most of their villages are located in the lowland (*bareh*). The people of the northern areas will refer to their neighbours in the west as *mai kareh*, while *mai kareh* refer to their northern neighbours as *mai katah*. In addition to the direction of sun, this idea also derives from the direction of river flow: the river flows from upper to lower areas, regardless of its 'compass' direction. According to this, the *mai bernem* use the terms *mai katah* and *mai kareh* to refer to their neighbours within the same village: *mai katah* refers to the villagers whose houses are up-river, and *mai kareh* refers to the villagers down-river.

The idea of higher and lower areas (*ditah and direh; katah and kareh*) has been adopted by the *Seng-oi* as a means of reference at all levels of location, from region to local, or village. This is how they create boundaries between themselves, which then become a basis for territorial rights. This idea of regional divisions, however, does not seem absolute, in the sense that the boundaries do not stop the *Seng-oi* from undertaking inter-regional movements. People are free to move out from their region and become members of another. In the old days, movements freely occurred between these regions, either by an individual or group of families. These days, however, people of these regions lack land, and movements are, therefore, only due to exogamous marriages.

Ethnicity, however, is not the subject matter of this study. This study is concerned with the pattern of land use and its history, and the changes in ideas about land ownership and its impact, a subject which concerns all *Seng-oi*. Although this study will only focus on the *mai direh*, its findings will reflect the situation experienced by the entire *Seng-oi* population, regardless of whether they are *mai direh* or *mai ditah*.
Field Work

I began my field work in December 1994 and continued until June 1996. The research programme was divided into two stages. First, library research, which concentrated on materials in the National Archives of Malaysia (Arkib Negara Malaysia) and the Department of Orang Asli Affairs. This research took six months. This historical information is important to examine alongside the information produced orally by the communities involved in the field research. The second stage was the field work. This research considered two types of Seng-oi villages, the ‘traditional village’ and the ‘new village’. A traditional village, known by the Seng-oi as lengri ’ or dengri’, is a village which has existed for a very long time. The villagers inherited the dengri’ from their ancestors. A new village refers to a new settlement area established by the people to replace a traditional village which was affected, or taken over, by the government for other development projects. In the fieldwork, unstructured interviews and observation were widely used.

Theoretical Considerations

The Concept of Indigenous

The Seng-oi claim to be the mai pasak (indigenous people or indigenous inhabitants) of Peninsula Malaysia. According to the United Nations, indigenous (pasak) means “tribal” or “native”. However, there is a problem in using these two words: “tribal” has always been problematic in Anthropology, carrying certain stereotypes, while “natives” gives the impression that everyone is native of somewhere, especially to the place where they were born. In addition, colonial powers such as the British used the term “native” in a derogatory sense implying inferiority. In distinguishing these two terms, Williams (1976: 181) notes that it is fortunately more difficult to use indigenous in the sense which relegates all others to inferiors (“to go indigenous” is obviously less plausible than “to go native”). Due to this problematic, Burger (1987: 9) provides a set of quite detailed, although overlapping, criteria to define indigenous. One of those criteria is that indigenous people are the descendants of the original inhabitants of a territory which has been overcome by conquest. In addition to this, Waterson considers moral values and relationships with the land in her attempt to strengthen the term.19 According to her, “indigenous” also carries the important moral implication of a unique and prior relationship to the land, in a context
where power has been taken by invading settlers; it is a relationship which resists commodification, because, to its indigenous occupants, their land is not “the same” as any other piece of land. This moral implication of the term is useful, since the critical issues facing most indigenous people today are those of land rights and self-determination.

In Malaysia, the dominant party in government has introduced the term *Bumiputera*, meaning “sons of the soil”, a politically motivated term to refer to the Malays, the indigenous people of Peninsula Malaysia (Orang Asli), and the indigenous people of Sabah (Anak Negeri) and Sarawak (Orang Ulu). However, the concept *Bumiputera* is rather loose in its ethnic categorisation in the sense that, under certain circumstances, non-Malays, non-Muslims and non-indigenous people could also become a *Bumiputera*. The synonym *masuk Melayu* or “to become Malay”, which refers to people who convert to Islam, carries the interpretation that the non-Malays who convert to Islam can become Malays and are potential *Bumiputera*. The state has recently awarded the status of *Bumiputera* together with its privileges to the Portuguese community, who are non-Malay, non-Muslim and non-indigenous but are considered native because they had been living in Malaysia for more than four centuries. The indigenous-*Bumiputera*, who were vocal in claiming their rights over land and self-determination, became concerned about the entitlement to this status, despite the fear of losing their identity as the *pasak* inhabitants. The outcry from the *pasak* people led the state to come up with another term, *Pribumi*, meaning “pre-sons of the soil.” This term theoretically distinguishes the native-*Bumiputera* from indigenous-*Bumiputera*, since the *Pribumi* refers exclusively to people whose descendants are *pasak* inhabitants such as the Orang Asli (*Seng-oi*), the *Anak Negeri* and the *Orang Ulu*. The background of the appearance of this term is not clear. It was probably politically motivated in order to calm the *pasak* people. For the indigenous people, however, their inclusion in the category of *Bumiputera* or *Pribumi* has morally recognised their close relationship with the land, particularly their ancestral and traditional areas.

**The Concept of Rights**

‘Rights’ in itself is a broad concept. In regard to indigenous society, particularly the hunter-gatherers and swidden cultivators, rights can be defined roughly into five categories (summarised from United Nations, 1993):
1. Rights over land, water sources and ungarnered resources (including rights in fixed assets, if there are any—ritual sites, dwelling sites, prepared hunting sites, dams, weirs, pit traps and so on);

2. Rights over movable property—tools and weapons, clothing, cooking pots and containers, beads and other ornaments;

3. Rights over game meat, harvested vegetable foods and other garnered food and raw materials;

4. Rights over certain capacities of specific people—over their hunting labour, over their domestic labour, over their sexual capacity, over their reproductive capacity;

5. Rights over knowledge and intellectual property—over song, over sacred knowledge, over ritual designs, and so on.

Among these five categories, land represents the bottom line for indigenous rights. Land is regarded as a foundation of other rights, such as the right to reside, to farm, to practice social life, customary law, religion, and leadership. These concepts, whether they were held in the past or are still held today, are considered as ‘indigenous’ since the people themselves belong to a so-called ‘indigenous people’. I emphasize the word indigenous because both concepts, the ideal and the one held today, are ruled by domestic and religious values such as mutual understanding, respect and agreement, and governed by customary law and order, to serve the interests of the community. The indigenous value of concern for the community remains, although they (the people) and their concepts of rights exist in the modern world. These concepts of rights basically cover other aspects of life. These rights are interrelated or interdependent with one another.

The Orang Asli Concept of Land Rights

The Orang Asli, such as those among Seng-oi sub-groups, refer to their ideal-indigenous concept of rights as adat manah. They claim the term adat as their own word. The term adat, which is sometimes referred to as pengham or resam, means more than a customary law and includes natural ways, law or order and proper ways of behaviour. For example, it is adat for a baby to cry, for an adult to marry, for the rooster to crow, and the like. And the term manah means old, previous, former.
The Seng-oi regard their land and surrounding environment as ruled by *adat* principles. And these principles are implemented by the Seng-oi through the concept of sharing. For them, it is *adat* to share land and all resources for survival available to them, including economic resources, social spaces and sacred sites (with the exception of sex and reproductive behaviour). Not sharing food when one can afford to is taboo, *puhnan*, and increases the risk that rejected people will fall sick or have an accident. Not to share is thus to do violence (Dentan, 1992). Even more, Seng-oi share emotions and feelings such as mourning, sadness, and happiness. If one of their members dies, for instance, the whole community will mourn in sympathy with the unlucky family.

The *adat manah* also recognizes the concept of territory, called *saka’* or *lengri’*. A *saka’* is a large area of land possessed by a community who have lived in the area for a very long time. They regard themselves as the original inhabitants of the area. The community who own the *saka’* is called *gu*, a cognatic descent group or ramage (Dentan, 1969; Benjamin, 1966; Juli, 1993b). Each *gu* has absolute rights to their own *saka’*, meaning that they are free to dwell, hunt, fish and to use the land, as long as they follow the *adat* principle to share products among their *gu*. They, however, cannot enter an other *gu’s* territory, which is regarded as *saka’ mai*, or belonging to others. This agreement is only maintained by a mutual understanding and appreciation, and supernatural sanctions which are suggested by their *adat* principle. All members of a *gu* have an obligation to act according to these principles in order to maintain their social equilibrium.

In the old days, land was mainly used to cultivate swidden rice and vegetables. Later, however, the state encouraged the people to carry out non-swidden cultivation. Due to this encouragement, the Seng-oi began to cultivate fruit trees such as *durian*, *petai* (*Parkia biglandulosa*), rambutan, mango, and mangosteen in their *saka’*. These fruit trees are regarded as the property of the *saka’*, to be inherited by future generations. Each generation of the *gu* has the same obligations and responsibility, that is, to look-after their *saka’* and to share the products equally among their *gu*. As an outcome of these farming traditions, agroforestry has scattered trees of identifiable kinds all over the territory. Claims to these trees constitute claims to the land they stand on (Dentan et al., 1994). Such claims are actually based on the *adat* principle; it is *adat* for the trees to grow on the land. Thus, the Seng-oi perceive all trees and other beings ‘who’
stand on the land, not as separate entities, but as interrelated and/or interdependent with one another.

The Seng-oi notion of land is more than a means of subsistence with utilitarian value. It is associated with the definition and principle of autonomy and of shared identity. They have symbolic and emotional ties with the land (Carey, 1976: 142). Some of them claim that they have a spiritual relationship with the land in their territory since the content of its soils are the ‘mixture’ of the bodies of their dead ancestors. To alienate them from their land or saka’, means to separate them from their ancestors (Edo, 1993). For them, land means more than just soil in a particular area where people can plant or grow their food crops, build their houses and so on. The concept of land is broadened to include everything that exists on it such as human beings, animals, rivers, rocks, caves, trees and the like. Land is perceived as the world. And its ‘uses’ go beyond economic significance, to include sources of knowledge, religion, rituals, social and political adaptation.

The Seng-oi indigenous religion maintains that all beings on earth (tiik) have spirits. All spiritual beings are equals and their images are the same as human spirits. The ‘spirit’ of dead beings, such as humans and animals, can become spirit guides known as gunig (Edo, 1988; 1994b). The Seng-oi also obtain their magical knowledge, such as ritual songs, chants, incantations, cosmology and so on, through interaction with spirits of other beings, which occurs in their dreams. The notion that dreams are an important source of communication between human spirits and other spirits is also held by the Temiar. In dreams, the soul of the dreamer meets the souls of trees, river rapids, tigers, and houses, who express their desire to become the dreamer’s spirit guide. People regard land as an important source of knowledge. For them, the symbolic power of the image of the path arises from their daily travel along land and river routes running through the jungle and settlement. The land, especially the jungle, constitutes essential knowledge in their life (Roseman, 1991).

The Orang Asli believe that supernatural beings are superior to human beings, and are therefore vitally concerned with the supernatural or spiritual aspect of the land. These people avoid activities which can upset the spirits of these beings. For example, if the spirits of fruit trees get upset, they will refuse to produce
fruits, which means disaster for human beings. Most of the Orang Asli who deal with rice cultivation, such as the Ma Betisek (who are known as Mah Meri), Temiar, Jah Hut, Semai and others, believe that the spirit of rice is very sensitive. Therefore they have to perform various rituals, which need the total representation of the community, in order to please this spirit (Wazir-Jahan Karim, 1981; Roseman, 1991; Couillard, 1980; Edo, 1988).

Since the Orang Asli cannot fully penetrate the spirit world, their religion suggests that human beings cannot look after the spirit part of the land, which indirectly means that human beings cannot be custodians of land. According to Orang Asli belief, supernatural beings can only be looked after by supernatural beings themselves. Thus, the Orang Asli believe that there is a supreme (supernatural) being who is the custodian of land at large and its spirits, including human beings. They refer to this supreme being by various names, which differ from one ethnic group to another, but carry the same perspective of meaning, ‘the owner of earth’. The Batek people, for instance, believe land is owned by a supreme being called hala’. Land is created for all people to use, both Batek and non-Batek, and no one has the right to exclude anyone else from living or working anywhere they wish (Endicott, 1988). Among other Orang Asli subgroups, this supreme being is known as Nyenang (by the Semai), Peruman (by the Jah Hut), Allah (by the Temuan, Semelai, and Mah Meri), and Tohan (by the Chewong).

Importance of Study

This study will, it is hoped, enrich the field of Anthropology, especially ethnography and ethnohistory. It will contribute to current debates on minority issues. The findings may also benefit the Seng-oi by providing a historical basis for their struggles. Further, the government could adopt the findings to solve the major Seng-oi problems regarding their land. Successfully addressing these problems will help the government to fulfil its main aim, that is, to integrate the Seng-oi into the mainstream of society and to place them on an equal footing with the rest of the community in Malaysia’s development and modernisation.

The brief account of the Batek shows that this egalitarian society has recognized equal rights to land among all human beings, and this is applied beyond age, ethnic, and gender considerations. However, the Batek have recognized a special connection between each individual and certain places which they call *pesaka*. The term *pesaka* basically refers to the area to which people have strong sentimental ties such as their birth place, where they grew up or had former residence, even though they may now be living far away from it. They have a right to live in their *pesaka*, but there is no sense in which the persons who share a *pesaka* can claim a collective right, or ownership, or custodianship over it. The recognition of the *pesaka* concept indicates a change in land holding from non-possession to a minimum degree of ownership. There are, I assume, differences between past practice which recognized only communal ownership and current practice of the concept of *pesaka*, which shows some notion of land ownership in a particular area or territory.

The Temiar hold a similar concept of land rights with the exception that the produce of the land can be owned by individuals (Endicott, 1977). Among these communities, people are free to dwell anywhere in the area. After harvesting, the product will no longer be communal, but belongs to the person who has collected it. However, they still have the obligation to share collected products, normally among their family members.

The Jah Hut people also believe that, “land itself cannot be owned; only the produce of the land and things built on it, can be.” (Endicott, 1977; Couillard, 1980). Within any area of land, each individual Jah Hut does not own a specific plot. All members of the community have equal access to land for cultivation, to the rivers to fish and to the forest to hunt. In the past, the Jah Hut had a definite concept of territory, which was associated with a river valley. This valley in the past was the scene of political hierarchy with the Panglima or warriors as defenders of back waters and the headman, referred to as *Batin*, at the mouth of the river. Today, that practice does not exist any more (Couillard, 1980).

The acceptance of money as the means of exchange has had a great impact on Orang Asli such as the Jah Hut community. For them, “money means rice and survival,” (Couillard, 1980). This outcome has led the community to change their perception towards land, which it is now considered as capital. This new concept, then, has changed the concept of land holding from communal to individual or family ownership. In addition, there are two other factors which have accelerated the change in land ownership among the Jah Hut: first, ecological limitations, and secondly, the government efforts to modernize their mode of economy. The change in mode of economy from ‘looking for food’ to ‘looking for money’ has motivated these people to become involved actively in money making activities. Jungle products are for sale rather than for domestic use. The active involvement in collecting jungle produces has led to a shortage of these natural resources. The Jah Hut also grow short term crops for domestic use and for sale.

The government policy banning the opening of jungles for swidden cultivation has given the Jah Hut little choice but to confine swidden agriculture to a specific and permanent area. The resulting concentration on one plot of land results in infertile soil. But they cannot abandon the area, since they face another problem, that is, the pressure from their peasant neighbours who have shown a strong interest in encroaching on their areas. This situation, then, has helped the government to implement its development policy, which aims to modernize the economic life of the Jah Hut (and other Orang Asli) by turning them into peasants. Through this programme, the government has provided them with permanent and long term crops, especially rubber. Each family has been given a plot of rubber field. Now they are small-holder rubber cultivators, with clearly defined individual land ownership.

The transition of Orang Asli economic life, especially in the lowland areas, from hunter-gatherers and swidden cultivators to peasant-type activities has been noted by researchers.
Baharon Azhar, the former Director General of the Department of Orang Asli Affairs, has claimed that the Orang Asli are as dependent on the market economy as their peasant neighbours (see Raffie'i, 1976). This development shows that the people have adapted to the national economy. Indirectly, his view can be interpreted as suggesting that the Orang Asli are dependent on land since their economic activities have changed from subsistence jungle producers to smallholders or peasants. Hood Salleh concurs with this view (see Mohd Salleh, 1980; 1982; 1984). He predicts that the transformation of the Orang Asli into Malay-type peasants will encourage them to modernize, but at the same time will lead to a shortage of land.

The Orang Asli, half of whom live in the lowlands and the other half in the highland areas, seem to practice various forms of land holding which can be observed from their economic activities. Most of the lowlander Orang Asli have switched to peasant-type economic practices, especially simple commodity production and rubber small holdings. Their land rights concept is basically individual or family ownership. But there is also communal land in the territory, which is inhabited by the community. Communal land refers to the area located outside individual land. These areas are claimed by the people who own the private land next to them as belonging to their territory. On the other hand, the highlander Orang Asli still collect jungle produce and practice swidden, but they are slowly adopting permanent agriculture such as planting fruit trees and rubber (see Edo, 1994a). These changes have occurred in their ancestral or customary land, which they regard as their territory.

Gomes’ (1986; 1990) analysis shows that the Semai concepts of land rights in Tapah are in transition. These people have traditionally held the concept of territory which they refer to as lengri. The inhabitants in it are called mai pasak, meaning local people or ‘land-owning group’. In one lengri, the mai pasak are the group who own the land. In a lengri, villagers can hunt, gather, fish, collect forest products and cultivate crops but do not have exclusive rights to land unless it is a swidden that they cleared and are still using. Individuals have an absolute right to the produce but not to the land. People from other territories who have marital ties to members of that territory are referred to as residents (or mai sengrei). Mai sengrei also have rights to harvest fruit in that territory but cannot claim the trees and land as their own. They can borrow land (from mai pasak) for cultivation but have to return it to mai pasak after using it. This practice depends on mutual understanding and responsibility among the community in regard to their rights' preservation. The system provides individuals with the right to use the land in the lengri in the way they desire, but these rights are held in common with others in the ‘land-owning group’.

Nowadays, however, it appears that some people are trying to control the land on which their groves of fruit trees grow, calling the land kampuk, which means ‘orchard’, or in Malay dusun. Ordinarily it is considered proper to consult the owner of a kampuk if one desires to exploit resources in it or in the vicinity of the area. In this new situation, the household is the unit of ownership of swidden land, kampuk, and other properties, which they have amassed on their own or inherited from their parents (called sakaa) for use by the household. Through the concept of kampuk, villagers can claim exclusive rights over fruit trees that they plant or have inherited, which they regard as cha halior or ‘eat alone’, meaning not to be shared. Sometimes the owner may not divide up his estate among his heirs but may transfer the ownership of the fruit trees to his descendants, usually a sibling set, as a group; an arrangement which the Semai aptly refer to as cha samak or ‘eat together’, or need to be shared. In such type of ownership, the owners cooperate in the maintenance and harvesting of their fruit trees and share equitably the produce from these trees among themselves (see Gomes, 1990).

4 This term is borrowed from Rosaldo (1980).
Renato Rosaldo offers another example in his attempt to construct Illongot history. He states that: “My ethnohistorical sketch based on literary sources has both revealed and concealed the reality of Illongot history.” (Rosaldo, 1980: 37).

He begins his task by listing names of places which were involved in Illongot movements, such as the places where they had erected their houseposts and cleared the forest. According to her: “This task was as culturally appropriate for them as listing the place names along any walk they took, whether to visit, hunt, raid, or flee from the Japanese.” (Rosaldo, 1980: 42).

Visiting Illongot sites became the second task in tracing the subject. Rosaldo walked with people and looked at as many former house and garden sites as possible, made crude sketches on paper, and later re-sketch them on a contour map. In addition to mapping, Rosaldo employed his understanding of the Illongot’s concept of time, Pistaim and kakapun, to reconstitute the past. Pistaim is the Illongot translation of English ‘peacetime’, and refers to the period before World War II. In the pistaim, Illongot migrations were due to economic and cultural reasons, such as headhunting raids: rites de passage which require a novice to feud with someone, especially his rival or enemy, in order to become a young adult, i.e. to get recognition from members of their society. The kakapun, on the other hand, refers to the time of the Japanese occupation, a brief period packed with matters of life and death. During the kakapun, Illongot migrations were forced by the desire to save their lives from the cruel Japanese army. This situation led the Illongot to regard the Japanese army as an enemy, and legitimate targets of headhunting. The desire to preserve the headhunting tradition by expanding their raids to include the Japanese resulted in difficulties, which forced them to flee further interior beyond the reach of the Japanese army. In addition to an understanding of the Illongot concept of time, Rosaldo also ‘used’ the year 1945 as a reference point, dividing the Illongot past from one that merged into the present. Rosaldo’s work on Illongot oral history successfully brought out the Illongot historical dimension in the context of Philippine history. Rosaldo could at least show that the Illongot were there during the kakapun, the Japanese occupation in 1942-1945.

The Illongot, as well as other hunter-gatherers and swidden cultivators, are very much dependent on their memory of stages in their life history in recalling past events, incidents or their existence in certain places or areas. The headhunting tradition, for example, which was an essential male rite de passage, provides a perspective in time and place. In fact, every event which occurs within this tradition such as headhunting (whether the victims were the lowlanders, Japanese army, American army etc), feuds and reunions, demanding and paying for compensation ceremonies between the bertan (groups), marriage alliances, their experiences in detention and in prisonment, and relationships with the Hulkbalahap, provides clues to construct past times. Although all these events might not be considered sufficient to construct accurate accounts in terms of day, month and year, they are significant enough to provide perspectives in time and valuable historical evidence, showing that the Illongot have existed in their areas for a long time, even before the construction of the modern history of the Philippines itself.


9 Among researchers, such as Endicott (1979b), Gomes (1982), and Rambo (1985), the Semang-Negrito are well-known as “the most egalitarian society among all human beings.” (Summarized from Endicott, 1977).

10 These people move in bands, each of which ranges from 17 to 49 members with a mean of 31 people per band (Gomes, 1982). Regarding the division of labour, Rambo (1985: 34)
writes: “Division of labour within a band is based almost entirely upon age and sex: Men are the hunters, collectors of plant products that require tree climbing or other risky activity, the sole users of fish nets and spear-guns, and the decision-makers about future band activities and movements. Women care for the children, cook and do most domestic chores (carrying of water, gathering of firewood), build the shelter, and gather terrestrial food plants such as wild yams. Women also fish... Children contribute little to the economic life of the band until they reach late adolescence. However, even when still quite young they begin to imitate the economic activities of adults, they are gradually prepared to take on the roles that they will fill when they reach maturity.”

The Semang-Negrito are regarded as the earliest inhabitants of Peninsula Malaysia. Some authorities, such as an Englishman named John Smith, who was Adviser to the Queen of Patani, a Malay state located in what is now southern Thailand, claimed that the Negrito came to the Malay Peninsula about 25,000 years ago (Carey, 1976: 13). Archeological evidence, it is said, shows that the Negrito appeared in Peninsula Malaysia between 8000 B.C., the end of the last ice age, and about 1000 B.C. (Rambo, 1979; Solheim, 1980; Benjamin, 1985; Taha, 1985; Dentan et al., 1997: 10). Promoting similar claims, Bellwood (1993: 46) quoted Bailey et al. (1989: 73-74) and Merimee et al. (1981): “The Negrito of the Malay Peninsula—and, I suspect, some in the Philippines too—represent a population that has adapted to a close rainforest environment during the Holocene and that may well have acquired relatively short stature within this 10,000-year period.”

The resettlement programmes were carried out for various reasons: internal security, rural development and the idea of the nation state. In relation to security reasons, the people were resettled in order to protect them from being influenced by the Communist guerrillas, whose movements were concentrated along the Malaysian-Thai border. In addition, the state intended to protect these people from being used by smugglers, as well as by the anti-government subversives, to sneak consumer goods and illegal items, such as fire-arms and drugs, from Thailand into Malaysia, which could create a threat to the stability of the government. In relation to rural development, the government intended to expand the scope of development to include the Orang Asli. The government, therefore, required these bands to combine to form larger communities, and resettled them in permanent resettlements. This situation helped the government to introduce developments, such as plank houses, basic infrastructure and amenities, and a cash crop economy. Finally, the idea of the nation state relates to concern about the nationality of the Semang-Negrito, who spend most of the time crossing the Malaysia-Thai border. The state wanted them to settle in either Malaysia or Thailand, so that their nationality could be decided.

Anthropologists, such as Rambo (1988), believe that the Senoi occupied coastal areas during the Hoabinhian but moved interior when the agriculturalists arrived. Archeologists, such as Solheim (1980), on the other hand, distanced the Senoi from the coastal areas and suggested that these people lived in the limestone areas inland. All these theories are, however, still debatable. From a linguistic point of view, these people are Austroasiatic speakers and are, therefore, believed to have come from the Austroasiatic homeland in the Northern region, especially Cambodia and Khmer (Benjamin, 1996). According to archeological evidence, “Skeletal data from Malaysian Hoabinhian sites point to an ultimate Australo-Melanesian rather than a Mongoloid [origin],” (Bellwood, 1985: 89-98). These never ending debates have led social scientists to offer various opinions, such as proposed by Bellwood (1985: 91): “Since the Gua Cha remains must be ancestral to some of the represent Orang Asli they may represent a population closer to the present Senoi than to the Negritos, and this region was obviously never settled by Southern Mongoloids to any extent until very recently.”

In his later writings, however, Bellwood (1993: 48) writes: “I am inclined to conclude that the Senoi are likely to be the descendants of both the Hoabinhians of the peninsula (or some of them) and, perhaps to a greater extent, of an intrusive Southern Mongoloid population of
pioneer Neolithic farmers moving slowly southward into agriculturally uninhabited terrain from central Thailand, opening new lands for agriculture by generation-by-generation expansion as local groups increased in number. The southward expansion of the Ban Kao culture appears to have led to two major introductions into Malaysia: agriculture and the Aslian languages.

Notwithstanding these debates, almost all historians indicate that the Senoi are among the earliest inhabitants of Peninsula Malaysia (see ZA’BA, 1961; Winstedt and Wilkinson, 1974).

According to Andaya (1975): “The relationship between the Orang Laut and the rulers of the Malacca-Johor royal family may be a very old one dating from the period of greatness of the Srivijaya-Palembang Empire between the seventh to the eleventh centuries, and again re-established at the end of the fourteenth century with a refugee prince who became the founder of the Malacca dynasty... Tome Pires, a Portuguese observer writing in the early sixteenth century, states that the Orang Laut followers of Parameswara discovered the site of Bertam and Malacca for their lord when he was expelled from Singapore. Pires also mentions that the second rulers of Malacca abandoned the Bertam court and ‘sent all the Celate (Orang Laut) mandarins to live on the slope of the Malacca hill to act as his guards’.”

The Malayan Union was a British proposal to give equal status to all Malaysians regardless of ethnic and religious backgrounds. The Temuan, through an association called Persatuan Kaum Darat Selangor, supported the Malays for fear that they might lose status as natives and as indigenous people of Malaya.


I consider the census of this year because it represents the most complete figures produced by the JHEOA, and includes the population according to gender, number of families, name of groups and sub-groups, names of headmen, i.e. Penghulu or Batin, and names of settlements, their location, size of area and status, i.e. “Orang Asli Reserve” or “Orang Asli Area”.

Bareh is borrowed from a Malay word, baruh, which means low and flat areas, or the land lying between a Malay house and shore or riverbank, land in the flood-channel of a river; generally, coastal or river-side land, as opposed to land upcountry (Coope, 1991).

This information was gained from a pilot survey undertaken in Kelubi in 1993.


Similar cultural and religious notions about land are held by other hunter-gatherers and swidden farmers in Southeast Asia, although there are differences in structures of belief and ritual practices. Beliefs about the supreme custodianship of land are also held by the Buid in Mindoro of the Philippines. The Buid value land as a major source of economic and social and supernatural independence (Gibson, 1986). Land belongs to the ‘Spirit of the Earth’ or Afu Daga. As long as the spirits were not offended, land was freely available to whomever wanted to farm it. A person owned only what he or she planted, and when the last productive cultigen in a swidden was harvested, all further claim to the plot lapsed. Thus, land in itself was not thought of as being subject to private ownership, because Buid agriculture involved no permanent investment in land. This form of land rights is a part of their sharing practice which is important in maintaining their solidarity. Sharing goes beyond human relations to include supernatural beings. The importance of sharing, whether it is between human beings or with supernatural beings, is believed to produce a transactional equivalent of life, solidarity and growth. In regard to this system of belief, the Buid regard the relationships between human beings and supernatural beings who ‘own the
earth’ as reciprocal. On the one hand, human beings have an obligation to look after land, such as retaining its original structure, and to share it equally. In return, the supernatural beings, namely the Afu Daga, have an obligation to ensure good harvests and so restore stability in terms of solidarity, harmony and health. Therefore, it is important to handle any conflicts, especially regarding land, domestically in order to avoid anger from the Afu Daga who own the earth.

The Wana people of Central Sulawesi, Indonesia, believe land belongs to the Pue or the ‘Owners of the World’ (Atkinson, 1989). The Wana can use the land for swidden cultivation as long as it is permitted by the Pue. This permission is received by the shamans or Tau Kwalia through Molawo rituals. After getting the permission of the Pue, the farming leaders or Woro Tana have to deal with the spirits who occupy the swidden sites by performing rice rituals.

Commonly, hunter-gatherers and swidden cultivators have held no individual land but share it equally among the community. However, there are minimum concepts of land possession held by certain groups in these societies. Among the Agta of Palanan Bay of the northeast coast of Luzon, Philippines, for instance, activities were bounded by the concept of territories (Peterson, 1978). Groups have rights to certain hunting and fishing territories. Any Agta man and members of his family may hunt, fish, trap, or plant. In short, he may utilize all the food resources in the territory in which he was born and/or in which he has affinal or consanguineal kinsmen. Most Agta men have as many as three territories and they can claim such rights in all of them. Nevertheless, a few men have rights only in the territory of their own birth. Territories are clearly bounded and rules exist governing access to resources within a territory. In most areas, territorial rights are preserved on the threat of death to violators. Any uninvited entry into a territory constitutes trespass. The Agta avoid entering unfamiliar territory, and if they wish to do so, they have first to consult the owner. However, the claims to territories never go linearly beyond two generations. Other than territorial rights, the Agta have no idea of absolute inheritance of land held by one’s family (Peterson, 1978).

The concept of territorial rights is also held by the Wana people. The Wana subdivide themselves into four clans based on topographic features. Therefore, there are four Wana territories named To Barangas, To Kasiala, To Untu nUe and To Pasangke. The members of each clan have rights to land in their own territory (Atkinson, 1989). Each territory constitutes an independent political unit. Consequently, land has a great role in power alignment among the Wana, which reflects their leadership system. In this system, the communities are led by members who possess magical knowledge, and are known as shaman. The shaman referred to as Tau Kawalia has a mediation role between humans and supernatural beings. By using his magical knowledge, which is regarded by the community as an extraordinary power, the Tau Kawalia can deal with the ‘Owner of the World’ or Pue. Therefore, the community will refer any problems regarding their land and its production to the Tau Kawalia, seeking solutions. The Tau Kawalia, then, approaches the Pue to solve the problems faced by his community through a ritual called Molawo. His links with the Pue make him politically powerful. Another shamanic leader in the Wana leadership structure is called Waro Tana or farming leader. Waro Tana is also consulted regarding all cultivation activities, including the choice of farm site. The recognition of the shaman is characteristic of small-scale noncentralized societies in which special knowledge, such as magical, serves as a basis for political differentiation. Ritual, controlled by the shaman, has been integral to the creation and maintenance of the polity and authority (Atkinson, 1989).

The Wana also regard land as a source of social solidarity. Rituals regarding land, such as the rice ritual, need total participation from the community. These rituals are events that bring the community together (Atkinson, 1989). The social significance of land also appears in the Buids’ life. For them, their remaining land can only be protected from falling into peasant hands through social solidarity within the community. Land has
become a major source of social unity, which serves as the most important strategy to prevent the peasants' encroachment on their area (Gibson, 1986). Among the Ilongot in Northern Luzon, land has become an increasingly important issue in marriage alliances. Some families who lack access to land themselves want their children to marry individuals who do. The availability of land in a given area has been seen as a major factor influencing choice of residence, whether virilocal or neolocal (Rosaldo, 1980).

Among different hunter-gatherers the concept of rights has undergone varying degrees of change. Two of the most prominent reasons for this are, firstly, the influence of new values and influences, such as religion, education, the free market economy and the like. In many cases, societies opposed these new values during their early emergence because they appeared to contradict their existing concepts of rights. However, this resistance has not lasted longer than one or two generations. Subsequent generations have had little choice but to compromise with the new values and influences, and to realign or reconstruct their indigenous concepts of rights in order to suit the pressures of change. Secondly, the changes have been due to alterations in their environment, such as the encroachment by outsiders or regional development. These kinds of development have reduced the area of (forested) land upon which so much of their lives depended. All rituals associated with land and forest which had been practised for hundreds of years were affected. These losses led the societies to reconstruct their concepts of rights in order to survive and sustain their identity as an indigenous population.

State prohibitions regarding forests, together with regional development, state projects such as logging and dam construction and other forms of activities which have affected hunter-gatherers and swidden cultivators' territories, have led to a reduction of their rights. The Agta people of the Philippines regard this situation as "the major source of frustration" (Peterson, 1978), while their neighbours, the Buid, regard it as "the end of their golden age" (Gibson, 1986). These two statements describe their disappointment about the present situation. In their case, the expansion of development projects and a population explosion that has pushed outsiders into their region have led to the loss of their ancestral lands and threatened their indigenous rights.

In the Southeast Asian region in particular, a number of other external factors are responsible for the change in indigenous concepts of rights from the 'ideal' to the one practised today. The most influential factors are the recreation of the nation state, colonisation, World War II and state independence.

In the case of the hunter-gatherers of the Philippines, the Japanese occupation during World War II was a major factor in regard to this separation. The Ilongot referred to the pre-war period as the pistaim or 'peace time' (Rosaldo, 1980), while the Buid (and the Agta) regarded it as 'the golden age'. In both concepts, it was regarded as the idealized past. Prior to war, they were in possession of all their indigenous rights without any interference or threat from outsiders. According to the Buid, there was plenty of food and land, population was sparse and there was only a handful of Christian peasants to deal with. They lived in harmony, and shared their space and resources. They had a strong spirit of solidarity. This era was brought to an end by World War II.

When the Japanese occupied the Philippines, the Buid fled to the interior. They came back to their villages after the war was over. Unfortunately, they faced another massacre, a smallpox epidemic. They fled for a second time to avoid more loss of life while one third to one half of their number were wiped out by the epidemic. These two disastrous episodes forced them to leave their villages and gave the peasants an opportunity to fill the vacuum. When the Buid began filtering back to their homes in the 1950s and 1960s, they found much of their ancestral land already occupied by peasant squatters. From this time on, especially since the peasant occupation of their traditional lands, the Buids' rights began declining.
The Agta in Palanan experienced a similar fate. In their case, the peasants, referred to by the Agta as _puti_, had come to their areas seeking protection during the Japanese occupation. When the war was over, many _puti_ families occupied Agta areas. The _puti_ took over most of the Agta lands without paying any compensation. The _puti_ tended to predominate in the flat areas which were suitable for agriculture, so forcing the Agta to the hills (Peterson, 1978).

Concerning the notion of rights in general, the Buid and Agta experiences show that the hunter-gatherers in the Philippines enjoyed relative autonomy in their rights, but this lasted up to the Japanese occupation era only. After the war, most of their ancestral lands, including their secret sites, were taken over by peasants who came from elsewhere. Their religious rights were not respected by the new settlers. Activities such as 'flattening the earth', the use of the plough and of water buffalo in wet rice farming were seen as 'wrongdoing' from the Buid’s religious point of view, but these practices were carried out extensively by the peasants. These agricultural activities were believed to be the major source of the _Afu Daga_ or Spirits of the Earth’s anger which led them to withdraw their protection allowing predatory spirits to attack.

The development of large scale settlements alongside Buid areas was also regarded as 'incorrect' because it was believed that it would attract the attention of a variety of evil spirits leading to disease and disaster for the community. This disrespectful endeavour by the peasants denied the importance of the equilibrium between human and supernatural beings which used to be a major concern of the Buid religion. In general, most of the peasant lifestyles were at variance with Buid lifestyles, and, in the same way, also denied hunter-gatherers’ rights.

Further erosion of their rights was due to the expansion of state-sponsored developments such as large-scale agricultural projects, the construction of dams and logging activities (IWGIA, 1992), which are sometimes referred to as 'internal colonialism' (Mills, 1967; Hind, 1984). This kind of outcome is regarded as a transaction in rights. For example, areas which used to be the main source of livelihood for the Buid and Agta are now converted to agricultural sites which serve the livelihood of the peasants. As a result, the peasants enjoy the resources while the Buid and Agta have to rely on the remaining small areas. They are at a distinct disadvantage. They have had to sacrifice most of their ideal way of life, their religious practice, sharing and the like, which relates to their rights in general, in order to obtain the basic requirements for their families and for their survival. Seen in the context of a hunter-gatherer society, the Buid and Agta still have a struggle ahead with regard to the future of their rights, which is uncertain. If they lose in their struggle to uphold their rights, especially in regard to land, the peasants will take over their remaining land, which means their basic rights.

Land is the substantial basis of other rights for indigenous societies such as hunter-gatherers and swidden cultivators. Given the control by the dominant group, the Agta or Buid are facing pressure from dominant values and threats, which appear to be the great challenge to their desire to sustain themselves as a culturally indigenous minority. Otherwise they will be dominated by outside pressures and, in the long run, they will be assimilated into the dominant group. But, if the Agta and Buid win in their struggle, they will carry on with an identity and their remaining rights intact. Despite this, the Agta and Buid are still subject to the influences of the peasant threat to their values. The future of their struggle will be influenced largely by the peasants since they are the political majority.

Among the indigenous peoples in Southeast Asia in particular, land is a fundamental principle for their identity. Land is a major source of unity, as has been shown among the Buid and Wana. Identity is a reflection of cultural traits, especially norms and values, customs and taboos, religion and rituals, ways of life in economic, social and political, language and sentiments of ethnocentrism. Most of these cultural traits, or worldview as a whole, are related to land. Secret sites, for instance, are an important source of rituals, and
ritual is a prominent element in the construction of identity. Land is a source of indigenous knowledge, which is also an important characteristic in the construction of identity. Sharing social spaces and economic resources is seen as a major element in indigenous identity. If their lands are taken over, their space vis-a-vis their worldview becomes smaller. Loss of secret sites means loss of religious rituals. In the long run, they will lose their sense of solidarity as well because they have no place to get together to share their religious practices and responsibilities. The position of shamans as a traditional leadership will also be ignored. The shortages of economic resources will lead the community to change their values and ideal ways of economic life, from sharing to selling, for instance, since money is needed to buy basic requirements.

Without these cultural traits as elements in identity construction, the community will also exist as a cultural minority, like the urban Australian Aborigines. They might have a distinct language and physical appearence as a means of identifying themselves as belonging to a particular race or ethnic group. However, in the context of indigenous people in Southeast Asia, the absence of cultural traits or elements in the construction of identity is regarded as a disadvantage because of the lack of political power or support to strengthen their identity. If the construction of identity of the indigenous people in Southeast Asia relies only on language (and physical appearence), without having strong support from politics, it means they have no strong shield to protect themselves from the challenge of popular culture and values which politically dominate and exist around the indigenous people. This is due to the attitude of the dominant society, which tends to assimilate the indigenous people and their culture into the mainstream rather than to preserve them as a cultural minority.

Among the Orang Asli of Malaysia, land is also regarded as a source of material and non-material culture, which symbolizes their identity. More significantly, land is a symbol of their pride and seniority in the area. The word asli, means 'original' or 'native'. Therefore, if they do not own the land, it means that they are no different from the squatters and their 'indigeneity', 'aboriginality' or 'originality' in the area is meaningless. They have no pride as an Orang Asli if they can not practice their ways of life in their own area. Thus, their identity is very much associated with land, especially their ancestral land and sacred sites.

This discussion highlights the problem faced by the majority of hunter-gatherers and swidden cultivators in Southeast Asia in relation to their land and other rights. It also shows that the greater part of their rights are continuously being eroded through the increasing involvement of the state and the expansion of population. The wider developments achieved by the state and/or dominant groups mean that the sacrifice of the indigenous minority is great, especially hunter-gatherers and swidden cultivators. Their freedom and rights are curtailed as land is taken over by dominant groups or by the state itself for development. Therefore, the indigenous minorities must struggle to protect their remaining rights. One way to overcome this dilemma is to realign or reconstruct (or in general, to change) their 'ideal' concepts from what they understood in the past or 'idealized in the past'.

The Buid nowadays have redefined their ideal indigenous concept of land-holding from 'non-possession' to 'communal possession'. They regard their remaining land as the corporate property of the community as a whole, and rights to pieces of land within the communal territory as subject to communal control. And lately, there are Buids who would like to possess a clear title to their land, as a guarantee that they will be able to continue to hold it in the face of any peasant challenge.

The Buid also adopted several strategies to protect their remaining land. One of them was a 'non-violent' approach emphasizing internal solidarity. Their indigenous value system stressed absolute equality and autonomy of all adults and a need for collective solidarity in the face of external aggression. The creation of a community based on sharing social space and activity is viewed as a priority in order to keep the community unified. Any conflicts
regarding land arising within the community have to be settled through the institution of *tutulan* or 'collective discussion', which avoids disunity. They believe, according to their religion, that social solidarity can serve as a barricade against external threat and prevent encroachment on their land. Therefore, social solidarity serves as a basic strategy in protecting their land.

The Agta emphasized the *ibay*, or 'a special friend', relationship whether within the community or with their peasant neighbours, the *puti*. This approach was widely practised although there were problems in the relationship. The Agta concept of sharing provided in the concept of the *ibay* relationship, was abused by the *puti*. The *puti* always wanted to gain profit from such friendship whereas in the Agta's tradition, wages and profits should be shared equally. This *ibay* attitude of the *puti* damaged the Agta concept of equality in sharing.

Among the Kubu in Sumatra, the relationship with the Malay majority has existed for several decades (Sandbukt, 1984), and is both friendly and hostile at the same time. As a friend, the Malay is regarded as a source of desirable goods. And as an enemy, the Malay is strongly perceived as a source of danger or *bahayo*. The *bahayo* perception is very much based on the past experience of Kubu, who were captured and enslaved by the Malays a few generations ago. The Malay image as a threat still exists in the minds of the present generation, as well as in their cosmology and ritual practices. The current Malay influence is also considered as a threat to their customary law, their *adat*.

The Kubu also relied on a non-violent approach in protecting their rights. They avoided Malays as a way of defence. Another strategy is that the Kubu maintain their relationship with *Jenang*, a traditional leader whose authority is established by the Malay. It was established as a 'post' in the Kubu leadership system in order to mediate between the forest dwellers and the external government, especially Malay rulers. The government perceives the *Jenang* as someone who has the special trust of the Kubu, who is able to communicate with them and influence them. The Kubu, however, perceive the *Jenang*’s authority as an important source for protection of their rights because it constitutes a basic legitimization of their traditional way of life. For them, the *Jenang* is a personal guarantor of their autonomy and of their customary law, the *adat*. They have never been concerned about the absolute role of the *Jenang* (Sandbukt, 1988).
Chapter Two

THE ETHNOGRAPHIC SETTING

Introduction

I carried out my fieldwork in two villages in the State of Perak: Perah and Tangkai Chermin.¹ My main work was in Perah, an old traditional Seng-oi village. I chose a newly occupied village, that is Tangkai Chermin, in order to examine its people’s ideas of land rights and their problems, and to compare these with the people of Perah. My general assumption was that, in the old days, the Seng-oi people of Perah and Tangkai Chermin held similar notions of land. However, I presumed that the different land problems faced by these two communities would have changed their common notions and resulted in the people adopting new ideas and developing them according to their own priorities. Living in a traditional village, the people of Perah might have deeper feelings towards their inherited land, going beyond economic significance to include social and supernatural relationships. The people of Tangkai Chermin, on the other hand, might put emphasis on an economic relationship with their newly occupied area and this might over-shadow other sentiments. These possible changes and differences will, however, be examined in later chapters. In this chapter, I will describe the physical aspects of the villages, which include area and location, layout, population, housing and infrastructure, and their people’s way of life, such as economic activities and leadership.² I will describe these topics separately for each of the villages.

Kampung Perah

Location and the People

Kampung Perah, which in the context of this research I will refer to as Perah, revived its name from a wild rainforest tree, “Perah” (scientific name Elateriospermum Tapos). Perah fruit is edible and is used as a fishing bait. When people first occupied the area, they found it full of Perah trees, especially
Map 2.1: Perah Area
along the river that flows south through the middle of the area. The river was named _Teaw_ Perah (_teaw_ means river or water). For this reason, the village was named Kampung Sungai Perah (_sungai_ in Malay means river). The area lies in the lowland of the northern part of the Central Perak District. Specifically, it is located between Parit town, the district capital in the South, and Kuala Kangsar town, which is nationally known as the Royal Town of the State of Perak, in the North. The area of the village is about 346 hectares. Initially, the area was divided into two, 121 hectares classified as Malay Reserve and another 225 hectares as Forest Reserve. These two areas were then converted into an Orang Asli Area, which is enforced under the provision of the Orang Asli Act, 1954 (revised 1974). All areas have been developed by the villagers into various economic projects. The hilly areas were planted with rubber, while swampy areas were turned into fish farms.

The Perah villagers are from the _Seng-oi_ community and are classified by Dentan (1968) as the “West Semai”. There are about 390 people comprising 64 families. This population does not include family relatives who work outside the area and only occasionally return to the village. The latter number about 85 people and comprise 17 families. The villagers of Perah occupy areas along the Perah river, and their housing covers an area of about 20 hectares within this territory. They live in 69 houses, mostly modern plank houses or _deurg papat_.

The first plank house was Long Dahaman’s house, which was built in 1961. At that time he had just retired from the Orang Asli field force troop called _Seng-oi Praq_, and had not yet been appointed as the headman. After that, many more plank houses were built by the people. In 1982, there were 16 plank houses subsidised by the JHEOA, namely _Melati_ houses. My adopted family was one of the recipients of a subsidised government house. Since the house is small, my adopted father, Derboh, renovated its kitchen to provide more space for his family. In early 1995, the government provided four more plank houses to the villagers under a housing scheme for the hard-core poor, or poorest, families.

Apart from plank houses, there are only three brick houses. One of them belongs to the headman, Long Dahaman, whose house was subsidised by the government under the housing scheme for Orang Asli headmen all over the State of Perak. He built his brick house adjoining the front part of his old plank house. Another
brick house belongs to my friend, Bah Kunar. He was involved in an accident at his work in which he lost all the fingers of his right hand. He received compensation for that misfortune, and used most of the money to build his house. More than 10 houses are half brick and half plank. The floor and the lower part of the wall, to one metre from the ground, are made of brick. The top part of the brick wall is then joined to the plank wall. Out of the 69 houses, only four are wooden houses. One of them belongs to a key informant, the late Andak Jameah. She felt comfortable living in a wooden house because it is cooler than a plank house. The other three wooden houses belong to Ken Entiing and her two married daughters.

The village is divided into three hamlets. Each of these has a different name: Keramat, Baring and Ajoinj. Keramat is the main village and is named after the belief that the area was once occupied by a keramat or supernatural guardian of the land of that area. Baring is named after a tributary of the Perah river, locally called the Baring river. Ajoinj is named after a villager who died in that area. These three areas are inhabited by villagers who originate from different backgrounds. The inhabitants in Keramat mainly originate from three villages, named Tembuh Bekett, Bekau, and Teaw Batu’. The elders of this hamlet claim that they are the indigenous inhabitants, or mai pasak, of the area. On the other hand, the inhabitants of Baring, who came from Denak, also claim to be the mai pasak. Finally, the inhabitants of the newly developed sub-village, Ajoinj, comprise a combination of former residents of Keramat and Baring. Disregarding Teaw Batu’, an area which has ‘disappeared’ due to mining activities, all the villages, i.e. Temboh Bekett, Bekau and Denak, from which the people of Perah originated, are located in the area around Perah itself. Bekau is the nearest neighbour, at a distance of about eight kilometres, or two and a half hours walk from Perah along a jungle track, while Temboh Bekett and Denak are located about 40 kilometres away from Perah and need motorised transport, i.e. motorbike or motorcar, to go there. Because of this background, the people of Perah still have strong links with the people of their original villages, and these links have been strengthened by a degree of consciousness about their common origins and by intermarriages.

The three hamlets of Perah—Keramat, Baring and Ajoinj—reflect their inhabitants’ religious beliefs. Almost all Keramat inhabitants maintain
traditional *Seng-oi* beliefs. Baring is inhabited by only 10 families, most of whom are Christians, while Ajoinj is inhabited by 14 families, who are a mix of these two religious traditions, with six families being Muslim. Since there are Muslims in Ajoinj, the government has built a double storey community hall there. The ground floor is used as a community hall, while the upper floor is used as a prayer house or *surau*. Except for the Muslims, the people of Perah never use that community hall because they do not want to desecrate the Muslims’ holy house. Therefore, the people have applied for a new community hall, which the government has promised to build in the coming budget. The ground floor of the existing communal hall has been turned into a kindergarten. The government has appointed Robiah Uda Arus as a staff member of the Community Development organisation, whose post is called *Pemaju Masyarakat*, to run the kindergarten.

**Infrastructure**

This village has access to the nearest town, Parit, by an alternative road from Parit to Kuala Kangsar. The junction to Perah is about 7 kilometres from Parit along the road. Perah is about 2 kilometres from the junction along a ‘rural road’. When I first came to the village in December 1994, the road was just a track. A year later, the government upgraded it to a tar road running one kilometre from the junction. According to the JHEOA officer, the road was built as a Rural Development Project. However, the villagers have their own opinion. According to them, the road was built due to the 1995 National Election, and they call the road *nung undi* (election road). The remaining one kilometre of the track will be upgraded in the ‘next budget’, which according to the villagers, may be in the next election.

There used to be three ‘roads’ linking the village to Parit town, but only one is still in use, while the other two have been abandoned. One of the abandoned roads was a jungle track, only accessible on foot. This track was used from the time the village was established until a second road became accessible for ‘public’ use. This second route was a logging road. In the 1970s, there was logging activity in the area. The logging company built roads through their area of operation including one which was built near the village. The villagers then started using this road. However, the distance was longer compared to the previous track, and the road was very dangerous because some parts of it were
steep and slippery during the rainy season. In the 1980s, the government built the current road near the first walking track. The road is closer to Parit town and less dangerous than the logging road, and is now used by the people.

The villagers go to town mainly by motorbike because there is no bus service along the alternative route that links Parit and Kuala Kangsar town. Most of the villagers have motorbikes, which are regarded as important means of transportation. Beside that, they can also hire taxis or vans from the Gop nearby if they want to go to town for shopping, to get medical treatment, and the like. The teenagers always hire vans to go for leisure pursuits such as watching movies, concerts, or taking part in sports tournaments, and the like. The villagers have faced difficulties a number of times when emergencies have arisen at night. They have to go all the way to Parit to call for an ambulance from the District Hospital in Batu Gajah. The distance from Batu Gajah to their village is about 45 minutes’ drive; an ambulance will take one and the half hours for the return journey. Although the hospital is relatively near, it might sometimes take three or four hours for the patient to arrive there.3

A number of facilities are available in the village such as a school, kindergarten, the surau and the village’s tar road. The school is a primary school run by the Ministry of Education. It caters for about 56 students from year one to six. There is a kindergarten under the surau in sub-village Ajoinj. Only 29 children go to pre-school because the number of children within that age group in the village is very small. There was a clinic before, built and ran by the JHEOA from the year 1962. It was closed in 1990 due to a new policy that encouraged the Seng-oi to get treatment from the nearby district hospitals. Occasionally, volunteers come in to give free basic treatment to the villagers. When I was there, two programmes were carried out. The first one was organised by the District Administrator under a community service programme called Kumtis. The second one was organised by Christian volunteers. Concerning other amenities, Perah is served by electricity and water supply. The electricity is supplied by the Tenaga Nasional Berhad, while water is supplied by the Lembaga Air Perak.
Map 2.2 Sketch map of the Perah village.
Economic Activities

The interactions between the people of Perah and the Chinese appear to have economic significance. Most of the Chinese who become their friends are met at work. Their Chinese friends always offer them temporary jobs. Consequently, there is a lot of job opportunity, which attracts most of the men in Perah to work with the Chinese in nearby towns like Pusing, Simpang Pulai, Menglembu and Ipoh City. They work as contract workers, temporary labourers and guards. Most of the married men go to and from work every day. They go by motorbike early in the morning and come back in the late evening. Some couples live in quarters at their work place, especially old and young couples who have no children of school age. They come back to the village occasionally to clean their houses and rubber fields. My adopted father, Derboh, works as a night guard in a Chinese owned car workshop in Menglembu, a suburb of Ipoh City. He travels to work every day.

Some of the government servants like Alang Di, who works in the JHEOA office in Sri Iskandar new township, lives in the village. He also travels to work every day. A friend of mine, Bek Diah, has his own routine. He does not like to be an employee in the formal sector. He left the Seng-oi Praq (or the Seng-oi Fighters) troop ten years ago and now does his own work in the village in his own manner. In the morning, he taps rubber. After finishing tapping, he goes fishing or hunting in the afternoon, and spends his night with his family. Sometimes he and his friends go hunting or fishing at night. In the afternoon, he just relaxes, repairing his fishing or hunting gear. Occasionally, he visits his mother in Gedong Batu', which is about 20 kilometres away from Perah. He wishes to spend most of his time with his family because when he was in the Seng-oi Praq, he spent most of his time in the jungle fighting the communist insurgents. He admits that his duty in the Seng-oi Praq was dangerous and risky. As a family man, he was psychologically depressed about being away from his family, and at the same time he and his troop were confronted by insurgents.

During my fieldwork, there were 21 heads of households working in the private sector in town. Another 30 worked with the government in the public sector, particularly with the JHEOA (19) and with the Police Field Force or Senoi Prak (11). The remainder worked in the village as rubber tappers. Derboh’s only son, Pak Sofee, works in the Seng-oi Prak. Derboh has three sons-in-law. Two of
them, Bek Dayu and Nan, also work in the public sector, with the JHEOA and Seng-oi Praq respectively. His third son-in-law, Pak Yan, is engaged in a temporary job. When I first joined the family, Pak Yan was tapping rubber in his late father’s field. In July 1995, Pak Yan joined his friends working at a construction site in Ipoh.

My adopted mother’s nephew, Bah Ajemi, lives with her family and is still a bachelor. His mother and the rest of his family live with his father who works as a Seng-oi Praq in the Northern Brigade Field Force, camped in Upper Perak. He taps in his parents’ rubber field. He and his cousin Bah Dedeck, who is the son of Long Dahaman, always go fishing or hunting during the evening and nights. Sometimes they look for gaharu or eagle wood in the nearby jungle.4

After a year living in the village, I observed that the people of Perah have adopted two major attitudes regarding their working behaviour in relation to their economic concerns. First, they only apply for certain jobs, and will go for the highest income even if the job is available only for the short term. Secondly, they do not want to engage in permanent work, but prefer to move from one job to another.

The people, particularly the men, will only accept a job they like, provided the income is good, and the employer is known. They want a well-paid job and harmonious industrial relations. There are thousands of job opportunities in the town and city, which need workers. These jobs are slowly being filled by immigrant workers, particularly Indonesians, Bangladeshis and Nepalese. The people of Perah are not interested in offers of such work because the pay is just ‘average’. Good pay in this context means a daily income of more than $30.00 for eight hours working time, known in Malay-Chinese as satu kong. They have grounds to have that attitude. It is something to do with their pride. Working in the formal sector, for example in the factories, they are subject to bureaucratic rules and orders that require employees to follow procedures. The people of Perah do not like to be ordered about or scolded by their supervisors. In addition, the incomes are not compatible with the work required for those jobs (roughly about $20 or less for eight hours work). Sometimes, supervisors are arrogant and tend to use racial discrimination against them. After such uncomfortable experiences, the men of Perah prefer to stay home and tap their
rubber rather than going for a job and risking insult. They will leave a well-paid job without further notice if they happen to have an uncomfortable relationship not just with the employer but with other workers.\textsuperscript{5}

The men in Perah do not like to engage permanently in one job, except those in the public sector. Engaging in one particular sector permanently or for a long period of time makes them feel bored (\textit{jemu'}) because they are doing the same thing every day. When they feel bored, they become lazy, and this can lead to trouble with their employer. They do not know how to hide their laziness (or \textit{kicek}). They would rather move to another job even if the salary is sometimes a little lower than previously. By moving from one sector to another, they feel refreshed with the new job and will be able to do it to their maximum ability. Only the old men engage permanently in rubber tapping. The middle-aged men would work in town and tap rubber in the village alternately. After working in town for a while, they would quit and come back to the village to tap their rubber. After tapping rubber for a while, they would stop and go to work in the town again, especially during the monsoon season. They cannot tap rubber during this season because if they do, the rain water will penetrate the trunk of the rubber tree and shorten its life. Therefore, they only tap rubber during the dry season. The young men have a clear economic attitude about working in town. Young men do tap rubber, but for a short time only, that is the time between leaving a previous job and getting a new one. They will stop tapping immediately they get a new job in town. Women, however, are more likely to work permanently in whatever sector they are involved in, perhaps because of their lack of contact with employers and their less aggressive approach to job searching. The women are also emotionally more restrained than the men when it comes to racial and sexual harassment on the part of their employer: they tend to stay silent, ignoring such harassment.

In 1996, there were 13 young women working in town, most of whom worked in factories around Ipoh City. They worked as wage labourers or as production operators. Since most of them worked in the town, the village seemed to be without young women. When I first came into the village, the situation during the daytime was very quiet. There were only married women, children, school boys and girls, and school leavers wandering around on their bicycles or motorbikes. None of them were young women. However, during the feasting
day or *jiis cha' entoi*, which is held on 31 December every year, there were many around. They came back from town where they worked to celebrate the *jiis cha' entoi* with their family. Many came to our house and enjoyed the food together with us. When the celebration was over, the village became quiet again. Their involvement in the labour market in town has exposed them to other opportunities including getting engaged to partners from other ethnic groups.

Apart from job opportunities in the town and city, rubber remains the main important economic activity for the villagers of Perah. Most of the villagers rely on this commodity as a major source of family income. As they have large scale rubber fields, the government regards the people of Perah as rubber small holders who contribute to national rubber productivity. As a result of this status, the government has helped them to plant, maintain and market their products. In fact, there are three kinds of rubber fields in Perah. The first is the old rubber fields that were planted in the early settlement. The second is part of the project conducted by the JHEOA in 1966, and the last is the mini-estate project conducted by the RISDA (Rubber Industry and Smallholding Development Authority). Among these three types of fields, the old rubber fields, which are scattered all over the place within Perah area, appear to be the largest. These old fields are divided into plots of nearly one half to two hectares. Each plot is usually owned by one family. There are a few families who own more than one plot. The project conducted by the JHEOA is the second largest, involving 75 hectares of rubber field.

Out of three types, the old fields and the field projects conducted by the JHEOA have became the major focus for the villagers in their tapping activity or *mutong*. Although the mini-estate appears to be the most systematic project in Perah, the people are not interested in tapping here because the income is not worth it. The project is managed by the RISDA as an estate even though the area has been divided between the 31 heads of households who participated in this project. The government wants it to be managed as an estate in order to achieve higher productivity. If the people tap there, they are given daily pay, which amounts to less than $20. The operational costs are deducted from the gross income before project development loan repayments are made. The nett profit margin is then divided into two, one half for the RISDA and the other for the people. In this project, the people are getting their share in terms of dividend. They will receive
the full profit when they finish repaying the loan in the year 2006. Since the system contributes relatively little to present income, the people have turned to their old fields and the JHEOA project, and let the mini-estate be run by outsiders. During my fieldwork, the mini-estate was tended by an Indian company from Parit town.

While tapping rubber, the people also engage in many other economics activities, such as fishing and hunting. They go fishing or hunting when they finish tapping. Hunting wild boar always takes place at night and is called nyuluh. It is easier at night because the boars are tamer than in the day time. If they do get a wild boar, the next day the people do not tap but go to town to sell the game. They cannot sell it in the open market because they have no licence to do so. They will go secretly and sell it to a Chinese dealer who has a licence. In order to avoid the game ranger, they will go early in the morning, sometimes at dawn. The money from that commodity is divided among all the members who took part in the hunting expedition.

Fishing remains an important aspect of Seng-oi economic life. The people of Perah were once involved in fish farming but the project failed. Since fish is still a main component of their diet, they have reverted to their traditional mode of fishing, or tengroij. This activity is mainly carried out by men, including the young and unmarried. The married men sometimes bring along their wives if they have no small children at home or if they have daughters who can look after their children. Catches mainly serve the family. However, if they catch fresh water turtle or tortoise (pa-ars or bejuku'), they will sell them to the Chinese, illegally, because of the Wildlife Protection Ordinance. The selling price is high, that is between $13 to $25 per kilogram, each turtle weighing about 10 to 20 kilograms. Money from selling this commodity is also divided among all participating members. Fishing usually occurs during the dry season when the water level of the streams recedes or sometimes becomes intermittent. Since the river is shallow, the fish will only live in the deeper parts or geul. The villagers will concentrate on these geul where, according to them, hungry fish live. If they catch fish that are surplus to their daily needs, they will dry or salei the fish for their own family stocks. In the monsoon season, the river will flood its banks, allowing the fish to spread to a wider area that is full of food. According to Bek Diah, during flood season all fishes are full because a lot of insects fall onto the
Plate 2.1: A Primary Economic Activity
Long Dahaman processes latex into sheets. He said the job was complicated but full of nostalgia.

Plate 2.2: A Secondary Source of Income
Tiny sticks are sold to vegetable growers. Although the income is small, it is still valuable for family life.
water surface. "The fish do not want to eat our fishing bait then," he explained. In this season, the villagers who do not work in town usually spend their time hunting or pekpuut. One of my key informants, Long Apon, liked to go pekpuut rather than tengroij because he considers pekpuut as physical exercise. He explained:

If I go mutong, I have enough exercise through that work. My shirt will be wet with sweat. If I have not mutong, I feel so unhealthy because no sweat has come out of my body. I like pekpuut because through this activity, I have to move everywhere and sometimes I have to chase the game. It's like a sport. While fishing, I find it very boring. I did this job before but it is not enough to interest me. I say boring because while fishing, I have to stay put at one place, and keep waiting and waiting for the fish to catch our bait. No sweating at all.

Fishing and hunting appear to be the most important way to obtain a supply of protein. However, fish and game are getting scarce nowadays due to the active participation in these activities by the villagers and outsiders. The outsiders, particularly the Gop nearby, are involved in fishing for marketing purposes. According to Long Dahaman, "When those commodities become a source of obtaining money, they will be finished immediately." However, they had no explanation for the shortage of game in their area. He had no idea of where the game had gone. People only hunt occasionally and mainly for their own family consumption. They occasionally hunt wild boar too, although this game is saleable. They agreed that the game has become wilder and will run far away as soon as it detects human smells.

The villagers raise domestic animals especially chickens (manug), which could be an alternative source of protein. However, they never eat their chicken. They have two reasons for raising those domestic animals. Firstly, they are a good way to dispose of their waste food. Secondly, chickens can be sold to outsiders as another source of income. The villagers feel reluctant to sell their chickens among themselves since everyone is related. According to Ken Entiing, it is socially incorrect to sell things to one's own relatives. When I asked why they do not want to eat domestic chicken, which is very tasty, they answered with two main reasons. The first was that they felt pity for the chickens, since they regard their domestic animals as pets or friends that should not be eaten or killed. The second answer concerned cleanliness. They felt disgusted because domestic chickens ate everything including dirty things such as human waste, animals' dead bodies and the like. They preferred chicken from commercial farms, which eat clean foods.
Leadership

The people of Perah adopted a system of two leaders when they established the village in the early 1900s. Traditionally, the Seng-oi community, or gu, was led by an elder who possessed healing knowledge (or pawang) and had mastered the adat, and was called rakna', which means elder. Furthermore, his spouse always became a midwife (bidat), an important figure in the community too. However, their status as community and opinion leaders are not inherited. When the Seng-oi began to establish contact with the Gop rulers particularly in the early twentieth century, Gop influence penetrated their communities. They incorporated the Gop position of penghulu (leader), which is pronounced by the Seng-oi as penghulu' or pengulu', into their leadership system. Beginning from this period, the Seng-oi practiced a system of two leaders: the rakna' as opinion leader (whose role was to handle the Seng-oi belief system, the adat and other domestic affairs, such as marriage and divorce; and to mediate in misunderstandings or quarrels between the villagers, and the like), and the penghulu' as community leader (whose role is to liaise between the people and the Gop rulers). The title penghulu' was then inherited by the descendants of its holder, following the Gop leadership system.

In its earlier settlement, the Perah population was divided into two groups: one was led by Long Jeroneh and the other by Mara' Nile'. When Long Jeroneh established Perah around 1916, he held the rakna' position, and passed the penghulu' position to his nephew, Alang Tek, whose title was then endorsed by a Gop head of the Tanjung Belanja territory, or Penghulu Mukim, named Mat Alit. Prior to World War II, Long Jeroneh passed away, and an interesting scenario occurred in the village when his position as rakna' was not inherited by an individual elder but by a group of elders, among whom were Ata' Bek Semae, Ata' Ridek, Ata' Wahid, and Alang Tek himself. This was agreed by the elders due to the idea that matters related to adat and supernatural beings should be handled collectively by the elders. Alang Tek was involved in the group and seems to have monopolised the leadership system. This leadership team was maintained during the 'evacuation' period, during which two of the group leaders, Ata' Ridek and Ata' Wahid, passed away. When the people reoccupied Perah in 1960, Alang Tek retained his position as the penghulu' and as the rakna', with Ata' Bek Semae becoming the main pawang.
Plate 2.3: The Penghulu
Long Dahaman (in striped shirt) attended the POASM’s 1996 AGM in Gombak, Kuala Lumpur. He believed POASM could highlight Seng-oi concerns about their land rights.

Plate 2.4: The Rakna' Adat
Ata’ Bek Makar blessing a married couple, Mimah and her Chinese husband. Ata’ Bek Makar was worried Seng-oi culture might be disappearing as it is eroded by developments.
The group of Mara' Nile', on the other hand, was led by Mara’ Nile’ himself, whose title Mat Melaka was bestowed by the Sultan of Perak, Sultan Alang Iskandar Shah. Mat Melaka died during the Japanese occupation and his position was not filled when his people evacuated their village (Panchor) during the Japanese occupation and the Malayan Emergency. When his people reoccupied Panchor in 1960, Mat Melaka’s son, Ata’ Bek Pakai, acted as the penghulu’. In the mid-1960s, however, they moved to Perah when Panchor was affected by the route of high voltage electric cable, and occupied the area which is known as Baring sub-village. During their initial stay in Baring, Ata’ Bek Pakai was said to have been eager to maintain his leadership over his people, and wanted to become the penghulu’ of Baring. However, the JHEOA disagreed with this and urged these two communities to get together and stay under one leader, because it would be easier for the government to channel development projects to a larger and more cooperative community rather than if they were split into two. Due to this opposition, Ata’ Bek Pakai shifted his campaign to a wider perspective, that was to become the penghulu’ of Perah on the grounds that he was the most qualified candidate to hold this position as he was a descendant of Mat Melaka, who had obtained recognition from the Sultan of Perak, Sultan Iskandar Shah. This campaign resulted in a small power struggle between him and the existing penghulu’ of Perah, Alang Tek. His ambition was, however, not supported by the majority of Perah people, finally leading Ata’ Bek Pakai to abandon his campaign. Ata’ Bek Pakai’s surrender was also due to the fact that he and his people were outsiders (mai tlohl) who had moved to Perah, and therefore, had to come under the leadership of the native inhabitant (mai pasak) of Perah.8

Alang Tek passed away in 1968, and both of his positions as penghulu’ and rakna’ were inherited by his son, Alang Gek, well-known as Pertel. Soon after that, Ata’ Bek Semae also died. Pertel faced a critical situation at that time since no elders wanted to become the pawang, a position which he finally adopted himself. Pertel held these posts until the early 1980s when he had to surrender them due to illness.

Since 1980, however, the requirement to become a penghulu’ has changed from needing only traditional knowledge to the need to have modern knowledge. The government requires penghulu’ to have at least some academic background and work experience to suit the needs of the time because all business these days
needs academic ability and knowledge about the ‘outside’ world. In addition, the penghulu’ has to have a qualified assistant. The candidate for this post is required to have a similar standard of knowledge and experience as the penghulu’.

To meet this requirement, the people appointed Long Dahaman, a grandson of Long Jeroneh, as the penghulu’ because he has some academic background (he attended primary school before the war) and has had some work experience as a member of the Seng-oi Praq troop during the Malayan Emergency. His appointment was endorsed by the JHEOA Officer on 31 October 1983. He is assisted by Long Pawong. However, Long Dahaman lacks knowledge in healing and has not mastered the adat, which meant he could not become a rakna’. As a result, the people agreed to redivide their leadership system into two: the penghulu’ and the rakna’ adat. They then appointed Ata’ Bek Makar, a son of Mat Melaka, as rakna’ adat. This system remains until today (see Chart 2.1).

The appointment of Long Pawong as assistant to the penghulu’ indicated a change in the Perah leadership system. In principle, the assistant (Long Pawong) would become the penghulu’ were the present penghulu’ (Long Dahaman) to surrender his post. However, Long Pawong is not a descendant of either Long Jeroneh or Alang Tek, the previous inheritors of the position of penghulu’. This change means that the title penghulu’ is no longer controlled by members of one family, but can be filled by any community member who is educated and has a wide range of experiences in dealing with outsiders.

In 1990, the people established the Perah Branch of the United Malay National Organisation (UMNO). The acceptance of the UMNO Branch Leader (in Malay, Ketua Chawangan) as one of the community leaders has added a political dimension to the Seng-oi leadership system. Today, Perah has three types of leaders in the community: the penghulu’, the rakna’ adat, and the UMNO Branch Leader. Two leaders, that is the penghulu’ and the UMNO Branch Leader deal with outside affairs while the rakna’ adat deals with internal affairs within Perah. These three leaders work together in pursuit of harmony and stability within the village.
Chart 2.1: Leadership Succession in Perah
Plate 2.5: Feasting Day
Cooking *lemang* during the *Ngenggulang* festive. Such gatherings can strengthen *Seng-oi* solidarity at large.

---

Plate 2.6: Dancing Girls
The *peteri* ready to become dancing partners during the *runggin* party. They share responsibility in handling major events in the village.
Kampung Tangkai Chermin

Location and the People
In this research I will refer to Kampung Tangkai Chermin as just Tangkai Chermin (tangkai in Malay means stem or handle, while chermin means mirror). According to the penghulu', Anjang Makpin, this village received its name as a description of tributaries that run together to form a “Y” shape, reminiscent of the stem of a shaving mirror. There are four tributaries in the area, namely Tembeq Labu', Nyengka' or Jengka' Le', Teaw Penaq, and Teaw Krouq. Most of these recede and are intermittent during the dry season due the opening of the area for development projects and the change in climate. The people admit that the climate has changed nowadays, being hotter than decades ago.

The rakna' adat, Keling Nawan, has a different story about the origin of the village’s name. According to him, there was a small cave at the top of the hill, which was inhabited by a tiger. The tiger was believed to be the guardian of that cave and area. The tiger then disappeared, but Keling Nawan had no idea why or when. Long after, the elders of the village went to the cave and found a mirror and its stem, but separated from one another. Then they named the cave and its area, Tangkai Chermin. They also discovered that the Teaw Tembeq Labu' flows from this cave. After that discovery, an elder from this village lived in the cave as a hermit in order to become a shaman (hala'), and was then named Hala' Tangkai Chermin.9

Before this village was named as it is now, it had many other names such as Chenan Gungke, Jengka' Leq, and Tembeq Labu'. The people moved from their old village to Tangkai Chermin around 1984/1985. According to Anjang Makpin, they moved into the village in 1985. In 1984, they just cleared the area, cut the trees and built their houses and shelters. Some people moved here in 1984, but most of the villagers refused to follow the first group unless they had clear permission from the JHEOA. The area was gazetted as Forest Reserve although their elders had cleared the area for generations. They opened paddy fields and then replaced them with tapioca. However, they still hesitated to move in 1984 because they were afraid that the Department of Forestry would chase them out of the area. They had long negotiations with the government, particularly the District Land Administrator, the Department of Forestry, and the
Seng-oi Reserve

Lots for Housing and Dusut (232 acres)

Map 2.3: The Area of the Tangkai Chermin
Seng-oi Reserve

Lots for Housing and Dusut (232 acres)

Map 2.3: The Area of the Tangkai Chermin
JHEOA, in order to obtain official clearance to occupy the area permanently. They finally got this in 1985 through the former JHEOA Director for the State of Perak, Haji Mat Khamis. However, the size of the area was reduced from their original application for land.

In their original proposal to the government, the people had applied for the whole Forest Reserve area of Tangkai Chermin, an area of about 485 hectares. They claimed that the whole area belonged to them because it had been opened generations before to plant paddy and tapioca. According to the people, it was ironic that the government gazetted the area as a Forest Reserve since there was no forest in the area, except a secondary forest and agricultural plants. However, in 1985 the government granted 355 hectares for the Orang Asli area, while the rest was granted to the State Agricultural Development Corporation of Perak (or Perak SADC).

The village of Tangkai Chermin is inhabited by more than 700 people, and comprises 130 families. Out of this number, about 40 families reside outside the village due to their economic activity, especially those who have become employees of the public and private sectors. The remaining 90 families residing in the village are mostly old people, pensioners and retirees. My assistant, Pandak Basri Kana, retired from the JHEOA about five years ago. The people live in 72 houses that are scattered all over the area of about 11.5 hectares that is allocated for houses and orchards (dusun). Of all the 72 houses, the house belonging to Senator Itam Wali is the most beautiful in the village. The house would be worth more than $200,000 and is built in front of a mining pool. The rest of the houses are either plank houses, or a combination of plank and wood.

Since the villagers have no source of regular income, they build their houses slowly, stage-by-stage (or perikgek). For example, if this month they have surplus in term of income, they will buy three or four pieces of zinc roof. They then buy another four or five pieces with the next surplus, and this continues until they have enough pieces of zinc roof to replace their palm roof. They replace the roof first, and then continue buying planks one by one to replace their bamboo or wooden floors and walls. This style is adopted by most of the people whose income is uncertain in the village. As far as I know from my research, the village
has not received any housing aid from the government. Nevertheless, there are plans and promises over this matter.

**Infrastructure**

Tangkai Chermin is located near two small towns, Kampung Timah and Tanjung Tualang, which are both in the Kinta District. The village has access to the towns by an alternative road connecting Tanjung Tualang in the East and Kampung Gajah in the West. The junction to the village is located roughly in the middle of this road at a *Gop* village called Kampung Makmur. The distance from that junction to the village is about three kilometres, along a sandy rural track. It is muddy during the rainy season. The tar road built by the government only covers the main road within the village.

The village is served by electricity that is supplied by the Tenaga National Berhad. However, the villagers still have no water supply. There was a consultancy carried out to explore the possibility of building a water tank at the top of the hill from where the water could supply the village. However, the outcome of that consultancy showed that the project was not viable because the cost of building the tank was extremely high. The failure of that project forced the villagers back to natural resources. They fetched water from the tributaries which flow across the village. Since the stream is reduced and intermittent during the dry season, some of the villagers have dug a number of wells as alternative water supplies.

Other infrastructure available in the village include a community hall, a badminton court and a kindergarten, but there is no school. The children go to primary school in Sungai Galah, and to secondary school in Tanjung Tualang. They go to school by bus. There is a school bus in the village which belongs to an outsider but is driven by a local *Seng-oi*. The kindergarten belongs to the government, particularly the District Administration Office with the cooperation of the JHEOA. It is financed under a government community development project or KEMAS (*Kemajuan Masyarakat*). The government has appointed two *Seng-oi* women as community development staff to run the kindergarten. They are Uda Safiah Dongkin from Kelubi and her assistant, Surizat Itam, who is a local of Tangkai Chermin.
Map 2.4 Sketch map of the Tangkai Chermin Village
Educationally, quite a few successful Seng-oi have come from this village. These include Senator Itam Wali Nawan, who obtained his Master of Arts from the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia in 1993, majoring in Anthropology and Sociology. In addition, all four of Itam Wali’s children and others have graduated from local and overseas universities.11

**Economic Activities**

The people have occupied the village of Tangkai Chermin for more than 10 years. The village is considered to be well-planned. Each family was given about three hectares. Out of this number, two hectares are allocated for the main agricultural project, while one hectare are for the dusun and housing. Senator Itam Wali told me about their proposal to develop the area into an oil palm estate. He and the villagers plan to work together with an established private company to develop the area. Despite their wishes, they have not received any positive word from the government about their proposal. At the moment, there is still no main economic project in the village. They only have fruit trees around their houses planted during their first occupation of the area. Some of the tree’s seeds (benih) were subsidised by the JHEOA and the remainder came from their own effort. They planted those fruit trees in the area that is allocated for the orchard, and the plants are fruitful now.

Since there is still no reliable economic project for the villagers to depend on, they have had to look for other sources of support. The most attractive is outside employment. Most of the youngsters work as wage labourers or staff in the private sector, and as production operators in the factories. My assistant worked as a night guard and as a field assistant during the day on the estate developed by the Perak SADC next to his village.12

The people who live in the village are engaged in many other traditional economic activities. Traditionally, the villagers were engaged in fishing because their old village, Sungai Galah, was surrounded by swampy areas that were full of fresh water fish. Their catches were mainly for sale. Today, most of those fishing areas have been destroyed due to mining activities. After moving to Tangkai Chermin, some people, especially the old men, still continue this activity. However, their fishing area is smaller compared to the old days and
they have to compete with outsiders. All the villagers and the outsiders are concentrated on the remaining swamp, the Kinta river, and former mining pools. The villagers who depend on fishing as a means of livelihood only sell their catch if there is a surplus, or if they are in financial difficulties.

Tapping rubber used to be a reliable economic activity for the villagers. They went tapping in the fields in their old village, Sungai Galah. However, not many are attracted to work in this sector now because it is not profitable enough for them to rely on. Only old people engage in tapping rubber. Since they are old, they can not go tapping every day. Sometimes, they just tap two or three times a week. Tapping is considered a hard job that needs youthful energy. Furthermore, Sungai Galah is about three miles away from Tangkai Chermin, which is considered too far. The young are not interested in this work. Another job that can earn money is cutting tiny sticks and small pieces of bamboo and selling them to the Chinese who grow vegetables. The growers use these tiny sticks to support their vegetables from falling onto the ground. However, this job is temporary and depends on the demand from the growers.

**Leadership**

The people in Tangkai Chermin have adopted a leadership system similar to Perah. They have a headman called *penghulu*, a position currently held by Anjang Makpin. He was appointed by the government in 1980 to replaced his father who died in the same year. He inherited the headmanship even though it is not necessarily an inherited post. Another important leadership position is the *rakna’ adat*, which is referred to as *penghulu’ adat*. This post only needs local endorsement. The government has no concern with this appointment since its role only relates to the domestic affairs of the community. The government assumes that the people will choose the right person. The people of Tangkai Chermin have a similar rationale. They appointed Keling Nawan to carry out this responsibility. All *adat* business, such as handling marriage *adat*, settling internal crises among the villagers, enforcing *Seng-oi* norms and values, and the like, come under his responsibility. However, Keling Nawan has passed some of these responsibilities to his uncle, Panjang Long, whose role is specifically to preserve and exercise the people’s cultural belief. Panjang Long, locally known as Bek Tuyub, is considered to be the *pawang* of that village. He is the one who can cure, heal, and perform the *Ngenggulang* ritual. The people consider both of
Plate 2.7: The Pawang of Tangkai Chermin
Panjang Long is the oldest man in the village, and the only survivor of his generation. He is sad seeing the Seng-oi culture being destroyed by mining activity.

Plate 2.8: The Penghulu’ Adat of Tangkai Chermin
Keling Nawan believes in sharing power and responsibility. According to him, sharing has made the Seng-oi survive as an ethnic group until today.
Plate 2.9: Community Leaders of Tangkai Chermin
Pandak Basri Kana (left), Secretary of the Perah Branch of UMNO, and Anjang Makpin (right), Penghulu of Tangkai Chermin. They hope modern leadership systems will help the Seng-oi to obtain progress.

Plate 2.10: A Political Leader
Bek Lin, Deputy Branch Leader of the Tangkai Chermin Branch of UMNO. While their main reason for becoming involved in politics was to achieve development, the people of Tangkai Chermin also wanted to become political animals.
Plate 2.11: House of the Poor in Tangkai Chermin
The poor villagers build their house stage-by-stage. It will take years for them to have a 'home-sweet-home'.

Plate 2.12: Community Development
Uda Safiah Dongkin (left) and Surizat Itam (right) preparing teaching materials for kindergarten programmes. They believe education is the best way for the Seng-oi to achieve progress.
these elders to be the *rakna’ adat*, without ranking them socially. It appears to be a kind of division of labour in preserving their heritage. The people will consult with the correct elder to suit their problem. For instance, they will go to Keling Nawon to get advice about family problems, and will go to Long Panjang if they are sick.

The people of Tangkai Chermin have been exposed to many forms of modern leadership. While they were still in Sungai Galah, they set up the Committee for Village Development and Security (or JKKK, short for *Jawatankuasa Kemajuan dan Keselamatan Kampung*) which had the specific role of dealing with the proposal to move to Tangkai Chermin. The committee was headed by a chairman (or *pengerusi*) who was chosen largely from among the educated people, while the *penghulu* was one of the committee members. The *pengerusi* was replaceable and was decided on at their Annual General Meetings. This committee has remained until today, with Senator Itam Wali playing a major role. After the people moved to Tangkai Chermin, they set up another committee to deal with the rubber replanting project in Sungai Galah, a government subsidiary project through RISDA. This, the Committee for the Group Replanting Project (or JRTSB, short for *Jawatankuasa Rancangan Tanam Semula Berkelompok*) has its own chairman and committee members. The *pengerusi* is still held by Bek Pendi. In 1993, the people set up a political committee, that is a Branch Committee for UMNO. This committee is chaired by a *Gop*, while the lower posts from deputy chairman down to committee members are held by locals. Bek Lin is the deputy chairman of this purely political committee. Bek Lin explained that the local population was ‘not ready’ to hold the chairmanship since they were still new to the political arena and were still in the learning process. They will chair their own branch when they are ready to be involved actively in mainstream politics.15

**Conclusion**

Both Perah and Tangkai Chermin areas are located in the lowlands of the West Coast of Peninsular Malaysia, which has become a focus area for state projects. The people of Tangkai Chermin have been badly affected, particularly by the mining industry that forced them to move to Tangkai Chermin, whereas Perah is surrounded by state agricultural projects. These development projects have destroyed the area which used to be the source of livelihood for the people, and
have indirectly ruined the environment for people’s former cultural practices. The destruction of their sources of income, government restrictions regarding the opening of new land by the Seng-oi, as well as the introduction of a modern economy has caused people to leave their traditional economic system and slowly penetrate the open market economy. The adoption of a modern leadership system may cause the Seng-oi to abandon their traditional leadership system. However, the people still maintain their marriage adat, although there are differences in pengham. Marriage adat appears to be an important cultural entity, and is the main element of cultural and social identity. The institution of marriage is also important in relation to the inheritance of land as family property (see also Appendix A).

1 I visited Perah for the first time in December 1979. I had just finished my High School Certificate examination, a nationwide examination run by the Ministry of Education. I took that examination together with other candidates nationwide, including Orang Asli candidates. Two of them were Seng-oi who came from Perah. They were Uda Salmah Uda Baman and Anjang Sadang Itam, who became my assistants in this research. The Department of Orang Asli Affairs (or Jabatan Hal Ehwal Orang Asli, or JHEOA) had sent us to a private boarding school in Kuantan, the capital city of Pahang to pursue our high school programme. Before we left the hostel in November 1979, Anjang Sadang Itam invited me to his village to join his family’s celebration of a wedding ceremony of a relative, who married a Chinese man. After that, I did not visit the village again until I did this fieldwork in 1994-95. In contrast, I am more familiar with Tangkai Chermin. I had become close to the people there when they were living in their old village, Sungai Galah, which is located near the Kinta river and surrounded by mining pools. I always visited the village during my ‘fishing tours’ around that area. I have many close friends there, especially the Senator of the Orang Asli, Yang Berhormat Itam Wali Nawan. He had worked with us in the Orang Asli Association (Persatuan Orang Asli Semenanjung Malaysia, or POASM). I left the association in 1994 in order to concentrate on my doctorate programme. Itam Wali Nawan’s term as a representative in Parliament came into an end in October 1996. Another close friend of mine in Tangkai Chermin is Pandak Basri Kana, a former JHEOA staff member, and a part-time painter. He has a deep interest in painting, but he cannot develop his career further due to a lack of financial support. I also appointed him to be my assistant in this research.

2 A discussion of kinship and marriage, and feasting days, as well as additional information are included in Appendix A.

3 I have first hand experience of this situation. On 30 December 1994, my key informant, Andak Jameah, suddenly had an asthma attack. Her two daughters, her two sons and I decided to take her to hospital. Since she was very old, I had to drive slowly. Driving a four-wheel-drive car on a rough track is very uncomfortable. Though the tar road from the village-junction to Parit town is quite good, from Parit town to Batu Gajah it is very crooked. It would have been very dangerous if I had driven fast. Andak Jameah’s condition was quite critical when we arrived at the hospital an hour later. We were then criticised by the Hospital Assistant for the delay in bringing her. We just kept silent, and hoped that our lovely parent would soon recover.

4 I bought an axe for them since they used to have to borrow one from Derboh. They knew that the gift came together with a meaning or a hint that I would like to join them looking
for that expensive wood. Unfortunately, the monsoon season was coming, which forced us to stay at home most of the time. Their lifestyle made it difficult for me to meet them except by joining their routines. However, they did not want me to come along hunting at night because they were afraid for my safety, in view of the fact that I am not familiar with walking in the jungle at night. I had the chance to fish with them, but only in day time. I still did not have a chance to fish at night, or megam, as they kept warning me of all the dangers in the jungle, including that I might get ill from the ‘bites’ of mosquitos.

This attitude accords with the non-aggressive behaviour among the Senoi, as explored widely by Steward (1941), Dentan (1968), Roseman (1991), and Jennings (1995).

I came across this phenomenon during my fieldwork. Wak Mimah, who was working in Menglembu married a Chinese man who was her colleague. A daughter of Long Dalaman, Ken Nisam, met her Chinese husband while she was working in town too. She now lives in the village and is a full time housewife. Wak Nona met her Indian husband in the same way. Both of them still work in town.

This position was not exclusively held by an individual elder, as its responsibility was shared among other elders with the most senior member becoming the head of the group. In other words, rakna’ refers to the head of the elders.

Ata’ Bek Pakai resented his defeat in his power struggle with Alang Tek. He continually criticised Alang Tek, and accused him of carelessness for having lost the letter of authority given by the sultan to his father. I checked this matter with Pertel, and with the penghulu’, Long Dahaman. Pertel was quite doubtful about the sultan’s letter being handed to his father. However, he was sure that the letter that had been lost by his father was the one given by the Department of Forestry (referred to as Puris), and not by the sultan (see Note 1).

Note 1: It was lost during their evacuation from the village in the year 1948. During that time, the British Army, whose troop was a combination of the Special Constabulary and Jungle Scouts, only allowed the people to bring along their clothes. They had to leave the rest of their possessions. “We were quite disorganised during that time. We had nothing in mind except to move to a safer place,” Pertel explained. Long Dahaman agreed with Pertel. The letter that was lost by Alang Tek was the authority letter from the Puris, which allowed them to open paddy fields and plant the rubber in the Forest Reserve where they are staying now. He saw both of the letters since he was a young man during the time before the Emergency. According to him, the letter from the Puris was written in Rumi (Roman character), while the letter from the sultan was written in Jawi (Arab character). “As far as I know, the letter from the sultan was never handed to Alang Tek or to his son, Pertel. I do not know if they received it secretly because old people always did things silently, avoiding cheap publicity. They were not like the people nowadays, who just do a small thing but look for big publicity,” he guessed while joking.

I asked Keling Nawan about the cave since I was interested to visit it. He told me that the cave is nearby Bek Lin’s house. However, he had no idea about it, as he told me he had not visited that area for a very long time. On his last visit years ago, he found most of the cave filled by earth. He presumed that it was now probably buried under the ground due to the erosion that is occurring rapidly in the area.

While I was carrying out my research at the JHEOA of Perak in Ipoh, an officer showed me that the government had agreed to the proposal that SADC develop the whole area into an oil palm estate. However, the government then reconsidered the Orang Asli proposal to build a permanent settlement and develop the area with a commercial agricultural project. The area of 130 hectares that had been granted to the Perak SADC had been developed into a palm estate by its subsidiaries, which have since produced a crop. In contrast, the area for Tangkai Chermin has still not been developed due to various obstacles, particularly the ‘unclear’ policy over the Orang Asli land. Tangkai Chermin area is now
surrounded by oil palm estates and former mining sites, which consist mostly of dry and infertile sandy areas, and a number of former mining pools.

11 Among these, Awang obtained his Bachelor of Commerce from the Universiti Utara Malaysia, majoring in accountancy; Elwalisa obtained her Bachelor in Electrical Engineering from the United Kingdom; Elwanponso obtained his Bachelor of Commerce, majoring in accountancy and auditing from the Universiti Pertanian Malaysia; and Elwanita obtained her Bachelor in Agricultural Business from the Universiti Pertanian Malaysia. Among other residents, Kamelia Alang obtained her Diploma from the MARA Institute of Technology, while another resident, Dr. Bahari, has obtained degrees in Computer Science, i.e. Bachelor (Adelaide); Master (Universiti Sains Malaysia), and Ph.D. (Leeds University, UK). These figures have become important assets for the village to be proud of. I say asset because some of them have shown their concern to help the villagers by offering ideas for community development. For instance, Senator Itam Wali came up with a brilliant idea of how to develop the village and increase the socio-economic status of the villagers. "I hope many more will come forward to help the senator," urged the penghulu'.

12 I was quite lucky to have him as my assistant before he got a new job as field assistant which he started in April 1996. Before that, he just worked as a night guard together with the penghulu', Anjang Makpin. I always spent my evenings talking with them in their guard post located at the border to their village area. Pandak’s wife worked in the factory in Kampung Timah, a Chinese village that has now become an industrial estate. When I asked Pandak why he was working very hard, he gave me a long answer, which could be summarised into two main reasons. His first reason was closely related to his first job as a night guard, which indirectly means that he is free in the day time. In reality he is supposed to sleep during the day because he guards at night. However, he felt bored, even though he used to fetch his wife and school children, who sometimes came home late after attending extra activities in school called ko-kurikulum. He tried to develop his career as an artist, but did not succeed due to lack of opportunities and financial support. Before I appointed him as my assistant, I met him painting the walls of a playground in Kampung Timah. However, that kind of opportunity only comes occasionally. He therefore accepted the job as field assistant of the estate because he had no activity that was financially valuable during the day. He also felt lonely because his wife was working and all of his children were at school. The second reason is related to his economic concerns. His salary as a guard is rather small, and is not enough to cover his family expenses, even when added to his wife’s salary. His three children are growing older. Although they are still at school, their needs are becoming increasingly complicated, and more expensive, if their needs can be gauged in financial terms.

A former classmate of my wife, Alang Jameah, works as a clerk on the Perak SADC estate. Her husband works on the same estate as a field assistant. They went to work early in the morning, or dawn, according to local perception, and came back in the late afternoon. The salary varied, ranging from $15.00 to $25.00 a day for eight hours work. There is also overtime that is paid according to hours worked. In addition to their involvement in the private sector, there are dozens of people from this village who work in the public sectors. Uda Hasan Itam heads the Orang Asli Broadcasting Unit of Radio and Television Malaysia (RTM). The son of Keling, Dain, works as a Game Ranger in the Department of Wildlife Protection. Panjang Ali, who is the UMNO Deputy Head of the village, works with the JHEOA. Tuyub, the son of my key informant, Panjang Long, works in the Seng-oi Praq field force troop. However, many of those who work in the public sector, work with the JHEOA and Seng-oi Praq troop.

13 The demand and price for fresh water fish have increased tremendously, but the catch has declined and is generally just sufficient for family consumption. Some exclusive fish, like prawn and lobster, have long been expensive but are even more expensive nowadays. The increase in price and demand for other fresh water fish is due to several reasons, many of
them cultural. Certain fish, such as *kelah*, are very rare to catch, so the increase in its price is due to its rareness. Other fish, such as *haruan*, are believed to have medicinal value. It is particularly effective in curing injuries, such as cuts and following surgery. Devout Muslims have turned to fresh water fish instead of salt water fish because they have discovered that the sea fishermen preserve their catch with camphor, which is cheaper and lasts longer than ice. The issue raised in an Islamic magazine which I saw distributed to the Muslims in the Batu Gajah and Kampar market place. A Malay chap who sells beef in Kampar market urged me and other Muslims not to buy sea fish, and he explained to us about the use of camphor. He said this use was improper because camphor is used to bathe and preserve the dead bodies of the people (*mayat*), and is not meant to preserve food. This kind of cultural concern has led to the increase in fresh water fish prices, and has also encouraged outsiders to participate in this sector. As I drove along the sand track towards the village, I saw many Chinese fishing in the former mining pools on the roadside, while the Malays were boating far away from the bank putting out their fishing nets. There were young villagers too, who fished at the pools. However, one elder told me that the young were not seriously fishing. Some of them were alcohol drinkers, and were just pretending to fish in order to hide their deviant behaviour from the elders.

14 His successor could be anyone who is chosen by the people and agreed to by the JHEOA. A successor for this post must get endorsement from the JHEOA in order to obtain an official appointment by the minister. Therefore, the people regard the appointment of their *penghulu* as serious business, in the sense that they have to choose the right person to hold the post. There are official procedures, roles and responsibilities that need to be carried out by the *penghulu* in order to liaise between the people and the government.

15 “There are too many leaders in our village. Sometimes the people don’t know who is the most appropriate one,” said the *penghulu* once to me indicating his confusion over his own role. “Is that the reason you work as a night guard?” I tried to check his opinion. He smiled and slowly replied, “One reason, yes! I am not too worried about my people because there are leaders who can offer them assistance while I am away working in the evening and night. We carry the same responsibility. But, the main reason I work here is for my livelihood. The $600.00 annual allowance (or *bunus*) given by the government for the *penghulu* is totally insufficient. I am sure every one would feel this if they just depended on this *bunus*!” We laughed together. This scenario highlights the division of labour in the leadership system of the community, which is new to some of the villagers. The older people, such as the *penghulu*, are confused because they still do not understand about the distribution of power that is a normal phenomenon among mainstream society. This new system is going to dominate the leadership system of the village, however, since it has been introduced and is strongly supported by the government. If the people are not made aware of this tendency, the new leadership system will ‘replace’ their old inherited system. Ignorance of their traditional leadership system, particularly among the young, will indirectly mean that the people will lose a little more of their cultural heritage that appears to be the important foundation to sustain their identity.
Chapter Three

THE BASES OF INDIGENOUS (PASAK) IDENTITY
Belief System

Introduction

In the context of Seng-oi efforts to maintain their land rights, their beliefs form part of the roots of indigenous (pasak) identity. Close association with the land and its spirits is regarded as evidence of indigenous identity (pasak) in a particular area. This chapter will explore this notion in two ways. First, it will discuss the categories of supernatural beings of the Seng-oi and then discuss the significance of these elements to Seng-oi claims. This discussion will, however, begin by introducing the shamans as key figures for the Seng-oi.

The Shaman

In the past, the shaman was the most important figure in Seng-oi society. The shaman was regarded as the intermediary between the people and the spiritual beings. In a trance, the shaman would be transported temporarily into a spiritual world, and he or she would serve, in a very real sense, as a bridge between mankind and the supernatural world (see Carey, 1976: 96). This social figure became the focus of the community, its members seeking help from the shaman to heal their illnesses, to obtain supernatural protection for their village, as well to predict their future in order for them to gain control over their environment.

The Seng-oi have four categories of shaman: pawang, hala', malip and bidat (see Edo, 1985). These terms indicate their position in the community, their scope of activity and methods of operation. Of the four, pawang is the highest rank because this is the only person who can perform the Ngenggulang ritual and deal with the land's guardians. In principal, this position can only be held by a special person with extraordinary characteristics (betuah) given by the Nyenang (God). According to Mara' Semae, these characteristics are given by the soul (kloog) of a first hala' on earth, called Hala' Asal, which now resides in a section of heaven which is only inhabited by the souls of the hala'. Among other extraordinary characteristics are a cool head-soul (ruwai) and a cool body (broog), which give
the pawang the ‘power’ to deal with ‘powerful’ supernatural beings, especially the guardian of the area referred to as Pangkal Tiik, Pawang Tiik, or Mai Dengri’. The betuah characteristic is only given to a special person, who is chosen by Nyenang, or Hala’ Asal, according to Mara’ Semae, and this choice is irrespective of gender. Thus, for example, Bekau village, a neighbour of Perah, has a woman as its pawang, while the pawang in both Perah and Tangkai Chermin are men.

The pawang must also put his or her own efforts into persuading other supernatural beings to serve as his or her guide or helper, called gunig, to learn all kinds of spells, called jenampi’ and chenagoh. The pawang is regarded as a person who possesses supernatural power, full of healing ability, and rich in knowledge. The pawang, therefore, become the most respected figure of the village. This position can, however, be inherited by ordinary people who are chosen and inspired by the pawang to be his/her successor. The chosen person, referred to as ie pangku’or ie penangku’, will be guided by the pawang and will be taught to perform rituals, especially those related to the guardians of the land. In those rituals, the pawang will introduce his/her successor to the Pangkal Tiik or other guardians. The ie pangku’, on the other hand, has to follow the necessary discipline and complex learning procedures, and to make other efforts in order to obtain sacred status. Among other things, the ie pangku’ has to take a flowery bath (muh bunga’) every full moon to restabilise his or her ruwai and broog to become cool in order to be able to approach the Pangkal Tiik. The ie pangku’ also has to learn the jenampi’ and chenagoh and to inherit some of the gunig belonging to the pawang to be his or her helper. The successor will take over pawang’s position when the former pawang dies or is no longer capable of performing his/her duty.

The pawang carries a great responsibility because if he or she makes any mistake which dissatisfies the Pangkal Tiik, this would cause anger from that guardian, and could result in an epidemic among the villagers. In most cases, the anger of the Pangkal Tiik causes the pawang himself to die. Because of the complex discipline and its dangerous position, not many people are willing to be a pawang. Each Seng-oi village normally has one only pawang and one, or at the most two, successors. The people of Perah, for instance, currently have no pawang. After the death of their last pawang, Ata’ Bek Semae, no one was
brave' enough to take over this position and to carry on the Ngenggulang ritual. In Tangkai Chermin, Panjang Long is supposed to be the pawang but his interest in continuing the tradition has declined because of the ecological destruction resulting from mining activities. According to him, the guardian might have fled to other 'cool' places since all areas of his traditional territory have become 'hot' due to this destruction. Even if there is a guardian in the area, he still cannot perform the ritual in a 'hot' area. If he does, it will be meaningless because the guardian can not come to a 'hot' place. Alternatively, the ritual will only attract bad supernatural beings. This means that the people will face a double danger: the first might come from the guardian, who fails to attend the ritual and claims its 'share', and the second from bad supernatural beings who attend the ritual. "Bad supernatural beings endanger human life, and, therefore, should be avoided and not called," said Panjang Long. For about a decade he has abandoned the ritual, and the villagers have been able to obtain a good life and have faced no serious epidemics or death, which would have indicated the guardian's anger. Because of that, Panjang Long believes that the guardian has been 'asleep', meaning that the guardian no longer wants to claim its offering given in the Ngenggulang ritual. Since the guardian is asleep, Panjang Long is not going to wake it up. "Let it sleep forever," he joked to me. Predicting the future of the tradition, Panjang Long claimed that, so far, no one is willing to be his successor.

A hala' is a healing practitioner who possesses a gunig and knowledge of jenampi' and chenagoh, but does not having extraordinary characteristics, such as a cool ruwai and a cool broog. Lack of these important preconditions makes the hala' unable to establish contact with the Pangkal Tiik. However, the hala' can still become a pawang if he or she is chosen to fill the ie pangku' position. Generally, anyone can be a hala'. A hala' obtains his shamanship in two ways. First, through a learning process: someone who is interested in the field can learn this skill from other hala'. Secondly, through a natural way, which is considered by the Seng-oi to be special and rarely happens. In this case, a gunig comes by itself to the person it would like to serve. This happens when that gunig is abandoned or its 'master', the hala', has died. The 'chosen' person normally knows about this in his or her dreams. If the 'chosen' person ignores the sign of his dream, the gunig will emerge in that person's sight, causing him to become ill. In many such cases, the hala' who heals the 'chosen' person would advise him to accept the gunig, and help the person to establish that relationship through a singing ritual called kebut or lamur.
The role of the *hala'* is generally to heal illness. In performing his or her healing rituals, the *hala'* will use *jenampi'* and *chenagoh*, and seek the help of his or her *gunig* to search for the lost *ruwai* of the ill person, or to rescue it if it has been captured by bad supernatural beings or *penyakit*. To seek help from the *gunig*, a *hala'* has to perform a *kebut*. In *kebut*, the *hala'* will go into a trance, during which his or her *ruwai* goes into the supernatural world to communicate with the *gunig* about his or her intentions or efforts. The *gunig* will then do what the *hala'* asks of it, either to search for, or rescue the endangered *ruwai*. Because of his or her ability in healing, the *hala'* has also become a focus of the community. In Perah, many people have this skill. The elders, such as Ata' Bek Pakai and Long Apon, claim their *hala'* position without any hesitation. Sometimes, they tell each other about their experiences healing outsiders, especially the Malays and Indians, and exchange information. In contrast to the people of Perah, the people of Tangkai Chermin hesitate to admit their status. They have adopted the attitude of pointing to another. If someone from outside comes into the village seeking healing from a *hala'*; the first reaction of the *hala'* would be denial. That *hala'* would claim lack of healing skill, and will suggest the person see another *hala*', and probably the second *hala'* will do the same, once again suggesting the outsider see another *hala'*.

The third category of shaman is called *malip*, probably from a Malay word, *malim*. The *malip* is a shaman who has mastered only *jenampi'* and *chenagoh*, and has no *gunig*. An important precondition to be a *malip* is that the person must have an excellent memory in order to remember hundreds of *chenagoh* and *jenampi'*. A strong memory is also regarded as a 'cool' characteristic, which is required by all categories of traditional healers. Anyone with a strong memory can become a *malip*, irrespective of gender. The *malip* obtain their *jenampi'* and *chenagoh* in two ways. The first is through a learning process. The *malip* will learn the *jenampi'* and *chenagoh* from all possible sources, including *hala'* from other Seng-oi groups and from the Malays, Indonesians, and the Siamese. The second way of gaining these spells is through the *malip'*s own dreams.

The *jenampi'* and *chenagoh* are used in different ways and for different purposes. *Jenampi'* are usually used to heal illness. For this purpose, the *malip* will recite his or her *jenampi'* into an object, such as water or ointment. The 'patient' then takes that object, and either drinks it (if liquid) or applies it (if ointment).
Sometimes the *malip* will recite his *jenampi'* direct to the ill part of the patient's body. The *jenampi'* are also used to create intimate relationships or to promote harmony in a relationship, in which case they are called *cenuai* (in Malay, *chenduai* means love potions). For this purpose, the *malip* will recite his *jenampi'* on fragrant oil, which is then used by a desperate man to entice a woman, or a desperate politician who wishes to regain popularity in order to secure a political career. *Chenuai* are also used to re-establish harmony between husband and wife, or improve the relationship of the entire family. The *jenampi'* can also be used for bad purposes, but the *Seng-oi* are strongly against this practice.³ The *chenagoh*, on the other hand, is a type of spell which is used to seek help or protection from a supernatural guardian, and to chase out bad supernatural beings.⁴ For this purpose, the *malip* will not recite his or her *chenagoh* to any actual object, but just to the space in front of him or her.

In Perah and Tangkai Chermin, there are many people who know *jenampi'* and *chenagoh*, but decline to accept *malip* status. Ata' Bek Makar, Mara' Semae, and my adopted father, Derboh, are good casters of spells. So is Keling Nawan of Tangkai Chermin. His brother, Senator Itam Wali, also knew a large number *jenampi'* and *chenagoh*. Ata' Bek Makar told me that he has to learn a lot more to be able to be a *malip*. The amount of knowledge he has now is not enough to entitle him to that status. Most of his *jenampi'* are *Seng-oi* and Malay spells, and none of them are Siamese or Indonesian, or rather the spells of the indigenous people of Sabah and Sarawak. “To be a *malip*, we have to possess all these *jenampi'* and *chenagoh,*” stressed Ata' Bek Makar. In addition to the elders, many younger people of these two villages own and learn this tradition. According to Bek Diah, this tradition is simpler than the *hala's* tradition, and everyone should inherit it. He knew only a few *jenampi' *and *chenagoh*, most of which were for minor purposes like healing a headache, flu, dizziness, and the like. “For a start, a small number should be okay, isn’t that right?” Bek Diah said jokingly to me.

The last category of shaman is called *bidat*, or midwife, and is exclusively held by women. According to the late Andak Jameah, this tradition was inherited from the first midwife on earth, *Jajaq Bidat*. Her *kloog* is believed to reside in a section of heaven which is inhabited by the souls of children. In addition to looking after these souls, *Jajaq Bidat* also looks after the traditions of the
midwives on earth. It is believed that *Jajaq Bidat* will come to offer its help when called by a midwife. In a ritual called *premmuh bidat*, or the midwife’s bath, for instance, a midwife will call *Jajaq Bidat*, seeking its blessing and protection in order to strengthen the *ruwai* of the baby, i.e. to give good health to the baby. Many other rituals carried out by the midwives involve this idea.

The main role of the midwife, or *bidat*, is to look after pregnant women, to deliver their babies, and to look after the health of the children of her community. This role has made the *bidat* a focus of the community. In the old days, most of the elderly women learned *bidat* skills. Elderly women, such as Andak Jameah and Ken Entiing of Perah, and the step-mother of Keling Nawan of Tangkai Chermin, for example, were previously experienced in this role. These days, however, they are retired, as their role has been taken over by trained midwives of the public health service, known in Malay as *Bidan Kerajaan*, or government midwives.

Traditionally, shamans were the most respected figures in the community. These days, however, their social position has begun to decline because of the introduction of new elements, such as modern medicines, trained midwives, and scientific knowledge. In facing this reality, the *Seng-oi* are able to maintain and practice a few of these traditions, such as the *hala’* and *malip*, most of which are preserved by committed elderly members of the community, while the rest of the traditions have been wiped away by the so-called modern elements.

**Categories of Spirit and of Being**

The *Seng-oi* believe that this universe is divided into two worlds, the real world and the spiritual world. Of these two worlds, the *Seng-oi* are afraid of the supernatural world because it is unseen. The supernatural world includes supernatural beings, which are referred to as *penyakit* or *nyaniik*. According to *Seng-oi* notions of the supernatural world, the *penyakit* is a general category of supernatural beings, which are classified into different ranks.

**The Nyenang**

The highest supernatural being is the *Nyenang*, sometimes referred to as *jenang*. The term ‘*nyenang*’ generally means elder, owner, or master (see Dentan, 1968;
Edo, 1985). In the context of social relations, *nyenang* means elderly parents, i.e. from grandparents to earlier generations. If someone has grandchildren, he or she will be addressed by the salutation *nyenang* followed by the first grandchild’s name. For example, if his or her first grandchild’s name is Lujch, he or she will be addressed as *Nyenang* Lujch. *Nyenang’s* other meaning is owner and it is applied to show a relationship between people and their pets or domestic animals. The owner of such animals, for example a goat, will be referred to as the *nyenang* of that animal. This meaning, ‘owner’ also relates to the belief system, alongside its other meaning, ‘master’. In this context, *Nyenang* means the owner or the master of the universe. This supernatural being is also referred to by several other terms. Andak Jameah told me that the people in the past used the term *tuhard*, meaning ‘owner’. The *Seng-oi* of other places refer to *Nyenang* as *Uyaang* or *Muyaang* (see Edo, 1993c). When religious influences penetrated into their community, the *Seng-oi* started to borrow the Malay term, *Tuhan* (God). This term is widely used by younger people, most of whom have adopted it from lessons in school or through their interaction with Muslims and Christians. The elders, such as Ata’ Bek Makar, Mara’ Semae and Andak Jameah, on the other hand, are still ‘loyal’ to the *Seng-oi* term, *Nyenang*. So is Bek Tambun. Although he adopted Christianity, he is more accustomed to using the *Seng-oi* term.

The *Nyenang* is regarded as the ultimate power who created the universe. In the *chermor* of origin, the earth was created by Him and was given a human being’s *ruwai* and grew like a human being. The *Nyenang* then sent plants to earth, which were also given the same *ruwai* as the earth, which in turn was like the *ruwai* of humans. The *Seng-oi*, therefore, regard the earth and plants’ *ruwai* the same as their own. However, neither of these *ruwai* influence their lives since they are not considered as *penyakit*. According to Ata’ Bek Makar, the earth and plants’ *ruwai* are the same as his *ruwai* and would therefore offer no threat to his life.

**The Helpers**

The *Nyenang* does not deal directly with human beings, but does that through His helpers, referred to as *maklikat*. The *maklikat* rank as the second highest supernatural beings after *Nyenang*. However, only three types of *maklikat* were sent by *Nyenang* to earth i.e. *Jaja’ Bidat, Malikat Maut* and *Pangkal Tiik*, and
only these three influence Seng-oi life. The other maklikat do not as they live in heaven and help the Nyenang there.

*Jaja’ Bidat* is the elder midwife described above in relation to the fourth category of shaman, the *bidat*. *Jaja’ Bidat* is believed to come down to earth frequently, especially if called by a *bidat* to look after and take care of children’s *ruwai*.

The *Maklikat Maut* have a power which the Seng-oi associate with death and are the most feared. The *maklikat* work in pairs, each having its own name and own role. Ata’ Bek Makar borrowed Arabic names to refer to these two *maklikat* as *Mungkar* and *Nangkir*, but people like Mara’ Semae and Itam Langsat refer to these *maklikat* as *Sabit* and *Maut*, as do the Seng-oi in other places such as Sahom and Kampung Stet (see Edo, 1985, 1990). *Sabit* was the *maklikat* who was assigned by Nyenang to create death, while *Maut* is responsible for pulling the life or *nyawa’* from the dying body. These *maklikat* only come to take people’s lives and bring their souls (*kloog*) back to heaven.

*Pangkal Tiik* is another *malikat* who has an influence on Seng-oi life. When the food plants that were given to Nabi Adam, or Nyenang Raq, did not fruit, Nyenang sent His helpers to earth to look after the plant’s *ruwai*, as well as earth’s *ruwai*. These *maklikat* then became the guardians, each of whom was responsible for looking after a huge area. The guardian of an area is referred to by the Seng-oi as *Pangkal Tiik* (meaning ‘the root of the earth’), and is also known as *Pasak Tiik* (meaning ‘the native of earth’), or *Mai Dengri’* (meaning ‘the man of the state’), or just *penyakit*. According to Long Apon and Ata’ Bek Pakai, a *Pangkal Tiik* looks after an area which is composed of seven main tributaries. This means that every area which has seven tributaries in it is looked after by one *Pangkal Tiik*. The *Pangkal Tiik* normally has no name, but the people of Perah call it *Datuk Keramat*. In the *Ngenggulang* ritual, for instance, the *pawang* addresses the *Pangkal Tiik* as either *Datuk Keramat* or *mai engra’ de be jaga’ dengri’ adeh*, meaning the elders who look after this *dengri’*.

**The Keramat**

The third degree of supernatural beings are the *keramat*, and they influence the life of the *Seng-oi*. A *keramat* lives in a smaller area within the *Mai Dengri’* area.
such as a river, swamp or cave. A *keramat* is also referred to as a spiritual guardian of the place or area in which it lives. Usually, there are many *keramat* in one area which is looked after by one *Mai Dengri*. The *Seng-oi* said that the *keramat* did not come from heaven, but originated from local supernatural beings. Sometimes, human beings could also become *keramat*. According to Long Apon, most of the *keramat* in the lowland area originated from *Gop penyakit*, and only a few places in this area are inhabited by *Seng-oi keramat*. However, most of the *keramat* in the interior areas originate from *Seng-oi penyakit*. A *keramat* has a human spirit, but varies in its image, from that of animals like the elephants, tigers, crocodiles, turtles or snakes, especially pythons and dragons, to fallen trees or trunks, and the like. The snake *keramat* always live as hermits in the jungle and transform themselves into fallen tree trunks. When their life time as a hermit is over, they transform themselves back to their original image, and move to the nearest river. From there, they move to their ultimate location in the centre of the sea, known as *Pauh Janji*, or in Malay as *Tasik Pauh Janggi*. However, their time as a hermit differs. It can range from five to ten years or more. On the day the *keramat* moves downriver, the weather is often bad. There may be heavy rain and the river may flood. In his explanation of the *keramat*, Ata’ Bek Makar referred to a flash flood tragedy in Sahom. According to him, the flash flood was probably caused by the snake *keramat* of the upper part of the Dipang river moving downstream to *Pauh Janji*. Ata’ Bek Makar’s opinion was similar to that of a *hala’* from Sahom itself, named Mni’ Iharg, who said that the guardian of *Lout Jenajak* might have moved downstream.

Regarding the *keramat* of Perah in particular, Long Apon and Ata’ Bek Pakai had another story of origin. The *keramat* of Perah is believed to have originated from a human being, who was a *Seng-oi*. According to the story:

There was a *Seng-oi* who worked as a fighter in the Palace of Perak and was named Tok Takor. He was a good fighter and won many fighting competitions. When he became older, he asked for retirement but the palace turned his request down since the sultan still needed his service. The sultan wanted to send him to *Siap* to take part in a martial art and fighting competition there. Tok Takor was very sad, but at last he had an idea of how he could cease fighting amongst human beings, and that was to make himself die. In *Siap*, Tok Takor told his opponent, who was a young Siamese, about the secret of his impenetrable body (*kebal*) since he saw that the young man was ambitious, and really wanted to win the competition. In contrast, he himself was not interested at all in that fight, except to obey the sultan. He asked his opponent to stab him six times straight into his
chest, without stopping. The young Siamese did as Tok Takor told him. After the fight, Tok Takor looked as if he was injured, but in fact he was not because he could walk all the way down from Siap to the Palace of Perak. When he arrived in the palace, he asked the sultan to abandon him in the area which was full of Perah trees. The sultan duly asked his people to take Tok Takor and abandon him in the area, which later became Perah village. When the sultan’s people arrived in the area, they leaned Tok Takor against a Perah tree. Before they walked on, Tok Takor wished them a happy journey. Then they began to walk away, but not far from there, one of them looked back and found Tok Takor had disappeared from his resting place. They came back and looked for him, but they could not find him. There was also no sign that he had been attacked by wild animals. Tok Takor was then believed to have become the keramat of that place.

I checked Long Apon’s story with Ata’ Bek Pakai, who agreed with Long Apon, and told me that his late father had told him the same chermor. He knew that Tok Takor was abandoned in the area but he was not quite clear about the specific location in which the legendary Tok Takor had been placed and disappeared.

A keramat can be used by powerful hala’ or pawang as their spirit guide, gunig, in order to protect human and plant ruwai from bad penyakit. However, this is very rare. In addition to keramat, there are other powerful good penyakit, most of whom became gunig. Most of these penyakit live in no specific area and have no specific place to look after. They just lodge in areas such as swamps, lakes, in the air and wind, on the clouds, in rivers, on the hills and mountains, in the caves, and the like. These penyakit are believed to help the Pangkal Tiik look after all ruwai on earth, especially when their ‘services’ are needed by hala’ or pawang to protect ruwai that belong to human beings and plants in a particular area. However, these good penyakit can become enemies too, especially if human beings do not take notice of their feelings. If these penyakit become angry, then this anger can be transformed into disaster. That is the reason the Seng-oi always ask permission from the supernatural beings or apologise to them before carrying out any activities, even if they want to defecate or urinate in an area which they do not know.

In Perah, the whole area is looked after by a Pangkal Tiik which has no name. There was also a keramat living there in the old days, but the people believe that it fled to other places. However, they did not know whether that keramat was Tok Takor or another. The sub-village Keramat was named after this supernatural being.
The Penyakit

The fourth group of supernatural beings are the penyakit. The Seng-oi divide this group into two: good and bad. The good penyakit include human beings’ ghosts, which are referred to as kikmoij. Other than kikmoij, these penyakit originate from plants, animals and the like.6 This group of penyakit can also become gunig, but this is very rare. Among these, there are a couple of penyakit, called Engku’ and Naga’, with great influence over Seng-oi life. Engku’ is said to look like a gibbon, while Naga’ looks like a dragon snake with its scales shining most of the time.

The couple, Engku’ and Naga’, are believed to have originated from human beings who were betuah. Engku’ was the husband and was very sensitive and hot tempered. His wife, Naga’, had a different personality, and was a patient and humble person. Engku’ had an interest in keeping pets, including worms, insects, lizards, birds, and animals, and was very sympathetic to disabled people. He became very angry if people made fun of his pets, or made silly jokes about the disabled, but was calmed down by his wife. After getting tired with human behaviour, Engku’ and Naga’ prayed to Nyenang to be transformed into another type of being. Engku’ was then transformed into a gibbon and lived in the clouds, and was known by his original name. Naga’ was transformed into a dragon snake and lived under the earth, and became known as Mai Kroob Tiik (the inhabitant underneath the earth). Both of them are responsible for controlling human behaviour. If people make fun of pets or of disabled people, the Engku’ will get angry, and this anger will be transformed into a thunder storm, called terlaij. The shining of Engku’s tooth is transformed into lightning and his voice is transformed into thunder. Naga’, on the other hand, very rarely gets angry. Certain behaviours do make the Naga’ angry, however, such as making a silly joke by hurting other people or animals. If both of them become angry, the effect will be disastrous. The Engku’ will produce a thunderstorm and the Naga’ will flood the area. There was a story about the anger of this couple, which occurred in Sakai Jadi:

In the old days, there was another group of Seng-oi living in the Sakai Jadi area. Every harvest season, young boys and girls got together to pound the paddy. The boys were making jokes in order to attract the girls they admired. On one occasion, a boy was making a silly joke about a family of ants. The ants tried to ‘steal’ the fallen rice and take it back to their hole. The boy harassed the ants by ‘stealing’ back the rice before those insects took it into their hole. Other boys then joined in and it became a big joke. Soon after that, the sky was covered by dark
clouds, followed by a thunderstorm. The land of their village subsided. All the houses were said to have been swallowed by the *Naga’*, which turned the area into a swamp.

Mara’ Semae told me that in the old days, at the time when the area was still ‘cool’, they could hear the voices of the people screaming and asking for help, especially during cloudy days. According to him, the voices came from the lost *kikmoij*, or ghosts, of the villagers. They cannot hear these voices these days because the area is now surrounded by agricultural projects and is regarded as ‘hot’.

The fear of *terlaij* is still held by the *Seng-oi* of Perah but not in Tangkai Chermin. Regarding this belief, the elders of Perah keep an eye on their children to prevent them from making fun of *Engku*’s pets or making silly jokes. Sometimes, it was very awkward when the elders could not give an answer to their children’s question about these natural phenomena. Ata’ Bek Makar became amused after recalling a remark by his great grandson: “If the *Engku* lives on the clouds, why is it never hit by the aeroplanes?” He admitted that it is difficult to threaten modern children with folk beliefs, which leads to frustration most of the time. He continuously voiced his disappointment after learning that traditions are no longer preserved by the people, especially those in the younger generation.

The bad *penyakit*, on the other hand, are said to be very destructive, and they have become a major threat to all *ruwai*. The bad *penyakit* will attack and eat *ruwai* in whatever image they are. Bad *penyakit* can became *gunig* too, but only to a powerful *hala’*. Therefore, it is rare for a bad *penyakit* to became *gunig* or *guardian* to human beings. In contrast, they usually become enemies to the *hala’, and to human being’s *ruwai*, which are considered as *menghar* (meat) by the bad *penyakit*.

These supernatural beings, particularly the *Pangkal Tiik, keramat* and *penyakit*, which are regarded as the most influential powers in *Seng-oi* life, have no specific living territory. In general, any one area or territory is inhabited by many supernatural beings. According to Long Apon, there are at least five supernatural beings in the Perah area: the *Pangkal Tiik*, which is the guardian of the *tiik* (or land, or earth) of Perah; and four other *penyakit*, which ‘serve’ as
spirit guides (gunig) to the hala’ of the village, and are therefore, regarded as guardians of the people. These four are known as Siti, Mambang, Dewa, and Megat. All of them have human ruwai, but differ in their image and locality.

Siti occupies a swampy area or bendang, and is referred to as Mai Susur Paya’, which means ‘a swampy patroller’. Siti lives on all the trees in that area and has as its image either a claw (kelarg), or a woman. Siti is believed to have originated from the kikmoij (or ghost) of a dead Gop woman and is ‘associated’ with the kikmoij of the first woman on earth, Siti Hawa. In hala’ trances, Siti always appears with messy matted hair. She wears a Gop woman’s black suit called baju’ kurung, and holds a knife in one of her hands. She is believed to be the source of skin diseases such as ulcers on the skin or syphilitic ulcers, called tukak. She is also the source of mental sickness. The second penyakit, Mambang, occupies the highest trees in the swampy area, and is referred to as Mai Lemug Jehu’ (meaning ‘the people of the upper tree’). He has two images too: either a kelarg, or a man wearing a teluk belanga suit, a suit worn by a Gop male. Like Siti, Mambang can create diseases like mental sickness or madness.

The third penyakit, Dewa, occupies the sky, living especially on clouds, but sometimes on the upper part of a tree. Its appearance on the tree led the people of Perah to refer to this penyakit as the Mai Lemug Jehu’. Occasionally, Dewa patrols swampy areas. Dewa’s image is either a gibbon (herl) or an old man. If the latter, he wears a long robe (as is worn by haji), and a turban on his head. He is said to be the source of headaches, dizziness, and the like. The last penyakit, Megat, looks either like a herl or a layman with no specific style of dress. He is also referred to as Mai Lemug Jehu’. Megat occupies the upper part of trees in no specific location and occasionally passes throughout the Perah area. Dewa and Megat are considered to be the most dangerous penyakit, especially if they are in their herl image. While they are in this image, their reactions are also like herl, which are very aggressive and violent. They will attack all ruwai images that they find on their way, especially weak ruwai, and make their victims die on the spot.

Although Siti, Mambang, Dewa, and Megat are used by hala’ as gunig, and are regarded as guardians, the ‘attitude’ of these penyakit toward human beings,
according to Long Apon, is ambiguous. They could be good, or bad, depending on the nature of the human’s relation with them.\textsuperscript{7}

The people in Tangkai Chermin possess the same beliefs as the people of Perah since they originated from the same roots. They believe that the tiger which used to live in the cave on the hill of Tangkai Chermin was a \textit{keramat}, which later fled from the area. The \textit{Mai Dengri}’ were also believed to have fled from the area due to the destruction of their environment near their old village, Sungai Galah, as well as Tangkai Chermin. The people still believe that other supernatural beings like \textit{gunig}, \textit{kikmoij} and other \textit{keramat} and \textit{nyaniik} still ‘exist’ around them. The \textit{hala}’ of that village still have their connection with those supernatural beings, from whom they draw the healing powers that they possess. However, the \textit{pawang} of the village, Panjang Long, refused to talk more about this since he was not quite in touch with those superhuman beings. According to him, if we pronounce their name, it is the same as calling them or waking them up from their sleep. When they wake up, they will come to us because they think that we called them. When they come, they ask for things which we cannot afford in today’s situation. This can become a big problem to the village, especially if the supernatural being becomes angry. As a researcher, I had to respect that opinion, especially after realising that I am not qualified to be a future \textit{pawang}. To be a \textit{pawang}, I would have to have a powerful memory, which I have not, in order to remember all the charms and ritual songs.

\textbf{Supernatural Beings and Land Rights}

The people of Perah have a structured explanation about the supernatural aspects of land in its relation with the afterlife. During the funerals of Andak Jameah and Itam Langsat, I had the opportunity to ask the elders about the ultimate fate of humans after death because the time was right. During Itam Langsat’s funeral in particular, I was lucky to be with Bek Tambun and Bek Gimbol, who were keen to satisfy my interest. Jokingly, but intentionally I encouraged the elders to talk about the theme. My adopted father, together with Bek Gimbol and Bek Tambun, came up with interesting stories in regard to \textit{Seng-oi} notions of the land’s spirituality. According to them, a graveyard is the \textit{dengri}' for the dead. They spoke of several stories which happened in the old days.
One of the stories was about a man who went into a ghostly (*kikmoij*) village. According to the story:

A long time ago, there was a young *Seng-oi* man who had a good *Gop* friend. His *Gop* friend had a deep interest in cock fighting and the *Seng-oi* man always accompanied him to cock fights. Sometimes, the *Seng-oi* left his lovely wife in the village with his parents-in-law for weeks and months just to attend cock fighting which might be organised far away from the village. If his friend's cock won, his friend would give him some gift such as cloth or metal machetes and food for his family. On one of his trips, his wife died at home. They came back after his wife's *nambak* day, the ritual which is held seven days after death. The husband became very very sad. One night, he went to his wife's grave and expressed his sadness and loneliness. Suddenly, the top part of his wife's grave opened. His wife came out and welcomed him to her house. The husband followed his lovely wife. He found the inside part of the grave was full of beautiful houses. However, their world was opposite to the real world. During the day, which is night to the real world, his wife went about looking for food. She came back in the evening, which is morning in the real world, with masses of food, mostly fruit. During her absence from home, she asked her husband to stay at home because he still did not belong to her world. If he tried to go around the village, the people of his wife's village would chase and attack him because they had never seen him before. She also did not allow her husband to climb up onto the roof because if he did, he would go back to his real world. They would be separated once again, and would have no second chance to met one another except in her husband's dream. One day, the husband felt bored and went up to the roof. Suddenly his wife's village disappeared from his view and he found himself sitting on his wife's grave. The people of his village, who had looked for him, were surprised when suddenly they found him sitting on his wife's grave. The villagers had looked for him for many days around the area, including his wife's grave, but found nothing.

After they finished this story, my adopted father and Bek Tambun continued with another story about a man from their village who disappeared in a place called *Rengok*.

This story of Rengok happened a long time ago (*manah entem*). Rengok is the name of a swampy area. It was named after a *Seng-oi* who disappeared in that swamp. It is located quite far from Perah, but is regularly visited by the people to fish. According to the story:

In the old days, the people seldom went to Rengok since Perah river was still rich with fish. Only a middle aged man, named Rengok, liked to fish there because he found the area supernaturally suited his mind. On night, Rengok dreamed that the guardian of that swamp, who was a woman, wanted to marry him. The next day he looked unwell but still decided to fish at that swamp. He told his wife that he wanted to go *dendep*, a term referring to an activity in which the people have to spend one or more nights outside the village, particularly on a fishing or hunting trip. In the old days, there was no bicycle or motor transport available. The
people had to walk to the fishing or hunting area, which sometimes took a whole
day to reach. For this kind of trip, they had to spend their nights in the jungle.

Before Rengok left home, he told his wife that he might never return. His wife
thought that her husband was just joking. However, his young son realised that his
father was acting unusually, and noticed that there was something wrong with his
father’s words. His son decided to come along with him. When they arrived at
the site, they built their hut. At first, his son fished near to him, but they caught
no fish. Then his son moved a little further from him. Not long after that, Rengok
heard the voice of the woman who had appeared in his dream, and she identified
herself as the supernatural guardian of that swamp. The woman asked him to
come near her. In a trance-like state, Rengok went into the water, and swam into
the middle of the swamp. His son realised that something had gone wrong with
his father, and asked him to come back. However, Rengok just ignored his son
and asked him not to come nearer. He also asked his son to go home and tell his
mother that he would reside in that swamp permanently. After that, he
disappeared from his son’s view.

In an ordinary case, a person who disappeared like this would always be regarded
as keramat, but in this case, Rengok was not. I then asked why Rengok did not
become a keramat. The elders just replied that they did not know.

They then told me another story about the disappearance of a woman, Amo’ Ken
Pertel, of their village. She had also disappeared, probably in 1975, in a swampy
area called Jenalek, which is located between their village and Bekau. According
to the story:

Amo’ Ken Pertel used to have a penyakit of a dragon snake as her gunig. However, when she became older, she tried to abandon her gunig. This was believed to have caused the gunig to be angry at her, as a result of which it might ‘eat’ her at any time. In addition, she had an unusual characteristic. Although she walked non-stop to and fro between Perah and Bekau to visit her relatives in these two villages, she never looked tired. On her last journey to Bekau, she acted abnormally, since she wore all her jewellery. She had never done that before because she was afraid the Gop would rob her. On that day, she walked early in the morning with a few of her relatives. In the middle of her journey she felt extremely hot, and stopped at the swamp to take a bath. Her relatives stopped quite far from the swamp because they thought the woman would feel embarrassed if they stared at her undressed. After waiting for quite some time, the relatives wondered why the woman was taking so long. Then, one of her relatives went to check on the old woman at the swamp, and she found that she was not there. They suspected that she had drowned, although the place where she had taken her bath was shallow. All of her relatives got into the water to look for her, but they found no body in the swamp. Some of them went back to the village and asked for a bigger search party. After a long search, they presumed that the woman had disappeared or nyeb.

In this case, the people believed that the woman had been swallowed by her
gunig and therefore she had not become a keramat. A friend of mine, Bek Diah,
joked that the body of that woman might have been eaten by a lizard or crocodile, but according to Bek Gimbol, the area had no crocodiles. Many more guesses were then made by the youngsters about her disappearance.

The essence of these stories is that the people of Perah believe these places, i.e. Rengok and Jenalek, are the resting places of their dead relatives, and their kikmoij are regarded as the guardians of these places. Such beliefs lead the Seng-oi to adopt a degree of connection with these areas, which they claim as part of their cultural heritage. This suggests that the claim over pasak identity goes beyond the living world to include links with the spiritual element of the land. These accounts of ancestral ties show that the Seng-oi have claimed a degree of spiritual affiliation in the negotiation of their pasak identity, in which they regard their inherited land as a part of their religious and spiritual property.

**Human Components and Land Rights**

When Bek Tambun and my adopted father finished their story, I asked them about what would have happened if the husband in their first story had not returned home. They said that the husband would have died, but through an unusual process of death which they called nyeb or raib (from the Malay, ghaib, which means ‘to disappear mysteriously’). That kind of tragedy frequently happened in the past. Sometimes, while people were hunting in the jungle, they found a dead friend, followed their dead friend to his dengri, and then disappeared. That is the reason the elders advised people to go hunting in a group. Then I asked them another question about what the husband had actually met in his wife’s grave, was it his wife’s soul (kloog) or her ghost (kikmoij). According to my adopted father, the husband had actually met his wife’s kikmoij and not her kloog. His wife’s village was also a kikmoij village. Her kloog had been taken up to heaven by Nyenang’s helpers, called Malikat Maut, on the day she died. The elders then described the components that constitute a living human being.

According to the elder of Perah, a human being is composed of four elements. Three of the components are invisible, i.e. the heart soul (kloog or nyawa’), the spirit or head soul (ruwai), and the body’s supernatural partner known as shadow soul (worg). Only one element, i.e. the body (broog), is a visible component. Out of these invisible elements, kloog and worg are immortal, while the ruwai is
not. The only visible component, broog, does not die but is transformed into its origin, that is the tiik. When a human being dies, his or her kloog is brought back to heaven. The ruwai dies immediately after the kloog is taken away from its broog. Sometimes the ruwai dies first, eaten by nyaniik or penyakit before its kloog is brought to heaven. In this case, the person would faint, with his or her nyawa\' remaining in the broog which, however, would become very weak. The person would not be breathing, but the beat of his or her arterial pulse, which is strongly linked with the nyawa\', would continue. The person would stop breathing when his or her kloog was taken away by the Malikat Maut.

A ruwai varies in its status and image. It has seven basic images. They are bird, chicken, turtle, goat (or deer, pig, or similar animal), human being, tiger (or bear, wild buffalo, or similar animal), and elephant. This arrangement of ruwai images ranges from the weakest to the strongest respectively. Four images which are considered weak are bird, chicken, turtle and goat, while the human being, tiger and elephant are considered strong. Children’s ruwai belong to the weakest range, and look like a bird, which attracts the penyakit to eat it. The penyakit are afraid to interfere with the stronger ruwai because they would fight back. When a person sleeps, his or her ruwai may leave the body at the forehead and travel around. Its experience is transformed into a person’s dream. The elders said that if we dream of fighting with other creatures or enemies, we have to struggle until we win the fight. If we are defeated and get killed, it means that our ruwai has been killed too, and in the real sense, we may also be dying.

Another supernatural component of human life is worg (shadow), a supernatural partner of broog. Worg is also known as maklikat broog or maklikat ja-ag. It is said to forever stand side-by-side with broog and to ‘imitate’ everything the broog does: walking, sitting, diving, sleeping, and so on. According to Bek Tambun, it is just like a mirror-image. When humans die, their worg become the kikmoij. The kikmoij is considered to be a good supernatural being compared to a nyaniik, which is bad. “Does the kikmoij attack and eat human ruwai?” I asked them. Bek Tambun answered that the kikmoij and other good nyaniik do not eat, or even interfere with, human ruwai. Normally the kikmoij eats fruit. However, sometimes they make a mistake, especially when a ruwai’s image look like their food, such birds and chickens. That is the reason people do not allow small
children, whose ruwai are weak, to come close to a dead body or to visit a graveyard.

In general, the Seng-oi also believe that graves are the houses of their dead relatives and that the graveyard is the village of their relatives’ or families’ penyakit or kikmoij. The kikmoij can also be employed by the hala’ as their spirit guides or gunig, and are believed to help to protect human beings from other aggressive or bad penyakit. This idea or belief has once again created a strong link between the people and their area. Some elders like Bah Pertel hope to be buried in the area to join their family members and relatives in the afterworld there. Others like Ata’ Bek Pakai, who is a joker, said he would not mind where he was buried because his kikmoij could visit his relatives just by flying. As a hala’, he could call his gunig, and the gunig would arrive in no time. Based on his experience in shamanism, he presumed that when he died, his kikmoij could do the same thing and would have no problem moving anywhere it liked, including visiting his family. But then he told me that, if possible, he would like to become a part of the soil or tiik of Perah because his father was buried there.9

The body or broog is the only visible component of human beings. Broog is regarded as a shell (hoq) to ruwai and kloog. If a human being dies, the broog goes back to its origin, that is, it is absorbed (selasat) into the earth. Since earth and the human body became selasat, the people consider the earth to be part of the human body and believe that the earth possesses human ruwai. They have a strong feeling towards, and family ties with the land in their area because they say that the earth partly originated from the bodies of their ancestors and other members of their community who died and were buried there. Consequently, the Seng-oi consider the land of their area to be part of their family and their life. As told in their chermor, the earth is considered to be the same as a human being, since both were created by Nyenang, possess similar ruwai and went through the same growing process. The only difference is that the earth has a much much longer life span than a human being, probably hundreds of millions of years, or bejuta tawon. They also believe that the earth nowadays is old and is hurt as it cannot cope with unkind human behaviour. The elders said that people nowadays are not sensitive to looking after the earth’s life, and may ruin it. If human beings are not aware of this, the earth may die soon, and it might not

80
reach the age that it is supposed to, which is referred to by the Seng-oi as *chenok mol soq* (the grandchildren at the tip of a hair).\(^10\)

The Seng-oi have a clearer concept of *broog*, which is rooted in the belief that the *Nyenang* created the earth and all other living things, including human beings, from the same ingredients. When these creations die, they will go back to their origin, the soil. In regard to this belief, the Seng-oi do not consider death as the end of life. They refer to death as *chiip* or *ed* (which means 'go') or *jug* (which means 'return' or 'go home'), meaning that the humans or other creations return to their origin (see Edo, 1993b; 1993c). This belief once again creates a strong link between the people and their local area, as they consider the *behumi’* (which means an area of *tiik*) in their area originated from the bodies of their dead family members which have been absorbed (*selasat*) by the previous *tiik* to become one mixture.

The elders, like the late Itam Langsat and Andak Jameah, and the *hala’* in particular, had a strong love for their home land area as they regarded it as part of their family or relatives. This kind of feeling based on family links is also found among the Seng-oi in other areas, such as in the Warr territory of Batang Padang. The people of these areas fought for their land for economic, social, and political reasons in addition to spiritual reasons. According to Bah Tilot, the *Penghulu’* of Rensaak (see Edo, Forthcoming),

> Land in this area is formed from our own flesh and our own blood. The bodies of all our ancestors were buried in this land and they rot and become part of the land. Consequently, the land has become part of our families and it is our duty to take care of it in the same way that it has taken care of us all this time. There has to be a harmonious relationship between us and the land.

Andak Jameah agreed with this sentiment and considered that the *behumi’* of Perah had not only been *selasat* with the bodies of the dead but also included all the people who were born in the village and are still alive. As a former traditional mid-wife, she explained that during their delivery, the blood of these people was ‘spilt’ on the *behumi’* (soil) of Perah and their afterbirth (*uri’*) were also buried in the *behumi’* of Perah. Andak Jameah’s claim is also related to another cultural concept called *sech-behiib*.
The concept *sech-behiib* (in Malay, *darah-daging*) means body and blood. The *Seng-oi* regard the *tiik* (soil) in their area as a part of their *sech-behiib* because it has *selasat* with their body and blood. According to this perspective, people originate from the body and blood of their father and mother, and so continue their parents’ body and blood. Even when people die, since their body and blood become the soil of their area, their living relations’ links with them therefore continue, now directly through the soil. This leads the people to regard the *tiik* of the area in which they live, which refers to both soil and space, as their *sech-behiib*.

**Conclusion**

*Seng-oi* beliefs provide a substantial basis for *Seng-oi* claims to *pasak* identity. They highlight a strong link between the *Seng-oi* people and their land and its supernatural elements. This basis illustrates the intimate link between the people and the *behumi* at large, since the *Seng-oi* claims over land as soil and as space are interrelated. These are then strengthened by other concepts, such as *sech-behiib*, which once again associates the people with *behumi* and provides the *Seng-oi* with a *pasak* identity in a particular area. The *pasak* identity then links the *Seng-oi* back to a strong association with the *behumi*, which legitimates the significance of the concept *sech-behiib*. This is supported by the concept of indigenous (*pasak*) itself, which carries the important moral implication of a unique and prior relationship with the land (see Durning, 1992).

---

1 I asked Ata’ Bek Makar how he and other *hala* knew about these supernatural beings. He told me that the *hala* or *pawang* gained their knowledge from their past experiences, dreams and stories from the previous *hala* from whom they learnt and inherited shamanship. He added that *hala* dreams and lay person’s dreams are different, although both involve the spirit’s journey. In his dream, the *hala* spirit (*ruwai*) is guided by his *gunig* helper, who will guide the *hala*’s *ruwai* to search for new knowledge such as *jenampi*, *chenagoh*, or ritual songs. In lay people’s dreams, their *ruwai* are not guided by any helper, but are on their own journey. *Hala* are knowledgeable persons and have become important figures in the community, not only for their *jampi* and *chenagoh* but as a source of knowledge and information. However, the *hala* will only tell a story to people who are interested in shamanism, or to people who can be trusted to preserve the culture for the good of the community.

2 A researcher will face a similar situation: one *hala* will suggest he/she go to another, the second will do the same, and so on. In this way, they indirectly reveal that there are many *hala* in the village.

3 A bad *malip* (and *hala*) will use the *jenampi* to destroy an ‘enemy’. For this purpose, the *malip* (and *hala*) will steal their enemy’s possession, such as a shirt, and put destructive
jenampi' on it, returning it secretly to the enemy. The targeted person will get sick or die the moment the shirt is put on. In addition, there are many other ways of applying destructive jenampi'.

The pawang also use chenagoh to call the Pangkal Tiik in the Ngenggulang rituals.

While I was waiting for the approval of my visa, a flash flood occurred in Dipang river, killing 35 Seng oi of Sahom village and six Chinese who ran a tiger prawn farm six kilometres down stream. The tragedy occurred in the durian season. A month before the tragedy, I visited my uncle’s orchard in Teaw Peur, an extension of Sahom. I visited him twice, as he kept asking me to eat durian before I left for Australia. My uncle, Apak Hami, who is considered to be a hala’, told his elder brother, Apak Apok, about his dreams. According to his dreams, the custodians of four mountains (lout) around Sahom area, Lout Jenajak, Lout Tunggal, Lout Papart and Lout Bubu’, were having meetings, and decided to clean one of the areas, which according to the area’s custodians, was very dirty. He dreamed about those meetings a few times, and became fearful about their meaning. Therefore, he advised his family to be always aware while they were working.

After the tragedy, which occurred on 29 August 1996, the local media were busy with their stories about it. One story described the dream of a hala’ of Sahom, named Johari Uda. Interestingly, I found Johari’s story was about the same as my uncle’s. A few days later, I met another hala’ named Mnek Iehaq (see Note 1), and I asked about his dream in relation to the tragedy. He told me a different version of the story. According to him, he had dreamed once that the keramat named Jenajak wanted to move to the sea and would make its journey through the highway. He dreamed about it months ago and thought that the highway mentioned by the Jenajak in his dream was a real highway instead of Dipang river. As a matter fact, several months before the tragedy, a landslide occurred at the highway, killing one motorist. The landslide occurred at the place named Papart, an abandoned Seng-oi village which is believed to be the home land of Keramat Papart. According to Mnek Ngah Gantong, a penghulu’ of Preneurb village and an inheritor of a durian orchard in Papart area (see Note 2), the landslide might have been caused by the anger of the Keramat Papart. The keramat might have become angry when a section of its home, the slope of Papart Mountain, was bulldozed in order to build a major trans-peninsula highway. This was then followed by the noise that comes from the traffic. These interruptions are believed to be the reason the keramat became angry, and its anger was then transformed into a disaster. Mnek Iehaq agreed with Mnek Ngah Gantong as he thought that the landslide was the meaning of his dream. “Why didn’t you tell the people about your dream?” I asked him in an attempt to get further information about the significance of the dream in predicting both tragedies. “Well son, I think I was too lazy to talk about it. Let us leave it at that,” he replied. Then, he told me that the people of the village are influenced by other religious beliefs, and are slowly forgetting their traditional beliefs. They will only ask for hala’ assistance if they are ill during the night. If they are ill during the day, they will go to the hospital. His views indicate that the healing tradition among the Seng-oi has been eroded by modern influences, putting the tradition at risk. The Seng-oi are caught between the desire to preserve tradition and, at the same time, to adopt modernisation.

Note 1: While writing this thesis, I received news that Mnek Iehaq had died in a road accident on 7 September 1997. He was on a motorbike when it was hit by a lorry.

Note 2: Preneurb village adjoins the Papart area and is located in the same Seng-oi territory as Sahom village. The people of Papart fled to other villages, including Preneurb, during World War II when the Japanese used this village as a base to track the MPAJA. Mnek Ngah Gantong is also a hala’. I met him about one month after the landslide tragedy. He went to Teaw Peur to clear his wife’s durian orchard.

A human being’s ghost is referred to as kikmoij, while a non-human being’s ghost is referred to as nyaniik. Both of these are generally referred to as penyakit.
Long Apon told me secretly that all of these local penyakit had been used by hala' of that village as their gunig. Long Apon asked me not to tell others since it is regarded as a secret, and it is not proper to talk about other halas' secrets. “How do you know that these penyakit have been used by other hala’?” I asked him. He did not say anything, but just smiled. “I think all of them, or at least some of them, have been used by you, then!” I continued, trying to get more information. He remained quiet, and just smiled. “Your secret, hah...?” I teased him. Suddenly his wife, Ken Son, who is latah, ‘interrupted’ us from the kitchen, “Siti aji gunig mai ng Apon eh lah!” (which means, “Siti is Apon’s gunig!”). Both of us laughed very loudly, since Ken Son had been latah with her words, which exposed her husband’s secret. (Note: Latah is aroused by suggestion and often takes the form of hysterical mimicry; Ken Son passed away before I made my second visit into the village in April 1997.)

This categorisation of human components seems to be similar to that of the Seng-oi in other places (see Edo, 1985, 1993b, 1993c). Some researchers, such as Dentan (1968: 82-86), however, have attempted to make this categorisation clearer by dividing the components into six i.e. ruai (soul), kelooq (spirit), sengiid (thought), lehem (breath), sekoo’ (aura) and nadi (arterial pulse). In explaining these components, Dentan used a car as an analogy: Ruai would be the battery, kelooq the driver, sengiid the running of the engine, lehem the gas, sekoo’ the paint and nadi the speedometer. Nevertheless, the Seng-oi usually stress only four: kloog, ruwai, worg and broog, although they are most likely to show some differences in their interpretation or explanation of these components. They usually have a clear explanation about broog and worg, in that by the end of human life these components become soil and kikmoij or penyakit respectively. They are, however, rather less clear about the other two, ruwai and kloog. This lack of clarity might be due to fact that Seng-oi beliefs are non-written and are passed down verbally. In addition, this situation might be exacerbated by the influence of other religions, such as Islam and Christianity which have promoted concepts of life in the afterworld such as virtue, sin, heaven and hell. These religions suggest that virtue and sin determine the fate of the soul (in Malay, roh), whether it will obtain ultimate life in heaven or be punished in hell. If someone is good during his or her life, his or her roh will obtain a luxurious life in heaven but if he or she has committed a lot of wrong doings, his or her roh will be punished in hell. This perspective has created some confusion among the Seng-oi, particularly about the two components, kloog and ruwai.

The kloog is associated with life or nyawa’ and never leaves the body because if it does, the person would die. This component can therefore never commit any wrongdoing since it never goes or travels outside the body. The ruwai, on the other hand, which is similar to semangat in the Malay world-view (see Skeat, 1900; Endicott, 1970), is associated with mind and always travels outside the body as well as driving people to undertake their actions. This component has the tendency to commit wrongdoings. However, the ruwai will die at the same time as its broog dies (i.e. when the kloog is taken away from its broog), leaving the kloog as the only immortal component to be taken back by the Nyenang and to be placed in surgaak. The distinction between these components results from the fact that the Seng-oi perspective does not accommodate religious thought because if the religion suggests a certain punishment for bad roh, this will raise a question with the Seng-oi about which one of these two components is supposed to be the roh. If the kloog is the roh, it never commits any wrongdoings. If the ruwai is the roh, it dies together with the broog. Unlike the different views about the kloog and ruwai, the Seng-oi have a clear perception about the worg and broog. Of these two, however, they have a stronger feeling about the broog, which will become soil (tiik or behumi’), rather than the worg, which becomes kikmoij.
Despite the views of the *hala'*, ordinary people like Bek Diah regarded the *kikmoij* as purely a *penyakit*, a dangerous invisible element that the people could not fully trust. He believed that the *kikmoij* is only good with the *hala'* because this group of people always have their *ruwai* protected by their *gunig*. In contrast, the *ruwai* of ordinary people have less protection, probably only that of the *Mai Dengri* or *Pangkal Tiik*, and are therefore exposed to the threats of *penyakit*. Because of this, Bek Diah always wanted to keep away from any spiritual elements, including the *kikmoij*, which according to him, could be potentially harmful to people’s lives especially when these elements mistook human’s *ruwai* as their food.

From the *Seng-oi* perspective, the size of human beings has gradually declined and will continue to decline, finally becoming as tiny as the end of a hair when the earth reaches the edge of its age.

I once attended a meeting chaired by Senator Itam Wali, and held in JHEOA Transit Centre of Ipoh Airport on 15 June 1995. In this meeting, the Senator tried to promote the idea of a grant of land in contrast with the *Seng-oi* who preferred to have reserve land. The Senator urged the *Seng-oi* to follow the Chinese, who used these small pieces of land as business capital. On these lands, which they sometimes leased from the state for a short term, they planted vegetables and tapioca. The Chinese could make money from these activities, not just to cover their basic necessities but to build a business empire. In contrast, added the Senator, the *Seng-oi* wanted to make their land property but not to work it efficiently. The result was that the *Seng-oi* still lived in poverty although they had a large area of land. Most of the people who attended this meeting opposed the Senator’s suggestion. According to them, they did not just regard land as property or economic capital but their *sech-behiib*. They always referred to the graves of their ancestors, some of which were hundreds of years old, as proof of their long presence in the area, which had therefore become their *sech-behiib*. This could be interpreted as an indirect way of proclaiming their pride and social status as *pasak* inhabitant in the area. They were not squatting on others’ land in the *dengri’ adeh*. They were afraid of losing their traditional land, which meant they would lose their *sech-behiib* and their identity as the *pasak* people in the area. As a *pasak* people, they do not want to be landless in their own country.

This anxiety about losing land has been adopted by other natives in Malaysia, such as the Malays, who are afraid of becoming landless in their own native country. This anxiety led to the bloodshed and tragedy which occurred on 13 May 1969, and was followed by the political construction of the concept *Bumiputera* and *Pribumi*, meaning 'son(s) of soil' and 'pre-son(s) of soil', respectively. (Note: This event was described by Datuk Nordin Sophie in an ABC television programme entitled, “Four Corners Special: End of Western World-The Asian Miracle,” broadcast on Monday, 6 January 1997.)

In Malay, *Bumiputera* (sons of the soil) and *Pribumi* (pre-sons of the soil). From the Malaysian perspective, the term *Bumiputera* refers to the Malays, while *Pribumi* refers to the Orang Asli and the indigenous people of Sabah (*Anak Negeri*) and Sarawak (*Orang Ulu*).
Chapter Four

THE BASES OF INDIGENOUS (PASAK) IDENTITY

Chermor Traditions

Introduction

Chapter Three has examined the spiritual aspect of land, which forms an important basis in identifying pasak rights and identity. This aspect links closely with the chermor, oral tradition, which also serves as an important foundation underlying the claim over pasak identity. I asked Mara’ Semae1 about the earliest inhabitants of the dengri’ adeh2 (Peninsula Malaysia). He replied in Seng-oi language: “Uk..., de hiik adeh bukan lagi’ manah, hiik ade mai pasak ku degri’ adeh. Mai ng Gop adeh pai. De enai mai tloh tapi enai tibe manah jeh jeng-oi.” (Oh..., we are not just the earliest inhabitants, we are the indigenous people of this country. The Gop are new. They were ‘strangers’ but they came here in large numbers.) Mara’ Semae’s claim is similar to the claims which have been made previously by other Seng-oi groups, such as the Benua and Mantra, both of whom are now classified as Temuan: “Malacca and all the great island belongs to us, an aborigine told Logan in 1847 when he visited Bukit Pancor.” (Cave, 1989: 3). “It belongs to us: the Malays have come into our country, but Malacca and all the land is ours and not theirs.” (Logan, 1849 cf Cave, 1989: 3).

In dealing with the majority Malay or Gop, there was a long struggle for the Seng-oi to preserve their pasak identity, which they did mostly by avoiding direct contact with the Gop. The way the traditional Semai reacted when they encountered the Malay was to flee from them whenever possible, an avoidance approach which Dentan (1979: 83) regards as a smart encounter tactic. “Since the old days, the Seng-oi have avoided living with the Gop because if they did so, they would be converted to Islam, which would mean they became Gop,” stated Mara’ Semae. However, they only expressed their rejection to becoming Gop by saying that they were afraid to be circumcised, which was narrated as “doh bi koh lok hih.,” (our penis will be cut off.) They have always talked of their feelings indirectly in order to keep their good relationship with the Gop. “For this reason, we have always kept a distance from the Gop. By avoiding close interaction with them, we can keep ourselves away from hurting their feeling,” Mara Semae said.

86
As well as their belief system, the Seng-oi regarded chermor as bases for their search for their pasak identity, especially concerning land rights and self-determination. This chapter will, therefore, continue to explore the roots of their notion of indigeneity (pasak) by examining the chermor.

The Chermor

Chermor is a Seng-oi term meaning oral tradition. It includes myths, stories of origins, legends, and oral histories (penasal). The Seng-oi believe that events in their chermor actually happened.

In the past, chermor were told by elders to their children before they went to bed. The elders today still remember all those stories, but will only tell the stories if asked. This contrasts with the old days where story telling seemed to be part of their duty in socialising the youngsters. In addition to the myths and legends, the elders also know much about their oral history. They will tell their life history spontaneously in relation to certain occasions or situations. For instance, while I was still in Perah, I bought a Tapah, a giant catfish (Walago tweediei), from Parit town. After the fish was cooked by my adopted sister (Andak), she asked me to pass a plate of the dish to her grandmother, Andak Jameah. Andak Jameah then spontaneously talked about her old days in relation to Tapah fish.

In the attempt to collect chermor, I purposely chose the shaman (hala’ or pawang) as my sources. In Seng-oi society, chermor and cultural beliefs are the preserve of the hala’. They possess the knowledge, including the stories of origin. According to the etiquette of healing, a person who wants to became a hala’ has to know the stories of origin of all Nyenang’s creations that exist on earth. All spells (jampi’) and charms (chenagoh), which are used to cure diseases or to cure pain are contained in phrases about the origin of those diseases or things that cause the illness. Phrases about origins are used to curse (sumpah) the illness, and have become the key of all chenagoh and jampi’. In other words, the hala’ will curse the disease by using its origin. If someone has been bitten by a snake, for instance, the hala’ will use his jampi to cure the victim. In the last phrase of his jampi, the hala’ will curse the snake with its origin or its guardian, that is the Prophet (Nabi) Sulaiman. The last phrase of the jampi’ that curses the snake goes like this: “Go away from that body. This is not my order, but the order from the Prophet Sulaiman.”
The Creation of Earth and Human Beings

I asked Ata’ Bek Makar whether he knew about the story of the origin of the earth and human beings. “Well, actually I do not know very much about this story, but a little only,” he answered me. “As a start, a little should be okay,” I replied, as I understood that the Sengoi people are never proud of nor boast about the repertoire of their knowledge or skill but deny it most of the time. He then started telling me the story by recalling that his father and grandmother were the sources of the stories.4 Ata’ Bek Makar continued telling the story:

Before the earth and human beings were created, God or Nyenang just spent His time with His helpers. Then He got an idea to create human beings. One of His personal helpers asked Him about the location where He was going to place the human beings. Was it in the heaven (surga’) itself or elsewhere? He agreed with His helper’s view, which was to create another world for human beings. Then, He started surveying the areas in the universe in order to place the human beings’ world. At last, He found a blue area, called Semudra Raye, which was actually an area full of water. He decided to put the earth in the middle of Semudra Raye. He asked His helper to make the earth by combining popped rice (mertih) and tepung penawar, the rice that is ground with patchouli leaf (pogostemon patchouli) and flowers. His helper took a long time to prepare the ingredients. First, he took the paddy and heated it in order to make mertih (popped rice). After that, he took rice and plunged it into water until it was soft. Then, he ground the rice with patchouli leaf and flowers to make tepung penawar. When everything was ready, these two ingredients were mixed together until they stuck together. However the outcome was not flat. There were bumps here and there because of the mertih. There were flat and lower areas too, which were wet and soft. The rough and bumpy spaces are believed to be the origin of the mountains and hills, while the wet and soft spaces are believed to be the origin of swamps. Then, Nyenang asked His helper to put the combined ingredients in the middle of the Semudra Raye, and He called the resultant land behumi’. The first behumi’ created by God was the Mengkah (or Mecca). His helpers took seven days to make the behumi’, starting from preparing its raw ingredients until it was placed in the Semudra Raye.5 God created the behumi’ just like human beings as it was given the same spirit (ruwai) as a human being and grew like a human being too. During its first creation, the behumi’ was very small; it was only the Mengkah.6 Then, it grew up gradually and stopped when it became young.7 In its youth, the behumi’ became bigger than the Semudra Raye, which became stagnant and surrounded by the behumi’.

When the first behumi’ was created, Nyenang asked His helper to make a human being (Seng-oi). He proposed making the Seng-oi from the same ingredients as He had made the behumi’. However, His helper disagreed with Him because if they used the same ingredients the outcome would not be fine. Then, He got an idea of how to get better ingredients from the behumi’ itself. He asked His helper to go to the behumi’ and gather the flying dust and make the Seng-oi straight away. Before going to the behumi’, His helper wondered what shape to make the Seng-oi. God asked His helper to make the Seng-oi exactly like him, meaning Himself and His helper. The helper then went to the behumi’, gathered the dust and made the Seng-oi. After he finished, he went back to heaven (surga’) and told Nyenang that he had accomplished his job. However, Nyenang asked him to go back to the behumi’ once again to give a soul to the Seng-oi he had made. Nyenang asked His helper to stretch out his hand with his palm upwards. Then,
God grabbed one soul (kloog) from the surga’, and passed it slowly into His helper’s grip. He asked His helper to bring the kloog straight to the behumi’ and release it onto the heart of the Seng-oi that he had made. His helper wondered about the thing in his grip since he felt nothing in his hand.

On the way to behumi’, he opened his hand and found nothing in it. The soul that was released from his grip is believed to be the origin of supernatural beings. He went back to surga’ and told Nyenang about what he had done. Nyenang became worried because the kloog that His helper had released would become supernatural beings which could threaten the behumi’ and Seng-oi. God gave another soul and asked His helper to do his job according to His order. Immediately after he released the kloog on the Seng-oi, the Seng-oi came alive but he could not move because there were no joints through his body. The helper went back to Nyenang and told Him about the development of the Seng-oi. Nyenang then took back the kloog and asked His helper to make joints throughout Seng-oi’s body by chopping the body with his hand. After that, He sent back the soul to the Seng-oi. The soul then split into two. A part of it was retained in the heart of the Seng-oi, and was called nyawa’, sometimes referred to as kloog. The other part moved up and ‘settled’ at the forehead, and was called ruwai, or spirit, or head soul of that Seng-oi. This time the Seng-oi could move, woke up and walked.

The first seng-oi created was a man (kerarl) named Adam, or Nabi Adam, or sometimes called Nyenang Raq. Unlike the behumi’, the first human being was created large in size. Adam’s chest is said to have been as wide as seven depa’. However, his descendants would gradually become smaller and smaller until the final generation, when it is believed that human beings will be as tiny as a hair. The Seng-oi refer to the last generation of human beings as chenouk morl sorg, meaning ‘the grandsons of the tip of the hair’. After that, there will be no more human beings on earth. At the same time, the earth will be very old and die, which is referred to as kiamat.

Adam lived alone in Mengkah. Nyenang just asked him to pray to Him every day. If he did this, He would make Adam healthy, happy and his stomach full although he had not eaten any food. Adam was not happy with that. He prayed and asked Nyenang to take him back to surga’. Then, Nyenang gave him a chance to ask for what he needed. At first, Adam wanted to have food. Nyenang asked his helper to send seeds to behumi’. The fruit trees grew very fast but produced no fruit. Nyenang asked His helper to check the cause of that problem. His helper checked and found that the fruits’ ruwai had been eaten by supernatural beings. Then Nyenang assigned His helpers to look after the ruwai of the fruits as well as the ruwai of the earth.

After a long time living alone, Adam felt lonely. He prayed to Nyenang asking for a partner, as he had in surga’ before. Then Nyenang sent a woman straight from the surga’. Adam was very happy to have a partner. However, Adam could not get close to her. Once Adam tried to touch her, she disappeared. After that she came again. That situation made Adam sad and he refused to pray again since Nyenang was making fun of him. Nyenang persuaded him not to abandon his prayers. Adam told Nyenang that he would pray if He gave him a real partner, and not just a ‘shadow’. Nyenang agreed and sent Siti Hawa (sometimes just referred to as Hawa) to behumi’ to be a partner of Adam. At first Adam did not believe Nyenang’s promise because it had happened so many times before that He made a joke at his expense. Adam went on with his threat to stop praying. Nyenang assured him that He had fulfilled His promise, and asked him to touch Hawa. Adam followed Nyenang’s advice and touched Siti Hawa, and she did not disappear. However, Adam was still not happy because he could not make love
with Hawa since her vagina was so big, as big as the mouth of an earthenware jar. In answer to his prayer, Nyenang gave Adam a ring and asked him to throw it into Hawa’s vagina when she slept. If she was not asleep, she might cover her pubic area with her palm, which might make it difficult for Adam to put the ring into her vagina. After his night of prayer, Adam found Hawa sleeping. He quickly threw the ring into her vagina, and by the next day Hawa’s vagina had become small. He could then make love with Hawa as normal. Due to his aggressiveness in making love, Hawa got pregnant very rapidly. At first, she delivered her baby just a few days after getting pregnant. Her first baby was a boy, followed by a girl, and then a boy again, and then a girl, and so on alternately.

After delivering tens of Adam’s children, Hawa felt tired and asked for a divorce from Adam. She wanted to marry another person. Adam had no objection and let her go since he thought that there were no other men except him alone. He was wrong. Hawa met a genie ‘which’ had originated from the first kloog, which had escaped, and had turned himself into a man, named Jin Mani (jinnee of sperm). She married Jin Mani. Not very long after their marriage, Hawa got pregnant. During her delivery, Jin Mani asked Hawa to deliver her children in a hole he had made. After the delivery, he immediately closed the hole with a big pan (kawah). Hawa knew that she had delivered so many children and hoped to see them but was not allowed to by Jin Mani. Not long after that, she got pregnant again and once again delivered more children. Jin Mani did the same thing as before. At last she became tired and ran away from Jin Mani, who then disappeared into his origin, that was the genie.

Hawa returned to Adam again. However, Adam knew about her children since he had been told by Nyenang during his prayers. He then told Hawa that the children she delivered were not human beings but animals. Hawa did not believe what Adam said and accused him of lying. Adam then advised her to check the holes where she delivered her babies. Hawa went to all the holes where Jin Mani had hidden her children. Immediately after she removed the kawah, large numbers of animals came out and ran away into the jungle. Then she continued opening other holes and found all of them contained animals. She then went back to Adam and told him that she would not like to get married again. Adam accepted Hawa’s will. He then told Hawa that he could have a child even without marrying her. Hawa asked Adam to prove what he had said. Adam then prayed to Nyenang, and asked Him to bless him so he could prove his word. Nyenang sent a boy from surga’ and placed him under Adam’s armpit. After praying, he opened his long robe and asked Hawa to have a look. Hawa was surprised to find a boy there. That boy is believed to be the last child of Adam, and is believed to be the origin of the Seng-oi. Then Adam prayed again, asking for a longer period for pregnancy, and Nyenang answered his prayer. The story of Adam and Siti Hawa ends here, but continues with stories of their children and the generations after that.

All Adam’s children had no name. When they began to marry, the situation arose where brother married sister. Only this simple marriage rule was followed by these children. The first could not marry the second because they were too close, and the third could not marry the second or the fourth for the same reason. This ‘rule’ allowed the first son to marry the second daughter who was the fourth in the family line. The first daughter, who was second in family line, married the third son, who was fifth in the family, the second son who was third in the family could marry the third daughter, who was sixth in the family.
According to Ata’ Bek Makar, this was the first marriage rule in this world after the age of Adam and Hawa. When the population increased, the prophets disallowed marriages between brothers and sisters. They made a new marriage rule that only allowed marriages with spouses from outside the family line. That rule then differentiated human beings from animals. He then continued the chermor:

After the period of Adam and Hawa, Nyenang sent other prophets to earth. He sent those Prophets through normal human reproduction, that was, through birth. These prophets were the sons of Adam’s sons, grandsons and later generations. The main reason He sent these prophets was to look after the physical well-being of the people He had created, while their ruwai were looked after by His supernatural helpers, which are referred to by the Seng-oi as Mai Dengri’. For instance, He sent Prophet Daud to look after the plants, Prophet Sulaiman to look after the animals and insects, and Prophet Harun to look after fish and the sea.

There was a story about Prophet Daud. When the population of Mengkah increased, they faced a shortage of food. Prophet Daud prayed to Nyenang for additional food. Nyenang answered his prayer and sent fruit seeds from surga’. Prophet Daud distributed the seeds to the whole population of Mengkah. Among them was another Prophet named Tuakal or Nabi Tuakal, who was ‘lazy’. Prophet Daud told the people of Mengkah to plant the fruit the next morning before the sun rose. On the next day, Nabi Tuakal woke up late. He went outside his shelter and found no one around. All his neighbours were away planting their fruit. He felt too lazy to catch up with them, and so he took his seed and put it on the tree near his shelter. He said, “I plant you on this tree, and I surrender to Nyenang’s will to make you grow.” The plant grew and was believed to be the origin of parasites.

Nyenang, however, had a ‘headache’ with human beings because of their stubbornness. They were difficult to persuade or to deal with, since He had given them minds. For that reason, He sent many Prophets to look after them, especially to correct their behaviour and their way of life.

When Adam’s grandchildren and great grandchildren were married, Mengkah became overcrowded once again. Life became chaotic when people started to quarrel and fight each other for food. The elders tried to restore the peaceful life but failed to do so. They were worried that the situation might become worse since Mengkah was ungovernable. Before their people killed each other, the elders decided to move some of the population from Mengkah. They realised that the behumi was young, and therefore, there were many places available for them to reside. They held a first meeting to discuss a plan, but came up with failure. No family agreed to move since Mengkah was their place of birth. The elders held another meeting, with the same result. However, the elders never gave up because they wanted to see Adam’s descendants grow and live in peace. They held a number of further meetings which, according to the story, took months and years. Unfortunately, the result was still the same since no family was willing to move. One of the elders, Beginde Ali, became very angry about the lack of compromise among the people in Mengkah. He pounded his walking stick into the earth and walked away from the meeting. He refused to hold any more meetings and was willing to see the people of Mengkah kill each other. Since their honourable elder, Beginde Ali, was unhappy about life in Mengkah, the
family from the last son of Adam decided to move. They lacked bargaining power because they were descended from the last child of Adam who was not born from Adam’s relation with Hawa. Before they left Mengkah, Beginde Ali reminded them to share the land and other sources of livelihood, since it was Nyenang’s law that should be followed by Adam’s descendants.

This chermor illustrates basic Seng-oi ideas about the earth and human beings. The Seng-oi strongly believe that all human beings originated from one root (asal). In searching for equality among human beings, Ata Bek Makar always mentioned to me: Nyenang hiik had nanek, meaning we only have one God, that is, our God is the same. Another elder, Mara’ Semae, agreed with Ata’ Bek Makar and claimed the Prophet Adam or Nyenang Raak to be the prophet of the Seng-oi. Nyenang Raak had practiced the original way of life and adopted the original behaviour, as requested and created by the Nyenang. Mara’ Semae claimed that the Seng-oi in the old days adopted the same way of life and behaviour as the Nyenang Raak. This contrasted with the way of life and behaviour which were adopted by the people who came to Peninsula Malaysia later than the Seng-oi, who are referred to as mai tloh or strangers. The mai tloh were influenced by new ideas developed by later prophets.

The various chermor told by Ata’ Bek Makar, Bek Tambun, Mara’ Semae, Andak Jameah and Ata’ Bek Jarah carry an important understanding about Seng-oi ideas. For example, they show that these people hold a similar notion about the earth and human beings as well as other great traditions. The Seng-oi also insist on their ideas about their indigeneity in their homeland. The claim made by Mara’ Semae seems to be another piece of evidence in the search for their pasak identity: the Prophet Adam or Nyenang Raak was the first inhabitant on earth; the Seng-oi people were the first inhabitants of Peninsula Malaysia, the Seng-oi world. In strengthening this idea, both of the subjects, the Nyenang Raak and the Seng-oi people, are claimed to have adopted the original (asal) behaviour and way of life.

The First People of Peninsula Malaysia

Before Ata’ Bek Makar continued telling the chermor, he realised that Pak Yan and I had become hungry. “Would you like to have tea,” he offered. “Yes, I would,” I replied quickly. “I am now like an Englishman,” he told me in amusement. “I will ask first before I serve. Not like in the old days, we would serve without asking our guests. That is our adat,” he added after he stopped
laughing. "Why do you have to adopt an English tradition," I asked. "Well, some people like you, who live in town, and particularly the Gop, who are concerned about their religion, always refused to accept our food because they felt disgusted or suspicious about its cleanliness. They were afraid the food we prepared would be haram. We became embarrassed when we politely offered food to people, but people refused, sometimes with a facial grimace to show that they were disgusted." "Well, I think I like haram food, so please prepare the tea," I was joking with him, hiding my hunger. He then asked his daughter to boil the water, prepare the tea and serve some biscuits for us. Meanwhile, he continued telling the chermor.

The families of the last descendant of Adam moved in all directions, north, south and west, and the families who were said to be the origin of Malaysian Seng-oi, sometimes referred to as hiik, sailed by bamboo raft (rakit awaad), and surrendered to the wind to sail away from Mengkah. The wind pushed them east in the direction where the sun rises, or mat jiis hujh. Some said they walked over a bridge which was made from a fallen tree trunk (dendoug). Since the journey was far, some could not endure it and stopped at small islands they found on the way, and at a big island before Peninsula Malaysia (referred to as dengri’ adeh), which encompassed modern day North Sumatra. The rest tried to go as far as possible from the dominant group in Mengkah. Some of them stopped in dengri’ adeh, while the rest carried on their journey.

The group who landed in dengri’ adeh referred to themselves as hiik Seng-oi or just hiik or Seng-oi (hiik means we or we are the people, and Seng-oi means people or native). In dengri’ adeh, various Seng-oi groups landed in three different locations. The first group came ashore in Siap, or Siam. This group then resettled in Lout Maluk (or Maluk Mountain) which is believed to be located in the northern part of Peninsular Malaysia. The second group landed at the mouth of Perak river, and moved inland and resettled at Lout Sahine (or Senya mountain), which is believed to be located in the central-eastern part of Perak State. The third group landed in Melaka. Some of them settled near the seashore but some moved inward and settled in Lout Lidang (Lidang Mountain). All these three mountains are located in the Main Range of Titiwangsa.

I found the first part of the story told by Ata’ Bek Makar (and later by Bek Tambun) to be similar to the accounts in Christianity and Islam. But, the Seng-oi have their own chermor which link them with Peninsula Malaysia. However, the chermor told by Ata’ Bek Makar seemed to show that the Seng-oi were the mai manah (earliest inhabitants) rather than mai pasak (indigenous inhabitants) because they also migrated to the dengri’ adeh. Later I spoke to Mara’ Semae, telling him of my view about the origin of the Seng-oi of the dengri adeh. Mara’ Semae agreed with me in not supporting Ata’ Bek Makar’s chermor because, according to him, Ata’ Bek Makar’s version is influenced by Malay ideas. He maintained that the Seng-oi are the mai pasak rather than mai manah, and offered
me another chermor. He recalled his late father as the source of this chermor. According to him:

When mengkah became over populated, the elder of the population, Beginde Ali, asked some of the people to move out into other areas. A number of meetings had been held but these had resulted in no compromise because none of the inhabitants agreed to move. Finally, Beginde Ali became angry and this made a number of families change their minds and agree to move, including the family of the last descendant of Adam. All the groups except the last descendant of Adam snatched almost all the low and flat areas around mengkah. None of them occupied the hilly areas, which were located quite far away on the outskirts of mengkah. Learning of that situation, the family groups of the last descendant decided to occupy the hilly areas because they did not want to struggle with the others for the lowland. They also believed that the people who occupied low areas were not interested in occupying hilly areas, which indirectly meant that in future their group would face no trouble regarding their living area. They then occupied the hilly areas, which were located at the direction of sunrise. One gu occupied the first big hill; three gu occupied the second, a range of hills which looked like a lying man, referred to as dengri' adeh; the other gu of this descendant moved further and occupied the more distant hills. Of the three gu who occupied the dengri' adeh, the gu of the elder occupied the head of the range; the gu of the younger occupied its chest; and the gu of the youngest occupied its knee. As time went by, their population became large, split into various gu, and moved into various areas of the range, such as its shoulder, thigh, limb, and other parts of the body.

At the time Beginde Ali asked some of the people to move, the earth (behumi') was still young and small in size. As time passed, the behumi' grew and its size became bigger and bigger. This increase in size also caused the distances between the occupied areas to become further and further from one another. When the behumi' became adult, its size was bigger than the Semudra Raye, and the water of the Semudra Raye began to flow into the behumi' and flooded all the low areas. All people of these areas ran to the hills, including the big one occupied by one of the gu of the last descendant of Adam. A large number of the lowland dwellers were also drowned. Because of this flood, all hills became islands.

After a long time, the island which had been the big hill became over-crowded by the descendants of the lowland people, known as Gop, who survived the flood and came to occupy the island. They became dominant in the island, took over the land and villages which belonged to pasak people, i.e. the gu of the last descendant of Adam. The pasak people finally decided to move and looked forward to joining their long separated family. They sailed from the island by bamboo raft. Long after that they met their long separated relatives who lived in a village on the sea shore of the dengri' adeh. These pasak people, who identified themselves as Seng-oi, referred to their 'just arrived' relatives as Temuan, an expression which means 'meeting each other'. A very long time after that, the Gop started to come to the dengri adeh. The Temuan, who had experienced living with the Gop in their previous home, moved to the interior immediately after they learnt that this people had started to come into the area because they wanted to get away from the Gop's aggressiveness. At first, the Gop just came temporarily, and went back to their homes after getting the things they were looking for, such as rattan, resin, and other jungle products. Later, they came in a larger group, occupied the surrounded area, and took over Seng-oi's and Temuan's land. They then took control of the villages of the pasak people, and finally established a state
there, which they named Melaka. The domination of Gop over the area forced the Seng-oi and the Temuan to flee into the interior.

This chermor is clearer in demonstrating that the Seng-oi were the mai pasak of the dengri' adeh.

The Malay State of Melaka

A few days after we stopped the first part of the chermor, I met Ata' Bek Makar and asked for his time to continue his narration. He then advised me to come the afternoon of the next day because in the morning he was going to mutung. On the next day, I came to his house, again with Pak Yan. “Have you eaten?” He asked me. “Yes, we did,” I answered on behalf of Pak Yan. “That’s good, so we can talk until late afternoon. Where did we stop the other day?” He asked me again. “The last descendant of Adam left Mekah,” I replied. “Oo..., that’s right, that’s right,” he agreed. However, he did not start telling the chermor straight away but told us about the rubber price. “Bek Tambun told me this morning that the price of rubber increased by suku (25 sen). That’s good. Tomorrow afternoon I can sell my rubber.” He was joking with himself. He was probably telling me indirectly that I could not come to see him on the next day. He might hesitate to tell me directly because according to Seng-oi values, it is not proper to stop people from coming to your home, especially those who are seeking help or learning Seng-oi culture. While resting his back against the wall, he expressed his concern for the future of Seng-oi culture. According to him, it would decline if the new generation did not change their attitude and kept on ignoring their own culture. “Actually, I hope many younger people in this village become interested in learning our own culture, just like you.” He told me of his concern for the fifth or sixth time. He then asked his daughter to boil water and prepare tea for us and at the same time he rolled his tobacco, referred to as bakau kampar, lit it and smoked for a while. “I have to smoke before starting work. This is my favourite, bakau kampar. I have smoked it since I was young and never smoke cigarettes. No other reason, actually, bakau kampar is cheaper than cigarettes and satisfactory too!” He told me while musing. Only then did he start telling the chermor. He once again recalled his father and grandmother as the main source of his chermor. According to him:

Many generations after that, Mengkah became overcrowded again, and once again the food supply became a source of chaos. This time a majority of families were willing to move voluntarily. The second exodus again went in all directions.
Some of them moved across the sea, while the rest moved inland up to Dengri' China' (or China). A big group of these outmigrants who moved by sea landed in North Sumatra and then moved south along its west coast. Long after that, they met the people of the first exodus who had opened a dengri' called Pagaruyung. They lived together in the dengri'. Since the second wave was larger than the first, the people from the second exodus kept on coming to Pagaruyung and became the dominant inhabitants of the dengri'. The newcomers were quite aggressive and intolerant, which finally ruined the peacefulness in Pagaruyung. That situation forced the native people of Pagaruyung to flee because they could not cohabit with the dominant newcomers to the village. The former then landed in a place which today is named Melaka. They resettled there with the Seng-oi along the sea shore. The Seng-oi of Melaka refer to their long long lost relatives as Temuan because they at last met (temu) one another.15

Long long after that, the people of the second wave of migrants who dominated Sumatra started coming to Melaka. At first only a middle-aged man came alone, having paddled his wooden boat (perahu') all the way from Sumatra. The Seng-oi referred to him as Gop, a term which differentiated him from the Temuan who had come much earlier than him.16 The Gop lived together with the Seng-oi and the Temuan people there. He started his life like the Seng-oi and Temuan, and built his own house and cleared land for his garden. When he had established his life in Melaka, he went back to his old village in Sumatra. Not long after that, he came back with his family and another group of people. Then, many groups followed and resettled in Melaka, built houses and opened land for gardens. At one stage, they took away lands that belonged to the Seng-oi and Temuan. This outgrowth forced the Seng-oi and Temuan who could not assimilate with the dominant newcomers to flee to Lout Lidang and join their old relatives there. However, most of the Temuan families decided not to resettle in Lout Lidang because it was still near to Melaka. They believed the Gop would soon reach there and threaten them. They moved to far northern areas. A group led by Batin Bechanggei Besi' opened a settlement in Sungai Ujung. The rest of the Temuan separated into small groups and established settlements. Their settlements are scattered in various areas which are today named the states of Negeri Sembilan and Selangor.

A few Temuan families who still had family links with the Gop remained in Melaka and lived with the dominant group. The people from Sumatra kept coming including the Rawe people. Some of the latter purposely came to capture the Seng-oi and the Temuan and to sell them as slaves in Southern Sumatra. Starting from that time, the Seng-oi and Temuan were very scared of the people from Sumatra. After that, people from Java came, and moved inland along the Melaka River looking for rattan and other jungle products. The Javanese wondered why the Seng-oi and the Temuan kept running when they met them. When they tried to come nearer, the Seng-oi and the Temuan would run far away from them. After going through this experience which resulted in them not having a chance to met and talk to the Seng-oi and the Temuan, the Javanese named the place ‘tanah melayu’, meaning the land that belongs to the ‘running’ people (tanah means land, and melayu means run or running).17 At first, the tanah melayu just referred to Melaka because at that time Melaka still had no name.

Narrating the same theme, Mara’ Semae said that the Temuan were headed apah madeh, meaning towards the area where the mai direh are settled now. The Temuan probably stopped around an area which is now known as the State of Selangor. However, his version implied that different people came from Sumatra
to capture the Seng-oi and Temuan. They were not the Rawe, but the Batak.\textsuperscript{18}

Mara’ Semae also said that the dengri’ adeh got its name from Gop Jawa’ (the Javanese), and was based on their strange experience with Seng-oi and the Temuan, as told by Ata’ Bek Makar.

Long after that, came the period which the Seng-oi speak of as, “jer, jer, jer,\textsuperscript{19} baru' tiba' Raja' Gop,” roughly meaning, “then, then, then, only came the Malay king.” This period was believed to be the beginning of the Malay Kingdoms. According to Ata’ Bek Makar:

The first Raja' Gop, who ‘renamed’ tanah melayu Melaka, was a Gop-kelin (Malay-Indian) or Hindu.\textsuperscript{20} He and his people ran away from civil wars in Inunesia (Indonesia). When he and his people first landed in tanah melayu, he took a rest under a Melaka (Phyllanthus pectinatus) tree. Suddenly, a mouse deer ran out in front of them. His dogs chased after the mouse deer, but it fought back and hurt all the dogs. From that incident, the raja' Gop got the inspiration that if he established a dengri’ there, he would successfully develop it. He might also defeat his enemies and his rivals with no weapon, just using his ‘brilliance’, as shown by the mouse deer. Then he named the dengri’ after the name of the tree where he rested, Melaka. He did successfully develop the dengri’, which became a trade centre. The Seng-oi and Temuan were involved in trading their jungle products, especially rattan and honey. After a while the raja' Gop ruled the dengri’, and got married to a Muslim princess from Inunesia (Indonesia). Melaka then became an Islamic dengri’, referred to by the Seng-oi as dengri' Gop.

Before Melaka became an Islamic dengri’, the Seng-oi and the Temuan were quite close to the dominant group in Melaka. Some of the men worked in the palace as royal guards, and as fighters or leaders in war. The girls worked in the palace kitchen, and were engaged in work such as cooking, fetching water, collecting firewood, and washing dishes and clothes. The young and beautiful girls served as the gundik (inferior wives) to the raja'. They were protected in the sense that the ordinary people could not interfere with them since they became the ‘property’ (or reta”) of the raja’. When the raja’ and the dominant group became Muslim, their relation with the Seng-oi and Temuan became more distant. Many Seng-oi and Temuan stopped working in the palace. Some of the independent gundik married Muslim men, while the rest went back to their families at the fringe of Melaka dengri’ and the Lout Lidang. The main issue which caused a rift in their relationship concerned food. When the raja’ became Muslim, he did not want to have the Seng-oi and Temuan, who were non-Muslims to be his cooks, including those who fetched water and washed dishes. He did not want their service due to the notion that he had to avoid the kapir (dirty) person touching his food, drinks and dishes. He also did not want to have any gundik since it is inappropriate or haram according to Islamic law. Concerning food issues too, the Seng-oi and Temuan kept themselves far from the Muslims because they were ashamed of their food. They felt hurt when the Muslims spat at their food or spat at them while they were eating foods which were haram to Muslims. Some of the Temuan were also ashamed to meet their Muslim families which led to the rupture of their family networks.
Among those who worked in the palace, only a small number of Seng-oi and Temuan' royal guards and leaders in war remained. One of them was Hang Tuah. According to the chermor, Hang Tuah was a hiik but his family lived with the dominant group in Melaka. Although Hang Tuah lived with his family, he still maintained his relationship with his parent’s families who were non-Muslim, and were living in Lout Lidang. He always visited them and sometimes stayed there for a long time. According to the chermor, he actually spent most of his time with his relatives in Lout Lidang. He gained his skills in martial arts and his knowledge of healing from a batin (a term for a Temuan headman) in Lout Lidang, and used to live as a hermit up there before he became a fighter for the dengri’ of Melaka. On one occasion, he defeated a man who ran amok in the village. Since he was mighty, the sultan appointed him as a leader in war. He worked together with four of his relatives, who became the best fighters in the dengri’. They were Hang Jebat, Hang Lekiyo, and two others whose names were not mentioned. Hang Tuah and his brothers successfully raised Melaka to a powerful dengri’ in the region.

In the middle of Melaka’s period of sovereignty, a crisis occurred in the palace of Melaka. Hang Tuah was slandered by a group of palace aristocrats who were jealous of his achievement, and planned a conspiracy to create turmoil in the palace. Hang Tuah had always met the Seng-oi and Temuan girls who delivered things such as fruits and foods that were sent by their families in Lout Lidang. These ‘opportunities’ were used by the jealous aristocrats to damage his career. Hang Tuah was accused of having an affair, or sumbang, with a girl in the palace. The sultan was angered by this and sentenced Hang Tuah to death. However, the aristocrat who was assigned to slay Hang Tuah was good, and did not fulfill his duty because he knew that Hang Tuah had been slandered by jealous aristocrats. He then hid Hang Tuah with the batin of the Lout Lidang. On the way back to Melaka, he killed a monkey and smeared Hang Tuah’s cloth (abad selipang) with its blood. When he arrived in the palace, he showed the bloody cloth to the sultan as proof that he had fulfilled his duty to slay Hang Tuah.

The killing of Hang Tuah aroused the anger of his brother, Hang Jebat. He regarded the sultan as cruel and unfair because he just listened to the jealous aristocrats who were Hang Tuah’s rivals, rather than to a person who was loyal to him like his brother. Then he led a furious attack and occupied the palace. The sultan ran and hid in the house of the aristocrat whom he had assigned to slay Hang Tuah. The uproar lasted days, and Hang Jebat told the people of Melaka that he would cast out the unfair sultan. The absence of Hang Tuah made him very powerful. There were no fighters in Melaka who could beat him, including his brothers, Hang Lekiyo and the two others. Only his late brother, Hang Tuah, could do so. When the situation in Melaka was uncontrollable, the aristocrat who had been loyal to Hang Tuah broke his own secret, and told the sultan that he had not killed Hang Tuah, but hid him with a batin in Lout Lidang. He then told the sultan the whole scenario of the conspiracy created by the jealous aristocrats. He pleaded guilty and pledged to obey whatever sentence might be given by the sultan. The sultan was happy, and apologised to his brilliant aristocrat. The sultan called Hang Tuah to deal with Hang Jebat.

A fight between the two brothers took place. At first Hang Jebat refused to fight with his own brother, but Hang Tuah gave him no choice. Hang Tuah felt ashamed because Hang Jebat had misused his ‘warrior blood’ to embarrass their own family. The fight took days, but at last Hang Jebat was defeated. Hang Tuah felt disappointed at the tragedy which had forced him to kill his lovely brother. He then decided to move far from Melaka to cure his broken heart. However, his
own family refused to go along with him, and decided to continue to live in Melaka.

In the middle of the chennor, Ata Bek Makar asked my permission to stop because he had to answer a call of nature. He quickly went outside his house and headed straight to the bush. Meanwhile Pak Yan also wanted to go home to play Takraw, leaving me alone. While waiting for Ata' Bek Makar to return, I compared the chermor, which indicated the Seng-oi point of view about their involvement in the early establishment of the Malay state, with the Malay point of view, as told in the Sejarah Melayu (Shellabear, 1967) and the Hikayat Hang Tuah (Ahmad, 1964).

The Sejarah Melayu refers to the ordinary people of Melaka, who included some Seng-oi, as hamba Melayu, the vassals of the Malays. The Hikayat Hang Tuah records their skill in shamanship, their knowledge of the area and their willingness to fight, and notes that the Seng-oi were desirable allies, but not acceptable compatriots (cf. Leary, 1994). The chermor, however, gave the impression that the Seng-oi also played an important role in the establishment of Melaka. According to Wheatley (1964: 27):

Melaka was buoyed up on the flood tide of South-East Asian commerce. To take full advantage of her situation, Melaka had, like Sri Vijaya before her, to implement her monopoly of the trade through the strait, and this the Parameswara achieved when he fitted out a fleet of patrol boats, manned by Orang Laut, which forced all vessels negotiating those waters to call at the port for the payment of dues.

Earlier authors such as Maxwell (1882), Gullick (1949), Hooker (1976) and Dunn (1975), who collected chermor from other Seng-oi villages, also mentioned the Seng-oi's role in establishing other ancient Malay states of Malaya. The Orang Laut, for example, are generally referred to in Dutch documents as pirates, or as rowers and fighting men of the Sultan of Johor (Dunn, 1975 cf. Leary, 1994). The Orang Laut, loyal allies of the sultan, were engaged in the sea blockade and the carriage of goods by sea to the besiegers. They also prevented the escape of any of the Portuguese defenders from the besieged city (MacHocobian, 1936 cf. Leary, 1994). These contributions, however, had never been counted as politically significant and the Seng-oi were regarded as marginal to the established state. In sharing this view, Leary (1994: 94) stressed that, “Although it was accepted by even the most xenophobic Malays that the Orang Asli were the original inhabitants of the Malay Peninsula, they were never
regarded as part of the mainstream Malay social system.” Such marginalisation also appears in Seng-oi sources, as narrated in the Ata’ Bek Makar’s chermor.

The First Lowland Seng-oi of Perak

A few minutes later, Ata’ Bek Makar came back and asked me the time. I told him, “Quarter to five.” He responded quickly, “That’s good, so we can continue for another hour.” He then went to the kitchen to boil water because his daughter had gone to her friend’s house. After a short while, he came back, sat down and took his tobacco. While rolling the tobacco, he continued the chermor.

Hang Tuah moved north with his wife, whom he had married secretly during his ‘exile’, and accompanied by his loyal families in Lout Lidang. Most families, including the family of Hang Jebat’s wife, followed him. Only a few who wanted to remain in Lout Lidang were left behind. At first, they moved through the jungle without any clear destination, except to the north. On their way, they met Temuan settlements. Since the journey was long, most of the people tired. Some of Hang Tuah’s Temuan followers could not bear to continue and decided to settle with the Temuan they met on the way. Before they reached Teaw Bernem (Bernam river), the last group of Temuan families withdrew, leaving only Seng-oi families who still wanted to come with Hang Tuah and continue the journey. When they met the Bernam river (Teaw Bernem), which is located at the border between the State of Perak and Selangor, a few Seng-oi families were tired and decided to stop. This group then split up, most of them moving to the interior, the rest remaining in the area of the Bernem river. The latter later moved a little further to the interior into areas along the Bernem river’s tributaries.

Hang Tuah and the remaining families carried on their journey. Hang Tuah did not want to settle in Bernem because the area was still under the rule of Melaka and he tried to get away from this rulership. Immediately after they crossed the Bernem river, they were threatened by wild animals, especially tigers, buffalos, bears and elephants. Then, they tried to move through a lowland area but they were too tired to go through swampy areas or redang. At last, they decided to sail downstream along the Bernem river to the sea, and tried to carry on their journey by sea. All of them were tired and could not proceed against the strong sea waves. They just managed to paddle up to the estuary of Perak river. Then, they decided to move back inland along Perak river. At first, some of the families wanted to stop at the estuary of the Bidor river, a tributary of Perak river. Hang Tuah persuaded them to move further up because the Bidor river estuary was too close to the sea. The Gop from Melaka would come and take over the area in no time and they would have to flee again. The Seng-oi agreed with Hang Tuah and moved further upstream although most of them felt tired, and wanted to stop. The Seng-oi felt that they had moved far away from Melaka, as they spent months travelling. Furthermore, they had not found any settlement along their way, especially from the Bernem river to that area.

Hang Tuah still decided to move further up along the Perak river. The Seng-oi were tired and were not able to paddle fast against the strong current of the river. In one day, they had to stop and rest two or three times. After a long time paddling, they found an old field nearby the river side. They stopped and left their
rafts to explore the area. They found another Seng-oi group called Temir who were living there. Here, Hang Tuah and his followers came to opposite decisions. The Seng-oi group refused to move upstream because they believed that they had entered the Temir's area. The withdrawal of the Seng-oi left just Hang Tuah and his wife to continue the journey. Starting from that moment, the people lost contact with Hang Tuah. Long after that, they heard rumours that Hang Tuah had settled in upper Perak and had became the leader of another Seng-oi group there, probably the Temir or the Jahai.

The Seng-oi families who were left behind moved back downstream because they wanted to move far away from the Temir area. They stopped at a place down river which was then called Lambor. In their early occupation, they just lived on their bamboo rafts because they were afraid of wild animals especially tigers and wild buffalo (seladang). They cleared the riverside to plant food during the day, and came back to their rafts to sleep during the night. After many seasons living there, they had cleared a huge area which was mostly located along the Perak river. When the area was cleared, they had the confidence to live on the land. In their early life on the land, they built tree huts (deurg ran), which were high and safe from those wild animals. They lived in tree-huts for several seasons before they built their houses on the ground. The life was peaceful. No outsiders came to interfere with them. Once in a while, only Chinese vessels came in. Their crews collected rattan, bird nests and other jungle products. After hundreds of years (narrated as beratus tawon) passed, the Gop came, and settled in the area permanently.

While they were in Lambor, the Siap or Siamese came. Before that, the Perak river was overgrown with tree-nettles (Laportica crenulata), or Jelatag, which were itchy and poisonous. Then the King of Siam asked his people to clear the river because he wanted to send his vessel downstream. Hundreds of Siap workers came to clear the river. They were transported by wooden boats with a ship as the main carrier. However, they were stuck at Lambor because there were two silver bars, each about the size of a human's lower leg, across the river. One of the bars was just a few inches above the water and the other was a foot or two below the water. When the bars were struck by the river current, they produced a huge and strange sound like people pounding their clothes on a rock (narrated as: hembew..., hembew..., hembew...). One of the Siap boats tried to go through but it broke and sank because it was struck by the bars. Since they were well equipped, the Siap tried to cut the bars with a iron saw. They started cutting from early morning until late afternoon, but they could not manage to cut even the bar that lay above the water. When they came again on the next day, they found the cut had been repaired again, and the bar looked as if it had not been cut at all. They went on with their effort to remove the bars but the result was the same, the cut was repaired. At last the Siamese chief of the operation, called tikong, admitted that the bars were not built by humans but by a supernatural being who was the guardian of that river.

The tikong looked for help from the Seng-oi. Negotiations between the hala' and the tikong followed. The hala' refused to help them because he was afraid that the supernatural guardian might ask for his people as substitutes for removing those silver bars, which meant sacrifice. At last the tikong accepted the hala's views. However, he still wanted to provoke the hala' and said that if the hala' could persuade the guardian to cut the bars, he would accept that the dengri' belonged to Seng-oi, and he and his people would move back to his dengri'. In contrast, if the hala' failed to persuade the supernatural guardian, and failed to cut the bars, the tikong would kill the Seng-oi for lying, and he and his people would stay, and would try to cut the bars. The hala' agreed on the condition that the tikong
fulfilled his promise; otherwise the supernatural guardian would sink their ships and boats, and would eat them all. Both of them agreed. The *hala'* needed seven days to perform the ritual and asked the *tikong* to come back after seven days.

On the next day, the *hala'* and his people started performing the ritual called *kebut* or *lamur* (in Malay, *lambor*). At first, the supernatural guardian did not agree to let the human beings cut its 'trap', which referred to the silver bars, because if the trap was removed, it could not trap its food and would go hungry. The *hala'* kept on persuading the supernatural guardian in his *kebut*. He told the supernatural guardian that if he would not remove those silver bars, the Siamese would kill them. Then the supernatural guardian agreed on the condition that its trap must be replaced by a human being. The *hala'* did not agree to this condition, and kept on persuading. On the sixth night, the supernatural guardian felt pity for the Seng-oi and agreed to receive a *balei* as substitution for its trap. On the next day, the *hala'* and his people built a *balei*, which consisted of a small wooden boat, a human manikin which was carved from wood, and food of all tastes, i.e. rich, sweet, salty, and sour. On the seventh night, the *hala'* performed his *kebut* and offered the *balei*, as was requested by the supernatural guardian. After the ritual, the *hala'* released the *balei* into the river. The *balei* floated downstream, and then sank after striking the bars.

The *tikong* came early in the morning on the next day. He was angry because he saw the bars were still there. The *hala'* asked the *tikong* to be patient. He then explained that his people had no equipment to do the job, and asked the *tikong* and his people to cut the bars by themselves. The *Siap* could cut the two bars very easily from both side of the river banks. Then the *tikong* fulfilled his promise and went north back to their *dengri*.

Ata’ Bek Makar stopped once again and went to the kitchen to prepare tea. Expressing his loneliness he said: “Adeh la hei amen tok kenah hih, ui te yak lui, berchet yak lui,” (meaning, this is the fate if we have no wife, to prepare tea by ourselves, cook rice also by ourselves). I later checked Ata’ Bek Makar’s *chermor* with another narrator, Mara’ Semae, who told me another version. In this version, the early part of the story is about the same, but the *Siap* pulled back to their *dengri*’ when they failed to cut the bars. They did not look for the *hala*’ of the Seng-oi because they did not know about them. Long long after that, as it was narrated by Mara’ Semae:

Jer..., jer..., jer..., the *Gop* came from downstream, sailed up the river in a small *perahu*. Since that was their first trip, they did not know about the silver bars. Their *perahu* was hit by the bars, and sank. Most of them drowned except the captain and a few of his crew. They went back downstream on foot. Long after that, they came again with another *perahu*, and tried to cut the bars. They failed to cut even a single bar, and faced the same experience as the *Siap* before them. The bar was again repaired the next morning. The captain then realised that the bars belonged to supernatural beings. The captain, who is referred to by the Seng-oi as *raknak Gop*, knew about it because his great great grandparents had practiced the same belief before they converted to Islam. The *raknak Gop* then started looking for the Seng-oi’s *hala*’ to ask him to persuade the supernatural beings to remove the bars.
Not very long after that, the raknak Gop met the hala’. At first, the hala’ refused to help, and gave the same reason as in the first version. The raknak Gop told the hala’ that his chief wanted to go up river. If the hala’ would not cooperate, his chief might capture and enslave the Seng-oi, and the raknak Gop himself would be dismissed. Finally the hala’ agreed to perform the ritual, but did not guarantee that the supernatural being who owned the silver bars would cooperate. The raknak Gop agreed that the hala’ should try, otherwise all of them would receive punishment from his chief. As a precondition, the hala’ asked the raknak Gop not to interfere with their life and living areas. If the raknak Gop broke his oath, the hala’ would persuade the supernatural being once again to sink the chief’s vessel. Then, the hala’ asked the raknak Gop to go back downstream and persuade his chief to agree to the precondition. The raknak Gop and his people sailed back downstream. Long after, the raknak Gop returned and brought the good news that his chief had agreed to the precondition. As in the first version, the hala’ asked for seven days to perform his ritual. The same negotiation with the supernatural being took place as was told in the first version. When the hala’ finished performing his ritual, he asked the raknak Gop to cut the bars. After he finished cutting the bars, the raknak Gop went back downstream. Long after that, groups of Gop came and opened settlements upriver.

The Ancient Malay State of Perak

After a while in the kitchen, Ata’ Bek Makar came back with a tray containing a tea pot and two glasses. “Adeh la hei, te merlong, tok manik yah adeh,” he joked to me (meaning, this is plain tea, no rain today). The Seng-oi always associate their plain tea (without cream or condensed milk) with the weather. If there is rain, the river is muddy (kereh) but if there is no rain, the river water is clear. This analogy used in describing their drinks means that if they have the money, the tea is creamy but if they have no money, the tea is plain. This has become a typical joke among the Seng-oi despite the hint it provides about their economic situation at that time. Ata’ Bek Makar then poured the tea into the glass and continued the chermor although evening was approaching. He asked me to spare some more time as he wanted to finish this part. According to him:

Not very long after the Siamese left the area, a Gop man who heard a rumour about the story came into the area. When he found the story was true, he went back downstream to make his popularity by claiming that he had cut the bars. He then delivered that news to their chief down river. Not long after that, a Gop chief, named Tok Betangkuk, came sailing up the river with a huge vessel accompanied by tens of small perahu’. Tok Betangkuk stopped at Lambor and asked his crew to deliver gifts such as machetes, cloth, salt, and the like to the hala’ and his people. Then, Tok Betangkuk and his people continued their journey upriver. Later, Tok Betangkuk married a Seng-oi girl and established a settlement upriver.

According to this incident, the river was then named the Perak river (perak in Malay, means silver) after the two silver bars across the river. The State of Perak
was named after this river. The place where Hala' performed his ritual was named Lambor after the kebut ritual, or in Malay, lambor.

I then asked Ata' Bek Makar the status of Tok Betangkuk in the chermor. He continued his chermor about the dengri' adeh, the State of Perak, which still had no raja' when Tok Betangkuk arrived. According to him:

Tok Betangkuk was the earliest prince to come to Perak, and he then established a Gop kingdom in the dengri' adeh. According to the story, the Raja' of Johor had three sons. The first one would automatically succeed to the regency, but his second and third sons were ambitious too. Finally, the Raja' suggested his two younger sons go 'wandering' and establish a dengri' elsewhere, outside Johor. The Raja' asked his Royal Shaman to make a prediction about possible places for his two sons to establish their dengri'. The Royal Shaman then found that there was a Seng-oi girl who was betuah and possessed white blood. She lived on the upper side of a mountain located beside a huge river in the upper part of Johor state. The shaman added that there were only two ways to enter the place. One of them was from the estuary of the river, but the mountain was located far inside from the estuary, the current was strong, and the river was guarded by silver bars. Another way was from the upper side of the stream, but there was only one way to get into the river, through the cave where the river 'originated'. The mountain where the Seng-oi girl resided was located close to that cave but it was guarded by a moving stone called batu' betangkup.

Tok Betangkuk's elder brother was selfish and wanted to reach the place faster than his younger brother so he could marry the girl. He took a royal flying horse and tried to make an easy journey from the upriver side. When he got there, he found the batu' betangkup was moving up and down, guarding the cave. When the stone was moving upward, opening the cave, he ordered his horse to fly fast through the batu' betangkup. Unfortunately, his long sword stuck on the lower part of the stone, which made him fall from his horse. At the same time, the batu' betangkup was moving downward to close the cave, pinned him down, and he died there. His royal flying horse flew back to Johor and told the Raja' about the tragedy.

Meanwhile his brother, Tok Betangkuk, had decided to sail through the estuary of the river. He asked an aristocrat and a few sailors to accompany him. He and his crew took months to reach the estuary of the 'Perak river'. While enduring the 'Perak river', Tok Betangkuk made an astute move by sending his crew to survey their route. He had no ambition to marry the Seng-oi girl because he thought his brother, travelling by flying horse, would be the first to arrive at the mountain and marry her. Tok Betangkuk carried on his journey just to look for another opportunity to establish a dengri'. One night he dreamed that his father was telling him that his brother had been 'eaten' by the batu' betangkup. His father asked him to continue his journey, marry the Seng-oi girl and establish a dengri' there. Tok Betangkuk and his sailors took months to paddle against the strong current before they reached Lambor. With the help of the Seng-oi and a Hala' of Lambor, Tok Betangkuk managed to reach the place where the Seng-oi girl was living. He then married the girl and established a dengri' there.
The *Seng-oi* believe that the Perak sultanate began as indicated in this *chermor*. Ata’ Bek Makar added that some of the sultans were very close to the *Seng-oi* because they had ‘blood connections’ with the *Seng-oi*, while other were not because they were purely Malay (*Gop bernor*).

Ata’ Bek Makar stopped the *chermor* for that day after realising it was already dark. He also suggested that I collect the *chermor* from his nephew, Bek Tambun, if he himself was not at home. He added that village people like him had no specific working timetable. They could work at any time and go to places where they could gain ‘food’. “You don’t have to fix any appointment with me. Just come to my house, and if I’m available at home, we can talk. I like to talk about this and you must write, otherwise these stories will be replaced by movies on television,” explained Ata’ Bek Makar, indicating his cultural concern and cognisance of the influence of modern media, especially television.

A few weeks after that, I asked Ata’ Bek Makar’s opinion of Mara’ Semae’s version of the above *chermor*. Ata’ Bek Makar disagreed with Mara’ Semae. According to him, as he recalled the story told by his late father, Tok Betangkuk came long after the *Siap* and the *Hala’* of Lambor had removed the silver bars. The late Andak Jameah had a similar story about the prince of Johor coming to Perak. However, she said he was not Tok Betangkuk, but a prince named Nahude Kassim. He came to Perak after the *Siap* cut the silver bars, and fulfilled their promise to pull back to their *dengri’*. Nahude Kassim sailed straight from Johor to the mountain where the *Seng-oi* girl, who possessed white blood, resided and married her there. Andak Jameah said that Nahude Kassim was the one who established the Perak sultanate. I found the *chermor* told by Andak Jameah was slightly closer to a story called “The Legend of White Semang” collected by Maxwell (1882). In this legend, a Malay prince named Nakhoda Kassim, came to Perak and married a Semang girl who possessed white blood. Nakhoda Kassim then established his rule and became the first raja of Perak (cf Eusoff, 1995). With the exception of the *chermor* of *Si Tenggang*, a *Seng-oi* who married a Malay princess, many other *chermor* describe the inter-marriage between the Malay rajas and *Seng-oi* girls (see Edo, 1990; 1997). These *chermor* are an indication of the common derivation of these two peoples and the relation between the *Seng-oi* and the Malay rajas of the ancient Malay states.
Early Life in Perak Lowland

A few days later, I went to Ata’ Bek Makar’s house again. I believed he would be at home because of a heavy downpour during the previous night. When I reached his house, however, his daughter told me that her father had gone to Bek Tambun’s shop. I quickly went to Bek Tambun’s shop-house at Baring, a distance of about fifty minutes walk from Ajoinj. It was a good opportunity to talk to both of them at once.

Before starting to narrate the chermor, Bek Tambun asked his uncle, Ata’ Bek Makar, about what he had been telling me. It transpired that Bek Tambun had learned the chermor from almost the same sources as his uncle; that is his grandfather, Mat Melaka, his grandmother, his parents and his uncles, Ata’ Bek Pakai and Ata’ Bek Makar himself. According to Bek Tambun, he learned the chermor from these sources when he was young. In the old days, especially before the Japanese occupation, when there was no television, he spent his evenings asking about the chermor as well as learning the jampi from the elders. After telling his life history, Bek Tambun started narrating the chermor. According to him:

Long after the Siap, or Tok Betangkuk (or Nakhoda Kassim) arrived, the Gop started coming into the area. The Gop occupied both sides of Perak river, including Lambor. At first, the Seng-oi were neighbours with the Gop. They developed interaction with a few good Gop, and avoided the Gop who were bad, or jahat. Among the Seng-oi, there was a man named Bah Ladi, sometimes known as Kulup Ladi, who traded his jungle products in the Gop village along the Perak river, referred to as Gop Pirag. At first, Bah Ladi was very generous. He exchanged his products for salt, machetes, and clothes. But later on, the Gop began to cheat him. They just exchanged his products for a little tobacco, which was not worth the value of his products. At last the Gop took his jungle products without exchange for any goods, and regarded him as a slave. Whatever they wanted, the Gop just told Bah Ladi to search out for them. The Gop did not know that Bah Ladi was a good healer and a powerful magic man. His bad experiences made him undertake a silent revenge. On one occasion, the Gop asked him to look for a palm roof. He got it, but was only given a little tobacco in exchange. After he walked away from that house, the palm roof disappeared. Bah Ladi asked his spirit guide to steal the roof. Then he sold the same roof to another Gop, and did the same thing several times. Sometimes, he sold the same product three or four times, and stopped when he had enough goods to equal the value of the product he sold. However, he just did that to Gop who were jahat or who used to cheat (kicek) him. He did not do it or apply his magic to the Gop who were good (bor).

On another occasion, Bah Ladi traded his products until late afternoon. He felt hungry and went to a Gop house which he knew better. Unfortunately, the Gop whom he knew was not at home, only his arrogant wife named Kak Timah was
there. Bah Ladi just wanted to borrow a pot and asked for some firewood to cook his food. However, Kak Timah just gave him a coconut shell, and no firewood. Kak Timah told Bah Ladi that the *Seng-oi* need not cook their food because they used to eat it raw. If Bah Ladi really wanted to cook his food, Kak Timah advised him to cut his calf and use it as firewood. After Bah Ladi cut his calf and burned it as firewood, Kak Timah laughed at Bah Ladi for his foolishness and then went into the house and slammed her door. She kept on laughing in the house, talking to herself about Bah Ladi’s foolishness, and other bad things about *Seng-oi* life. After he finished eating, Bah Ladi thanked the arrogant wife and told her that he wanted to go. Kak Timah did not welcome Bah Ladi’s gratitude, since according to *Gop* tradition she had to reply *sama-sama* when someone thanked her. However, she urged Bah Ladi to leave her house very quickly because she did not want to see dirty people like the *Seng-oi* sit in her house area. Bah Ladi walked away. Immediately after he disappeared, Kak Timah opened her door and watched over the place where Bah Ladi had cooked his food. Suddenly, she found half the main pillar of her house cut. She was very angry, and cried loudly.

Bah Ladi’s naughtiness made the *Gop* angry at him. Some of the *Gop* who were jahat tried to give him a lesson by beating him. On one occasion, Bah Ladi walked home alone. When he got to the fringe of the *Gop* village, a group of *Gop* detained him and beat him with thick wood. After struggling a while, the *Gop* suddenly found that the thing that they had detained and beaten was just a frond of coconut leaf. The *Gop* became very angry, and this time they wanted to kill him. After that, Bah Ladi was ambushed on his way home. Immediately he got to the fringe of the *Gop* village, a group of *Gop* speared him, and struck him all over his body. He fell down. The *Gop* ran towards him with choppers (in Malay, *parang*) in their hands. However, they found the thing that they had speared was not Bah Ladi, but just a banana tree. The *Gop* became very very angry, although some of them felt astonished. Long after that Bah Ladi told the *Gop* that it was very easy to kill him. He asked the *Gop* to tie him with lead (or *timah*), and then throw him into the Perak river. The *Gop* who were angry with him started collecting lead. When they got enough, they tied it around Bah Ladi’s body and then they threw him into the river. Bah Ladi sank with tens of catties of lead. The *Gop* were happy and shouted at their success. However, they immediately stopped their laughing when they heard Bah Ladi’s voice hawking lead on the other side of the river. After failing in all their attempts to kill Bah Ladi, the *Gop* gave up, and realised that Bah Ladi was a good healer. After that, Bah Ladi disappeared. His people moved deep into the interior after the *Gop* came and occupied their area.

Bek Tambun stopped the *chermor* to serve a customer, the step-father of Wa Enchorn, who had come to buy rice and sugar.

Ata’ Bek Jarah told me the same *chermor* during the time I was healing my backache a few months later. He narrated almost the same version as Bek Tambun and Ata’ Bek Makar. He, however, had an answer for Bah Ladi’s disappearance. According to him:

After Bah Ladi had cheated a few times, the *Gop* reported his case to the *raja*’. The latter then sent his people to Bah Ladi’s village to detain him. Bah Ladi then voluntarily surrendered as he was not going to offend the head of the state. He was then put under detention, probably in Senggang or Sayong, where the *raja*’
was residing. The raja’, however, detained Bah Ladi for a short period only and released him secretly after learning that he was a good healer who could escape at any time he wished. The raja’ had to do it secretly to avoid complaints from his Gop subjects or rakyat. The raja’ then appointed Bah Ladi as royal healer or Pawang Di Raja and bestowed on him the title Pawang Uda because Bah Ladi’s real name was Uda Ladi. Bah Ladi served the raja’ until the end of his life.

Nevertheless, Ata’ Bek Jarah agreed with Bek Tambun and Ata’ Bek Makar that the rest of Bah Ladi’s family fled from Lambor after his detention and took up residence in Sangka Jadi or Berkei area.

The Shifting After Lambor

While Bek Tambun served his customer, Ata’ Bek Makar continued the chermor.

When the Gop gathered in Lambor, some of them who were jahat took over the Seng-oi’s land and treated the Seng-oi as slaves, animals and kafir. The Seng-oi felt ashamed (haib) and moved away from Lambor. In their first move they tried to explore new areas downriver. They sailed downstream by bamboo raft, and found that most of the area along the Perak river had been occupied by the Gop. They stopped at a place, probably Pulau Tiga, seeing from the river that the area had no inhabitants. However, soon after they moved inland, they found most of that area was also occupied. After they had a few days rest in the Pulau Tiga, they decided to move back to Lambor. They went upriver on foot, and took weeks to reach their old village. When they reached Lambor, they found all their gardens occupied by Gop, except their village area. Since there was no land to plant their food, the Seng-oi decided to move away from the Gop into interior areas and resettled in a place called Sakai Jadi or Sangka Jadi.

Bek Tambun, however, countered his uncle’s chermor and said that the Seng-oi did not explore the areas downstream because they knew that the Gop who came from downriver had occupied the areas. According to him, the Seng-oi fled straight from Lambor into the interior and then resettled in Sangka Jadi. He then took a turn narrating the chermor and gave another version of why the Seng-oi fled from Lambor. This chermor seems to show that the Seng-oi moved because they wanted to escape from becoming slaves, that is, they did not want to serve a Malay chief. The chermor began when a Malay chief involved in trading arrived in Lambor and established a close relationship with the hala’, a Seng-oi community leader of Lambor.

After a long time knowing each other, the Malay chief asked to marry a daughter of the hala’. At first, the hala’ refused, and his daughter also did not want to convert to Islam, but finally the hala’ changed his mind to show his appreciation of their relationship. After a while, the Malay chief’s wife got pregnant, while he continued his trade upriver, sometimes taking tens of days, then coming back to
the village and then going again. One day, the time when his wife was close to giving birth, the Malay chief told his father-in-law, the hala', that he would sail upriver for the last time, and after that he would go back to his own village downriver. On his way back, he would collect only his child, who would be born soon. He did not want to take his Seng-oi wife along because he had a Muslim wife. He also wanted to take along Seng-oi young men to work in his business and to be the crew of his barge. The Malay chief then sailed upriver together with his people. Meanwhile, his Seng-oi wife gave birth to a boy. The hala' was very unhappy at being cheated by his close friend, because before marrying his daughter, the Malay chief had told him he was a widower. In addition, his daughter also loved her just-born baby, while the young men refused to serve as crew because they knew paddling the yacht was much harder than opening selai (paddy field). For these reasons, the people fled from Lambor to the Berkei area.

At the time the Seng-oi settled in Sangka Jadi, a Gop settlement had already been established upriver. Sangka Jadi has its own story. It is said to have been a dumping ground where the Gop banished unwanted people who suffered from serious and incurable diseases.

When the Seng-oi arrived in the area, they found a Gop boy abandoned (bi passar) there. The boy suffered from an incurable skin disease which looked like leprosy. The Gop had abandoned the boy far away from their village because they were afraid the disease would spread to another village. The Seng-oi stopped there and adopted the Gop boy. They decided to do this because their hala' dreamed that the boy was spiritually powerful (betuah), and would help the Seng-oi in the future. The place where they stopped was also ‘cool’ (sengijh), and was a good place to establish a settlement. The Seng-oi believed that the Gop would not follow them into the area since it was a dumping ground which was considerably bad, or sial. Then, the hala' healed the Gop boy until he recovered from his disease. He grew up with the Seng-oi.

When the boy was young, a disturbing event occurred in the Gop dengri', where his original family lived. After their raja' died, the Gop of the dengri' faced a problem in appointing a new Raja' to rule the dengri' because nobody was willing to hold the post. Many people had offered to ‘occupy’ the highest hierarchy before, but all of them had died because they were not supernaturally entitled (in Malay, tidak berdaulat) to hold that position, as they did not possess royal blood. As a result, no Gop in that dengri' was willing to be the raja'. Once the dengri' had no rulers, the situation became chaotic because everybody considered themselves as raja'. They did whatever they wanted without considering or respecting their own customs and values, and acted without concern for their neighbours. A distinguished shaman (bomoh) of the dengri' then dreamed of an old man who told him about a boy whom they had abandoned long before. According to his dream, only that boy could become the raja' and save their dengri' because he had the daulat, and possessed the royal blood. After this, the Gop started to look for the boy.

When they arrived at the Seng-oi dengri', they met an elder and asked whether the Seng-oi had found the boy whom they had abandoned long ago. The elder then pointed to the tough and healthy young man who sat beside him. The Gop were so surprised to find the young man was so healthy, without any serious skin disease or scars on his body. The Gop told the elder that their bomoh required the young man to come back to their dengri' and become the raja' to save the people
from chaos. The elder, who had become the adopted father of the young man, advised his adopted son to go back to his real family, be a *raja'*, and save the *dengri'* from which he had originated. The young man took a few days to make his decision, and at last agreed to go back to his own family. He then became a *raja’* of that *dengri’. The *Gop* of the *dengri* also became peaceful (*aman*) after his appointment. He, however, still maintained his relationship with his adopted family and declared the *Seng-oi* as his people (*rakyat*). He always visited the village and hunted together with the *Seng-oi*. The *raja’* advised the *Gop* of his *dengri*’ not to look down or interfere with his adopted family’s way of life, as well as their area because the *Seng-oi* had also become his *rakyat*, and had been given the same social status as other *rakyat*, including the *Gop*. When he died, the *raja’* who replaced him did not continue the palace’s relationship with the *Seng-oi*. Long after that, the *Seng-oi* moved from Sakai Jadi to the lower area downhill nearby the Temboh river.

The name of the area, Sakai Jadi, is said to derive from the event told in this *chermor*, since the adopted son of the *Seng-oi* was referred to by the *Gop* as *sakai* and became (*jadi*) the *raja’* of that *dengri*. In a second version of the *chermor*, the place was named Sangka Jadi instead of Sakai Jadi, after an incident when the *Gop* of that *dengri* thought (*sangka*) that the young man who had become *raja’* (*jadi*) was a *Seng-oi*. In yet another version of the *chermor*, the term *sangka jadi* came from the *Seng-oi* themselves. According to this *chermor*:

Before the young man who was their adopted family member became the *raja’,* he had to convert to Islam. After he became the *raja’,* he used to visit his family, together with his *pembesar*. The *pembesar* tried many times to persuade the *Seng-oi* to become Muslim, but the *Seng-oi* refused. The *Seng-oi* then thought that the *pembesar* might force them to convert to Islam, which they regarded as equivalent to becoming a *Gop*. Since they were so afraid of that conversion, they fled from the area. According to this *chermor*, this part of which was narrated in Malay, “*kami lari sebab kami sangka jadi Gop,“* (we ran because we thought that we would become *Gop*)

Continuing the *chermor*, Bek Tambun said that the abandoned settlement was then named by the *Gop* as Sangka Jadi. Both Bek Tambun and Ata’ Bek Makar agreed that the *Seng-oi* who fled from Sangka Jadi might have become the founders of the Bunut (now called Temboh Bekett) village, considered to be the oldest *Seng-oi* village in the lowland (*bareh*) area, or *mai direh*. People from this village then established other villages such as Air Denak and Bekau. Later, the people from Temboh Bekett split into various groups, which then became the founders of other villages around Temboh Bekett, such as Teaw Mengkuang, Teaw Ba’, and Pai Teerd. All of these villages were then combined to become a bigger village called Bota, with Temboh Bekett and other villages around it becoming the sub-villages of Bota. From these villages, the young men moved to other places to look for spouses (*kenah*). This phenomenon, which is referred
to in Malay as *merantau* (wandering), is a product of the *Seng-oi* marriage system, which disallowed marriages between family members. Men from outside came into these villages with the main purpose of looking for their *kenah*, and to develop a new life with their own families. I asked the late Andak Jameah why her father, Long Jeroneh, had moved far away from Salu’ near Kampar town to Temboh Bekett. She replied that there was nothing more important for her father than to move far away to Temboh Bekett to look for a *kenah*.

According to Ata’ Bek Jarah’s version, the *Seng-oi* from Lambor did not flee straight to Berkei but first resettled in the area around Temboh river. The *Seng-oi*, however, still felt insecure living in the area and moved further into the interior. From Temboh, however, they decided to split into two groups. One group moved to Berkei area while another moved to Sanglop in the Larut District of the central State of Perak. Ata’ Bek Jarah narrated a similar *chermor* about *Seng-oi* life in the Berkei area, which he probably obtained from the same source as Ata’ Bek Makar. In addition, Ata’ Bek Jarah knew a *chermor* about the *Seng-oi* who moved to Sanglop. According to him, the *Seng-oi* had lived in Sanglop for at least a hundred years before the Dutch or *Belanda* era. The increase in mining activity during the *Belanda* era affected *Seng-oi* settlement of the Sanglop area. Ata’ Bek Jarah added that:

Although the *Seng-oi* never confronted the Dutch, they fled from Sanglop after they learned that the Dutch were fierce and cruel. The *Seng-oi* split into groups and moved into various places. Some of the people moved back to Temboh area and established a new village there called Temboh Bekett. The rest moved to Sedaput (now Batu Gajah), Salu’, Papart, Doug and Bipog (all of which were located on the slopes of the Titiwangsa range), Paloh (now Kampung Paloh of Ipoh City) and the slopes of Keledang mountain. In Batu Gajah, the group lived in various places called Air Mati and Air Tenang, both of which are located on the Kinta river. They then moved to Changkat Belingkor (also known as *Chenan Belingkor*) and then to Bemban and finally came to reside in Denak. The people who moved to Papart lived with the *Kerinchi* people. The people on the slopes of Keledang mountain had a different story. They had lived around the area for a long time, until the early British era. One of their economic activities was collecting and selling rattan. They sold the commodity to Papan, the nearest small township, or *pekan* from their settlement. Towards the end of their settlement in the Keledang area, the *Seng-oi* leader well-known as Ata’ Dayung established a close relationship with a local Malay chief, Raja Dollah, who governed Papan township. When the British came, the colonial power took over the administration from Raja Dollah. The British also employed a number of officers and a small troop of guards to govern the area. One day, Ata’ Dayung and his people came to Papan to sell their rattan. After selling the products, they were approached by a group of five guards, most of whom were *Benggali* people, and a Malay officer. The officer asked Ata’ Dayung and his people to pay tax for their selling of the
commodity. Ata' Dayung refused to do so because they had never paid such taxes before. The two parties then entered into an argument, in which the Malay officer insulted Ata' Dayung and his people by referring to them as equal to animals who lived without law. He also threatened to put the Seng-oi into jail if they failed to pay the tax. The situation became worse when Raja Dollah, who had begun to lose his power, backed the Seng-oi and accused the Malay officer of becoming a 'puppet' of the British colonials and confiscated his administration rights over the area. The quarrel ended with bloodshed, in which all the policemen were killed and the Malay officer was injured. Raja Dollah then advised Ata' Dayung to hide deep in the jungle and trade his rattan to the township on the other side of the Keledang mountain. Ata' Dayung and some of his people went to join his distant relatives in Denak, while the rest of them went to reside in Temboh Bekett, both of which were located at the other side of the Keledang mountain next to the Papan township. Long after that, the people who had gone to reside in Temboh Bekett, came back into the Keledang area to cultivate paddy. These people then established Bekau, followed by Perah.

By the end of the eighteenth century, the Dutch influence had decreased and control over the tin trade had been slowly taken over by the British (see Winstedt and Wilkinson, 1974). In his chermor, Ata' Bek Jarah mentioned that:

Long after the Belanda era, the Seng-oi of Salu', Papart and Doug got together and went to the lowland area with the main aim of reoccupying their old village, Sanglop. However, the area had been destroyed by mining activities and was occupied by the Gap. The Seng-oi then moved south to the Teja area and opened paddy fields there. After tens of years shifting around the area, they finally established a village in the area called Teaw Batu'. After a few generations living in Teaw Batu', the area was purchased during the early British era by a Chinese tycoon for mining. The people were forced to evacuate the area, and once again split into groups, moving to Gedong Batu', Teaw Mencharg of Kampar, Kelubi (or Padag Krikal), Gumpei, Mendang, and Perah. Some of them went back to Doug and Bipog.

At the end his chermor, Ata' Bek Jarah said that accounts of life in Sanglop and of all subsequent events are considered oral histories (penasal) rather than myths because from that point they are able to trace their ancestors: their names, gu, and movements. Ata' Bek Jarah claims himself to be a descendant of Pandak Kace, whose father moved from Sanglop to Paloh during the Belanda era. Pandak Kace was born and spent most of his life in Paloh, where he obtained his title, Tok Pawang Setia Di Raja, from the Sultan of Perak. Later, Tok Pawang Setia Di Raja and his gu moved to Busut, where he died and was buried. The majority of his descendants now live in Denak, Temboh Bekett, Gumpei (now Tangkai Chermin), and Perah.
Conclusion

The chermor serve as the fundamental basis for Seng-oi claims to pasak identity. They indicate that the Seng-oi were the first inhabitants of Peninsular Malaysia. Seng-oi claims over land and their pasak identity is essentially based on a view that the pasak people are the descendants of the original inhabitants of the dengri' (see Burger, 1987). This is then strengthened by their belief which suggests that soil in particular areas is viewed as having family links with its inhabitants. Such an idea becomes the basis for claiming pasak identity over those areas, most of which were Seng-oi villages. Later, however, the Seng-oi began to lose their pasak rights over ancestral areas when the new settlers arrived. In response to this situation, as most of my respondents, such as Ata' Bek Makar, Andak Jameah and Long Apon of Perah as well as Keling Nawan and Panjang Long of Tangkai Chermin agreed the Seng-oi moved to various other places including those mentioned in the chermor. The chermor are consistent with the Seng-oi claim narrated by the elders, that, in the old days, the Seng-oi were ‘pushed’ (or desak) by the Gop into the interior (Edo, 1990). This claim seems to fit with the older theory of the peopling of Peninsula Malaysia, which has often been repeated in Malaysian history and geography during the last-half century (see Benjamin, 1987). This theory is expressed by an archaeological analogy that the natives of Peninsula Malaysia are like a layer-cake (kueh lapis). Each segment of the population is a constituent layer of a gigantic layer-cake, with the "Negritos" at the bottom, then the Senoi, followed by the so-called “Proto-Malay”, with the final and topmost layer supposedly made up of the “Deutero-Malays”, the people usually referred to, in ordinary speech, simply as “the Malays”. This theory suggests that the Negritos were the first inhabitants in Peninsula Malaysia, who occupied both high and lowland areas. The Negrito were then pushed into the interior by the Senoi, who came and took over the low land area. Then the Proto-Malay came and pushed the Senoi into the interior, and finally the Proto-Malay were pushed interior by the Deutero-Malay, who occupied most of the coastal and lowland areas of Peninsula Malaysia.

This theory, however, does not correlate with the Seng-oi chermor and their claims in other oral histories. The chermor do not claim that the Proto-Malay, who were represented by the Temuan, pushed the Seng-oi (Senoi). In the chermor about their lives in Melaka, both of these groups lived together. The
Seng-oi regarded the Temuan as their long lost relatives. Moreover, the Temuan came to the dengri' adeh (Melaka) in small numbers, and were therefore unable to push the Seng-oi away from the area. Both groups were then pushed into the interior by the Gop, who came to Melaka in large numbers. The chermor of Lambor show that the Seng-oi were pushed into the interior by the Gop. Later, colonial powers such as the Dutch and the British, together with Chinese miners, were also involved in displacing the Seng-oi from their permanent villages. This sort of data is probably the weak link in the layer-cake theory, which led professional prehistorians to reject it. Unfortunately, its rejection by specialists has done little to reduce the entrenched position of this theory in the popular imagination of Malaysians at large, or indeed in the intellectual baggage of scholars in related fields of research (Benjamin, 1987).

1 While writing this thesis, I received news that Mara' Semae had died in a road accident on 24 June 1997. He was hit by a bus on his way to visit a relative in Gedong Batu'.

2 Dengri' adeh means this homeland. The term dengri' is borrowed from a Malay word, negeri, which means state or country. In Seng-oi, dengri' carries a broader meaning of homeland which includes country, state, territory and village. Its meaning depends on the context of the story.

3 Tapah is the largest Malaysian fresh-water fish. Sometimes it can weigh up to one picul.

4 He talked until late afternoon. I got hungry but managed to continue to listen. However, Pak Yan, who came to accompany me, could not stand the hunger as his fingers began to shake. Ata' Bek Makar laughed at us and said, "I warned you that this story is long, and according to its tradition, I cannot stop telling until the story finishes." I just smiled and replied, "next time we will bring along our food."

5 This length of time, seven, then became the secret number of the community. They have to perform all rituals in seven days or nights in order to obtain a satisfactory result.

6 However, I became confused between Mekah and Mengkah, another place name which appeared in Mara' Semae's chermor. I became curious when I found this name also appeared in other Seng-oi oral traditions, especially jenampi'. I heard the midwives frequently cite it in their healing verses. However, according to Andak Jameah, who used to be a traditional midwife, the name recited in a midwife's jenampi is Mengkah Sagarr, and not Mengkah. Mengkah Sagarr is the name of a place where the soul or kloog of the dead resides and is located in the direction of sunrise. This gives the impression that the Seng-oi would have also come from this direction because those healing verses are most likely to have been linked with, or related to, the chermor. Andak Jameah added that there was a difference between the direction of Mengkah Sagarr and Mekah; the Mengkah Sagarr being located on the east side while the Mekah is on the west, referred to as jengleed. I checked this matter with Ata' Bek Makar in order to get a clearer understanding about this notion. However, Ata' Bek Makar did not answer but just said, "ng kedei lek hei," meaning he never knew about it. He then gave me a "guess", saying that the Mengkah is a place where kloog of the dead rest, and is probably heaven. I wondered why this hala' refused to tell me more about Mengkah.
Finally, Bek Tambun, who had abandoned the healing tradition after his conversion to Christianity, gave me some explanation to help satisfy my curiosity. According to him, the “guess” and “confession” of his uncle, Ata’ Bek Makar, that he lacked knowledge and was unable to help me in exploring Seng-oi ideas about their origin might be genuine as he did not want to tell a lie or beda-ah. On the other hand, he might have also been trying to avoid talking about terms which are considered to be secret in the healing system, such as certain key terms in their jenampi verses. Bek Tambun took beer as an analogy. According to him, the key ingredient of beer is alcohol, referred to as spirit, which can make people drunk. If people consume the spirit regularly and get used to it, they will not get drunk when taking beer. It is the same with the jenampi. If people regularly talk about its key terms, which are used as the main tool to curse the penyakit, the penyakit will get used to it. This will result in the jenampi losing its effectiveness to cure the penyakit. I then understood the reason, but was still unclear about the existence of Mengkah in Seng-oi minds. I presumed that there must be reasons or events in the past which explained the existence of this notion. Nonetheless, I had to abandon my search for a while because no one in Perah nor any of my respondents in Tangkai Chermin could help me find the answer.

A few months later I had a serious backache and went to see Ata’ Bek Makar seeking his help to heal me. He then advised me to get a traditional massage from his second cousin, Ata’ Bek Jarah, a pensioner of the JHEOA who had converted to Islam. He lived with his Malay wife in Ipoh and occasionally came to Perah to visit his brother, Ata’ Bek Apok, who had also converted to Islam and lived in Ajoinj. I then arranged for Ata’ Bek Jarah to come to my house. I had two targets to achieve. First, I wanted to heal my backache and secondly, I wanted to use this opportunity to ask him about the chermor of origin of the Seng-oi people, especially to search for an answer to my question about Mengkah. I was very lucky then, as I managed to fulfil both of these goals.

Regarding the chermor of origin, Ata’ Bek Jarah had also learned from his late grandmother that the Seng-oi came from the last descendant of Prophet Adam and came to the dengri’ adeh from Mekah. However, according to his grandfather, well-known as Ata’ Pawang, the Seng-oi did not come to the dengri’ adeh straight away from Mekah but through China (Dengri’ China’). According to his narration:

“All families from the last descendant of Prophet Adam migrated from Mekah by land in the direction of sunrise. They then stopped in China’ and established a village which then turned into a city (kedeti). Tens of generations after that, a large number of people came and resettled in their city. The new comers became dominant and took over lands belonging to local or pasak people, which resulted in a civil war. Thousands of pasak people were killed. That situation forced the pasak to flee from the city. In their escape, they once again moved toward the direction of sunrise, but then became stranded at the seashore. Meanwhile, the dominant people kept on tracking them in an attempt to commit genocide. The “refugees” then took the decision to escape by sea. Each gu, or group, built their own raft and started sailing soon after they finished building it. They depended on wind to “blow” their rafts to various unknown destinations. After a long sailing, only six gu landed in the dengri’ adeh, while the rest either drowned and died or landed in other places or islands. These six gu are believed to be the ancestors of the Seng-oi of the dengri’ adeh.”

However, these gu did not land in one place but separately along the coast. Their separation was brought about by the wind, which blew their rafts into separate areas. The first gu landed on the mengkah side, which means the east coast, while the last one landed on the jengleed or west coast of the dengri’ adeh. Each gu then established its own settlements and lived there for a long time. They then moved inland when the Gop came and flooded the coastal areas. Those gu then established their villages in different places in the interior. When one gu became large, it separated into various gu and each of the gu established their own settlements. This process went on continuously. This way of life resulted in Seng-oi villages being small and scattered all over the place as they are today. Although these gu
live in separate villages, they still maintain their family links both among the members of their own village and of their own territory.

In searching for the origin of the Seng-oi, Ata' Bek Jarah strongly believes that Mekah was the centre of human development, although the chermor of his grandfather, Tok Pawang, implied that the Seng-oi came from China. In maintaining his grandfather's chermor, he assumes that the Seng-oi came from Mekah via China. He also claimed that the Seng-oi came to the dengri' adeh as early as narrated in their chermor, and that they were the pasak of Peninsula Malaysia (see Note 1). In his search for equality, Ata' Bek Jarah strongly believes that human beings originated from the same root, the Prophet of Adam, and that all human beings belong to one God (see Note 2).

Ata' Bek Jarah's chermor also offer some explanation of mengkah, a term which generally means “the direction of the sunrise.” The land which is located in this direction is believed to be the homeland of Seng-oi ancestors in the past, which has now become the homeland of their ancestor soul or kloog. This chermor would be the source of the jampi verses of their healing system. On the other hand, the chermor carries a similar theme to the migration theories proposed by prehistorians such as Solheim (1980) and Bellwood (1993) and linguists such as Blagden (1894; 1903), Schmidt (1903) and Diffloth (1977; 1979); (see Note 3).

In regard to 'mengkah', however, Ata' Bek Jarah’s version still did not correlate with Mara’ Semae’s version. On my latest visit to Mara’ Semae, I asked him once again about this difference. As a hala’ who possessed this kind of knowledge, Mara’ Semae had no problem in clarifying this matter. According to him, Mekah and Mengkah are names for the same place: Mekah is the Malay term, while Mengkah is the Seng-oi term. “It seems that Mengkah originated from a Malay word, what do you think?” I asked, trying to get him to confirm this idea. “Mimang lor..., de Mengkah adeh eh ju sembout Gop. Kado’ kan penasal kemoij apak manah enteh eh, Mengkah adeh bi serbout Padag Judah. Tapi hiik huad jeh, je-oi hi pakei engrok Gop. Begey Nabi Adam adeh eh, de ku sembout manah enteh, Nyenang Raq. Begey ajih juga’ ku Tuhan, mai manah be sebout Nyenang. Ha.... de betul sembout hiik, ku Mengkah Sagarr. Ajih eh nyiknyuk sembout Gop,” explained Mara’ Semae, meaning, “That’s right..., Mengkah is a Malay word. According to my late father, this was referred to as Padag Judah. But our people nowadays use many Malay words. For example Nabi Adam, which according to the old term, was Nyenang Raq. Also Tuhan, which the old people used to refer to as Nyenang. Yet, the word which is ours, is Mengkah Sagarr. This is not a Malay word.” According to him, Mengkah Sagarr is a different place from Mengkah. It is the name of a section of heaven where the kloog of children reside, and it is located in the direction of the sunrise (this correlates with Andak Jameah’s explanation.) After answering this, Mara’ Semae said jokingly to me: “Why do you ask so much about this, do you want to go there, to visit your late son, perhaps?” I replied that, “I just wanted to know because it is part of Seng-oi culture. Otherwise, this knowledge will also ‘die’ when you die.” “Oo..., begeh ajih ka!” (meaning, “Oh..., like that!”) replied Mara’ Semae, while nodding his head, showing that he understood the purpose of my questions.

According to him, the six gu did not land in one place but separately along the coast. Their separation was brought about by the wind, which blew their rafts into separate areas. The first gu landed on the mengkah side, which means the east coast, while the last one landed on the jengleed or west coast of the dengri' adeh. Each gu then established its own settlements and lived there for a long time. They then moved inland when the Gop came and flooded the coastal areas. Those gu then established their villages in different places in the interior. When one gu became large, it separated into various gu and each of the gu established their own settlements. This process went on continuously. This way of life resulted in Seng-oi villages being small and scattered all over the place as they are today. Although these gu live in separate villages, they still maintain their family links both among the members of their own village and of their own territory.
Note 1: Some scholars claim that the Seng-oi came to Peninsula Malaysia about 25,000 years ago (cf. Carey, 1976: 13).

Note 2: As a result, each race should not feel superior while the others are inferior. "You might have been influenced by Islamic thought, I suppose?" I tried to provoke Ata’ Bek Jarah. "No, essentially there are not many differences between Islamic thought and Seng-oi ideas. I have experience of both which has enabled me to make a comparison. The problem now lies with human beings themselves, who tend to use their minds, either knowledge or religious thought, and their social position to discriminate against others. Human minds and attitudes caused the problem which differentiates religious ideology and its followers and Seng-oi ideas." Ata’ Bek Jarah, said, showing his maturity.

Note 3: Linguistic data shows the Seng-oi speak a language which is in the same language family as the Mon-Khmer people: both speak Austro-Asiatic languages (Benjamin, 1976; Diffloth, 1974; Bellwood, 1985). This similarity suggests that the Seng-oi might have migrated from the north, particularly Cambodia and Vietnam, the homeland of the majority of Austro-Asiatic speakers. However, there is no clear data showing the Seng-oi pattern of migration to Peninsula Malaysia, presumably by land because Austro-Asiatic speakers are mainly inland or hill people. Archeologists, such as Solheim (1980), who has tried to separate the Seng-oi from the coastal area, suggest that the Semang-Negrito were the original occupants of the coastal shell mounds, while the ancestor of Senoi [Seng-oi] lived in the limestone areas inland (cf Bellwood, 1993: 43). Anthropologists, such as Rambo (1988), on the other hand, seem to support the chermor of the Seng-oi. Rambo believes the ancestors of both groups lived near the coasts during the Hoabinhian and only moved inland after the arrival of agriculture (cf Bellwood, 1993: 43). Disregarding these theoretical debates, Ata’ Bek Jarah claimed that the Seng-oi came as early as narrated in their chermor and were the pasak of the dengri’ adeh.

The people believe that the behumi’ now is very old and always unwell. Sometimes it becomes sick and shakes, which creates earthquakes, and sometimes it vomits, which produces volcanic eruptions

Depa’ is a native fathom which is the span from finger-tip to finger-tip of a person’s outstretched arms

These helpers are believed to be the origin of mai nengri’, (the men of the state), the spiritual beings which are believed to be the guardians of areas on earth. However, the people of both Perah and Tangkai Chermin refer to the spiritual guardians of their areas as Pangkal Tiik (the roots of the earth).

This is the origin of the marriage adat where a man should give a ring to the woman that he wants to marry.

The phrase, “surrender to Nyenang’s will,” is expressed as tawakkal in Arabic, and is pronounced by the Seng-oi as tuakal.

His stick is believed to be the origin of Tongkat Ali plant. I told Ata’ Bek Makar that the Seng-oi refer to this plant as jelars and asked for his comment. He told me that both names refer to the same plant. However, the name jelars is mainly used by the Seng-oi of the highland while the lowland people use Tongkat Ali. I presume that this is due to their relationship with the Malay, including the raja, as narrated in the chermor. The chermor of origin, in particular, would also probably show Malay influence and the influence of other religions as well.

The chermor indicated that the last son of Adam was born into the world from Adam’s wishes (or prayer) to Nyenang and not from his association with Hawa. In other words, he was not delivered by Hawa. The descendants of this son, therefore, lacked bargaining power and had to move from Mengkah.
This rolled tobacco, *bakau kampar*, is named after the Kampar town where the tobacco is made by small scale Chinese companies which market it to rural areas.

Temuan is categorised as a Proto-Malay sub-group. They have their own myths about their origin (see Skeat and Blagden, 1906; Gullick, 1949; Idris, 1968).

*Gop* is a specific term of reference for the people who came from Sumatra a long-long after the Temuan. They might have family links with the Temuan, but not with the *pasak* (Orang Asli or *Seng-oi*). These people then adopted Islam as their way of life. Today the term *Gop* specifically refers to Malay Muslims.

This is an example of a “folk etymology”, an idea based on a supposed etymological interpretation of some words. Folk etymology refers to the stories of origin of names of places, animals, plants, etc: such stories are told by other people throughout the world. It is important to attempt to understand stories from the narrators’ point of view, as well as their significance in cultural and historical context.

According to Mara’ Semae, the Batak were cannibals and came to capture and eat the *Seng-oi*.

*Jer* (pronounced as *jœr* in journey) is an expressive word used to indicate a feeling of loss or length of time. The first expression indicates losses caused by something falling down: the *Seng-oi* will spontaneously recite, *jer... jer...*, the moment they see something fall down, such as a glass falling down from a table, a boy falling down from a bicycle (or accident), or food falling from their hand. In this expression, the *jer* is only recited two or three times. The second expression indicates length of time. The narrator will recite, *jer..., jer...,* to indicate a certain period in their *chermor*. The length depends on how many times *jer* is recited: the greater the number of *jer* the longer time it was. Sometimes the narrator will recite it more than twenty times to indicate a very long period of time.

Hindu is a term used by the Malay (then borrowed by the *Seng-oi*) to refer to the Indian or Tamil people.

*Takraw* is a popular game in Southeast Asia. In Malaysia, this game was formerly known as *sepak raga jaring* but in Thailand it was known as *Takraw*. Malaysians then accepted the Thai name in order to popularise the game and to make it more international. It uses a court and net similar to badminton, and a rattan ball. The game is played by three players in a team against another team on the other side of the court. Players are only allowed to kick and head the ball and to kill it on the opponent’s side. Its scoring system is also similar to badminton.

Orang Laut is now reclassified as Orang Kuala and Orang Seletar.

According to Ata’ Bek Makar, the *Temir* (or *Temiar*) people who were met by Hang Tuah and the *Seng-oi* families in this *chermor* might be the group who are now settled in Bendang Kering, which is located near Kuala Kangsar, the Perak Royal City. Bendang Kering is the first Temir village in the lowland area (*bareh*) after the last Semai village, Bekau, in the central Perak area which borders the *Temir* areas. From Bendang Kering to the north are considered *Temir* areas, while from Bekau to the south are considered *Seng-oi* areas.

According to Mara’ Semae, the Chinese were the first outsiders to come to the State of Perak. However, they only stopped there for a while to fetch water, to collect firewood and other jungle products.

*Betuah* generally means lucky. In this context, however, it means superhuman and refers to people to whom *Nyenang* gave extra ordinary characters such as skillfulness in all aspects of life, having brilliant thinking and having a cool *ruwai* which meant they could communicate with supernatural beings and always be lucky.
The Seng-oi believed the people with white blood came from the swiig (literally, sky, or in Malay, kayangan), and referred to them as mai betuah (superhuman beings) for male, and peteri' (angels) for female. They came (or were, some said, sent by Nyenang) to behumi’ to help the desperate people obtain liberty and achieve a prosperous life.

Sama-sama is similar in meaning to ‘you are welcome’, or ‘same to you’, in reply to thank you.

This is another example of folk etymology.

This area has now been developed by a giant private company into an oil palm estate.

However, Ata’ Bek Makar was not quite sure about the establishment of these two villages. I then asked Bek Tambun and Wa’ Enchorn’s step-father the same question, and they came up with contradictory answers. Bek Tambun said that, “ngrok mai setengah jeh,” or some people said, that Denak village was established first, followed by Bekau, but some said the reverse. However, they agreed that some families from Temboh Bekett moved north and settled in Bekau, which is considered to be one of the older villages in the mai direh area.

Salu’ used to be a big Seng-oi village in mai ditah area. However, in the early 1900s the people moved from the village to the lowland areas, especially near Kampar town, to look for jobs. The village is now abandoned.

Historical data shows that the year 1639 marked the beginning of Dutch influence in Perak. They first become involved in tin trading when the Sultan of Perak, Sultan Mudzaffar Shah, gave them approval to wholesale the commodity and transport it along the Perak river. The Dutch built a few godowns in Pulau Pangkor and Tanjung Putus in the Larut District. Later, the Dutch gained control over the state and monopolised the tin trade along the west coast of the Malaya Peninsula. Many more tin godowns were built along the coast such as on the estuary of Selangor river and the estuary of the Linggi river. The Dutch monopoly established tin ore as a sellable commodity and stimulated the local people to become actively involved in mining (see Winstedt and Wilkinson, 1974: 24-60).

The Kerinchi were the were-tiger inhabitants. At certain times, the Kerinchi appeared to be human beings and were dressed like the Benggali people. At other times, they appeared to be tigers and even attacked men.

The chermor could also support the idea that the Seng-oi adopted an avoidance approach as a way of escaping slavery. The people of both Perah and Tangkai Chermin claim that they escaped from perag sangkil to a greater extent than the people in other areas, such as Salu’, Bipog, Chengriq, Gorl (Batang Padang), Telep and Bernem (Cerutti, 1908; Edo, 1990; 1993; Gomes, 1994). Ata’ Bek Makar assumed that this might be due to their close contact with the Malay chiefs or the Sultan of the ancient Malay state of Perak.
Chapter Five

HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS
Pre-colonial and Early British Era

Introduction

This chapter will explore the social history of Seng-oi of Perah and Tangkai Chermin in the transition period from the pre-colonial era to the early British era. It will cover the period of Britain’s early intervention in the State of Perak until 1941 when the Japanese occupied Malaya. I will again focus on the life stories of the grandfathers and great grandfathers of the elders in the two settlements I have researched. This discussion will begin with stories about their lives and experiences in the pre-colonial period, followed by stories about the early British era in the state. However, the discussion of these two periods may overlap because the Seng-oi in both Perah and Tangkai Chermin settlements were not aware of, or were confused about, these political changes. For them, the period of the early 1900s was still considered the era of Raja’ Gop because during that time they were still more closely associated with the Gop Sultan and his chiefs rather than the British Resident. In the following discussion, I will try to indicate the approximate dates of the events recounted in the life stories of the people in these two settlements, and relate them to the history of the period (see Appendix B).

Another task of this chapter is to trace the pattern of migration of the Seng-oi by examining their chermor within the perspective of Malaysian history in order to consider the main theme, that is the relationship between the Seng-oi people and their land.¹

Perah in the Transition Period

This section will trace the social history of the people who became the founders of Perah village. This social history will include the origin and the background of the three groups of Seng-oi families before they came and opened settlements in this village. The three groups who are involved are the family of the late Andak Jameah, the family of Ata’ Bek Makar, and the family of Long Apon (the
The following section will focus on the development of these families, and describe their life experiences and activities during the early British Era, up to World War II.

**Long Jeroneh and Andak Jameah**

The members of the family of the late Andak Jameah are considered to be the earliest settlers of Perah. They are referred to as *mai pasak* or *seng-oi pasak*, of Perah. Andak Jameah’s father, Long Jeroneh originated from a *mai ditah* village called Salu’, near a Batang Tonggang town, which is now called Kampar. Most of the people of Salu’ later moved to down-hill areas for a number of reasons. The people were looking for fertile land to plant paddy, and their preferred area had to be located near a river or swamp which was rich with fish. The area also had to be rich with jungle products, especially rattan. When Chinese traders came, the *Seng-oi* were actively involved in collecting rattan and sold it to the Chinese. Long Jeroneh and the people of Salu’ then opened a village called Teaw Batu’, located nearby the Malim Nawar township.

After a couple of seasons planting paddy in the area of Teaw Batu’, Long Jeroneh and his family moved to an area near a small township known as Sedapat, which is now known as Batu Gajah. They planted paddy there for a few seasons but then wanted to come back to the Teaw Batu’ area. Long Jeroneh, who was a young man (*lintau*) by this time, refused to accompany his family any longer, and decided to migrate to Temboh Bekett. Formerly, the *Seng-oi* men tended to leave their village, or go ‘wandering’ (in Malay, *merantau*), to look for a wife and build a new life outside their own village. Long Jeroneh then married Itam Perak, a young woman of Temboh Bekett, whose family originated from Denak and was related to Mat Melaka.

After living in Temboh Bekett for some time, Long Jeroneh decided to look for a new site for his family to open paddy fields (*selai*). They moved south to the Changkat Pinggan area of Batang Padang District, and moved about within that area for quite a long time until Long Jeroneh became middle aged. Occasionally, he and his family came back to Temboh Bekett to visit their family. Andak Jameah, Long Jeroneh’s sixth child was born in Temboh Bekett. Their last *selai* in the Changkat Pinggan area was known as Sempa’ Trog. They then moved
Chart 5.1: Andak Jameah's Family members

Chart 5.2: Mat Melaka and Long Apon's Family members
Plate 5.1: The Pioneer of Perah

Andak Jameah (first standing from left, holding a baby) with her family members - first son: Long Dahaman (extreme right, wearing hat); daughter-in-law: Ken Brasid (Dahaman’s wife, pregnant); adopted son: Lichoi (extreme left, wearing spectacles), who is now living in Kelubi; her last son: Anjang Sadang (sitting on the floor); and others - pictured in front of Dahaman’s house, the first planked-house built in the village (1961). Andak Jameah’s family members claimed to be the mai pasak of Perah.
north to areas near Siputeh and Ulu Lengkuas of Parit district. From Ulu Lengkuas, Long Jeroneh and his group joined his wife’s relatives in Bekau village, and settled there for several seasons. While there, Long Jeroneh and a few families of Bekau opened selai in the Perah area. Long Jeroneh regarded the Perah area as Seng-oi inherited land, or saka’, because long before that the area was occupied by the gu of Ata’ Dayong, who were the ancestors of his wife. They went to work in their selai ‘to and fro’ every day. When their paddy was ripe, Long Jeroneh and his group decided to live in the field to protect it from the attacks of birds and wild boar. They lived in the field until they finished harvesting. While waiting for the next harvest, they went back to Bekau, or sometimes to Temboh Bekett. Long Jeroneh liked the Perah area because the land was fertile and the Perah river was also rich with fish. After five or six seasons visiting their selai from Bekau, they decided to settle in the Perah area.

While in Bekau, Long Jeroneh, together with the penghulu of Bekau, went to Kuala Kangsar a few times to meet the Sultan of Perak, Sultan Idris Murshidul A’zam Shah (1887-1916). The Seng-oi paid their tribute to the Sultan every year after harvest. Sometimes they sent their tribute twice a year. In the middle of the year was the season of Tampoi fruit, which they sent to the Sultan together with palm-cabbage (palei) and other vegetables. They also had a good relationship with the Raja Bendahara of Teja, known as Marhum Kurus.

Long Jeroneh and his people carried on their selai tradition in the Perah area. When Sultan Idris passed away, the Perak Sultanate passed to Sultan Abdul Jalil in 1916. Just after Sultan Abdul Jalil was appointed, Long Jeroneh and the penghulu of Bekau visited the new Sultan and paid their tribute. During their meeting, Sultan Abdul Jalil suggested the Seng-oi settle in a permanent village or kampung and plant paddy, vegetables and raise domestic animals. That advice inspired Long Jeroneh to build a new community, rather than ‘squating’ in Bekau. He then decided to open a settlement at his old selai in the Perah area.

In the same season he met Sultan Abdul Jalil (1916), Long Jeroneh and three other families moved into Perah and settled in an area called Uda Belap. Andak Jameah still remembers the time they moved into the village because at the same time, as her father told them, Raja Abdul Jalil had just been appointed as the Sultan of Perak. The heads of the three families who joined Long Jeroneh were
Long Raja (the grandfather of my adopted father, Derboh), Bek Andak, and Ata’ Bek Apon (Long Apon’s maternal grandfather). During that time, Andak Jameah was a teenager, while Pertel, the son of Alang Tek, was still a small boy. Pertel used to live with his aunt, Andak Jameah. However, they settled there for only one season because Ata’ Bek Apon heard rumours that the Uda Belap area had been sold to the ‘white man’ or Mai Byeq, and so they would be charged for encroaching on private land. As a matter of fact, the area was proposed to be gazetted as the Keledang-Sayong Forest Reserve. The people became afraid of going to jail and fled a little further into the interior of Uda Belap and settled in an area called Kundur Itek. Long Jeroneh was very busy moving from one place to another, which made him fail to pay further tribute to Sultan Abdul Jalil for the season after their first meeting (1917). In the next season, Long Jeroneh also failed to fulfil his tribute to the Sultan, who passed away in 1918, two years after his appointment.

During their settlement in Kundur Itek, many families, most of whom were relatives of Long Jeroneh and his wife, came and settled there. Towards the end of their period of settlement in Kundur Itek, Long Jeroneh’s nephew, Alang Tek, better known as Bek Runjul, came along with his family from Teaw Batu’. The main reason they came was the attraction of the fertile land, and the Perah river which was rich with fish. The area was also rich with rattan, which they could collect and sell.

After one season living in Kundur Itek, Long Jeroneh joined the penghulu’ of Bekau and went to Kuala Kangsar to pay tribute to Sultan Alang Iskandar Shah, who had just been appointed as the Sultan in 1918. At that meeting, the Sultan suggested Long Jeroneh and his people settle permanently in the Perah area. According to the Sultan, this area was under his administration and he could thus ensure that his Gop rakyat would not interfere with Long Jeroneh in the area. The Sultan gave that assurance because the area had been gazetted as a Malay reserve in 1914, and was under his administration. After that meeting, however, Long Jeroneh and his people became confused as they heard rumours that the area was gazetted as State Land, referred to by the Gop as tanah TOL. Anyone, including the Gop, who wanted to work on the land had first to get a Temporary Occupational Licence or TOL. The Gop, who planted wet paddy in the area, abandoned their fields as they could not afford to pay the licence. Long Jeroneh
did not want to pay the licence since his family had worked the area for many seasons without paying any taxes, except the tribute to the Sultan, which they continued. Another problem was that the area of Kundur Itek was too small and was not enough for them to work. These two developments led Long Jeroneh and his people to leave Kundur Itek in the early 1920s and resettle in an area about one and a half miles in the interior, which is now called Baring. After about five or six seasons opening selai in Baring, the people from Denak who were led by Mara’ Nila’ came and settled in Ulu Panchor. This ’migration’ into the area was followed by Long Apon’s family who came from Teaw Batu’ and settled in Perah in the mid 1930s.

**Mat Melaka and Ata’ Bek Makar**

Ata’ Bek Makar was the son of Mat Melaka, and was born in Denak in the early 1900s. He was the seventh son of Mara’ Nile’ and the great grandson of Pandak Kace. According to the story of his family origin - which was also supported by his nephew (Bek Tambun) and later by his second cousin (Ata’ Bek Jarah) - his great grandfather (Pandak Kace) used to live in Paloh, a village established after the Dutch ‘conquered’ Sanglop. Pandak Kace was a well-known Hala’ and was close to Raja Ismail, who was then the Sultan of Perak. While Pandak Kace was in Paloh, the raja appointed him to the court and bestowed on him the title Tok Pawang Setia Di Raja together with regalia such as a shaman’s belt and head-wrapper (tengkolok). Almost every month Pandak Kace travelled to the palace of Sayong to perform duties for the raja. Since Paloh was located far from Sayong, the raja gave Pandak Kace an elephant as a means of transportation. However, when the Chinese started mining in the Paloh area and the number of Gop settlers increased, Pandak Kace felt disturbed and unhappy. Most of the Gop, who settled in the area were Rawa, a people who were identified in Sengoi’s history as slave raiders. Since Pandak Kace and his people were afraid that the Rawa may still want to capture and enslave them, and their uneasiness with the Chinese’s aggressiveness in snatching mining areas, they decided to leave the area. Having made their decision, Pandak Kace returned the elephant to the raja and moved to the Keledang area and settled in a place in the lower part of the Perah river called Bitam. Here, they lived together with a Gop named Napa Kaye, who worked as a middleman in trading fresh water fish. Pandak Kace and his family collected jungle products such as rattan, resin (damar), gutta-percha or taban (Dichopsis gutta), and fished. They sold these jungle products to Gop.
middlemen, including Napa Kaye. For those products, they were paid in silver coins called *Duit Rama*, each coin having a value of one *ringgit* or *seringgit*. However, they had a problem with Napa Kaye because he forced them to catch fish most of the time. Pandak Kace and his people wanted to engage in other work too. After a while, they felt uncomfortable living with Nyapo Kaye, and moved to various places around the area. After moving for a several seasons, they settled in a place called Busut, which was located in Lengkuas area. They lived there for quite a long time, and had a large *dusut* or fruit orchard.

According to Ata’ Bek Makar, Busut was the only *dusut* belonging to lowland *Seng-oi*, or *mai direh*, during that time. He added that the *Seng-oi*, who are referred to as *mai direh*, include the people of Denak, Bekau, Gumpey (or Sungai Galah), Teaw Ba’ (or Bota), and the surrounding villages. These people were previously referred to as *Pele’*, and were too ‘lazy’ to open a *dusut* because most of their area was swampy and not suited to fruit cultivation. The *Pele’* people used to move from one place to another looking for a dry area to open their paddy fields. On the other hand, the highland *Seng-oi*, or *mai ditah*, who were previously referred to as *Gelang Simpat*, were very persistent in cultivating fruit. As a result, there were a lot of *dusut* in *mai ditah* areas, particularly in the Gopeng and Sahom highlands known as *Doug* or *Bipog*. In terms of behaviour, the *Pele’* people were talkative but the *Gelang Simpat* were not. These peoples were non-aggressive, with the exception of the *Gelang Simpat*, who tended to seek silent revenge and to perform black magic against their rivals.5

By the time they moved to Busut, Pandak Kace’s relationship with the palace of Sayong had ended because he was getting old and was unable to make the long journeys to the palace. In the meantime, he started to pass his shamanistic skill down to his sons, the father of Mara’ Nile and Uda Semuk6 and to his young cousin, who was then known by his title Tok Gerak Machang. During their settlement in Busut, Uda Semuk and Tok Gerak Machang established a close relationship with another *Gop* chief, Raja Yusuf, who lived in Senggang and occasionally came down to Tanjung Belanja. Raja Yusuf was one of the raja who was involved in the rivalry between the princes (see Appendix B). Both Uda Semuk and Tok Gerak Machang then served as healers for Raja Yusuf. Uda Semuk was then given the title Uda Pawang, and was referred to by the people of Busut as Ata’ Pawang. Tok Gerak Machang, on the other hand, was skilled in
silat, a Gop martial art, and he therefore went through a different life history which led him to receiving his title. According to the story:

Tanjung Belanja was once visited by a Royal family from Acheh (but some said from Java). During that visit, both parties agreed to perform a fighting show. Since Tok Gerak Machang was skilled in silat, Raja Yusuf asked him to fight with an Achenese opponent. Tok Gerak Machang refused at first because the fight was just for fun. He told the raja that anybody could take part in such a show because it was not a real fight or war. The raja, however, wanted to keep his pride and insisted that Tok Gerak Machang represent Tanjung Belanja. Tok Gerak Machang finally accepted because he had to obey his raja. The fight took place under a horse-mango or Machang (Mangifera foetida) tree. The Achenese fighter attacked Tok Gerak Machang with his keris very rapidly and Tok Gerak Machang retreated because he was not serious about that fight. He considered it as just a show. In contrast, the Achenese was very serious, and finally forced Tok Gerak Machang to pull back to the Machang tree. The Achenese then had a good chance to stab Tok Gerak Machang. However, Tok Gerak Machang managed to escape by falling to the ground, which made the Achenese stab the Machang tree, and his keris stuck there. Tok Gerak Machang was very angry. He stood up and released his anger by shaking the Machang tree, which was as big as a rice gunny. All the Machang fruit fell down. Raja Yusuf stopped the fight and gave his fighter the title Tok Gerak Machang or 'the Machang shaker'.

Pandak Kace died in Busut and was then followed by Pawang Uda and Tok Gerak Machang. After that, Pandak Kace’s descendants abandoned the village and moved north to Teaw Ngor (now called Manong) and Berkei (also known as Sangka Jadi). They lived in various locations in these two areas for tens of years. They also engaged in selling rattan and other jungle products. One of the small towns (pekan) that they always visited to sell their products was Tanjung Belanja.

After this long period of moving around the Berkei and Teaw Ngor areas, Mara’ Nile’s father and his group settled with their relatives in Denak. At that time, Mara’ Nile’s father was already old; he died soon after they moved to Denak. Although the British Administration had been established in Perak in the late 1800s, the people of Denak still had strong ties with the Sultan of Perak. During the time Mara’ Nile’s family settled in Denak, the Sultan of Perak was Sultan Idris Mushidul’azam Shah I (1887-1916), who was then replaced by Sultan Abdul Jalil (1916-1918). Every year the people of Denak paid their tribute to the Sultan by sending rice and vegetables. For that purpose, each family was required to contribute five gantang of paddy. The penghulu would gather the paddy and vegetables from his people, and then call the villagers to pound the paddy, which took one or two days. When everything was ready, the penghulu and a few elders carried these ‘offering’ items to Kuala Kangsar, and delivered
them to the Sultan. This tradition was carried on until the time of Sultan Iskandar Shah (1918-1936), but began to fade when the British took control of the state.

Mara’ Nile’ was young when his family settled in Denak. He married a local girl of that village. With the advent of tin mining in areas nearby their village, the people of Denak shifted their economic activity from planting paddy to supplying sticks and logs to the mining companies. Mara’ Nile’ worked with the Denak villagers, selling wood to the English and Chinese mining companies around the area. The sticks, called *kachar* and *lungkut*, were used to shore up the banks of the mines to avoid land slides, while logs (or *tan*) were used to fuel the steam electric generator. The villagers were paid daily for the wood, and given some royalties by the Department of Forestry from the early 1920s. These royalties applied to all jungle products such as wood, rattan, *petai* fruit (*Parkia biglandulosa*), etc, that had been sold.\(^9\) In the case of Denak, the Department of Forestry gave the villagers five cents for every ton of wood they sold. These royalties were saved in a trust fund which was set up for them in recognition of their consistency in supplying the wood to the mining companies. After many years engaged in cutting and selling wood, Mara’ Nile’ retired from that activity. He was already middle-aged, and his children were teenagers. He then worked in a garden he cleared nearby his house, where he planted maize, bananas, sugar cane, tapioca and vegetables.

As a result of long and active involvement in supplying *kachar* and *lungkut* wood to the mining companies, the people of Denak lacked wood to build their houses and had to go far from their village to collect the necessary wood or *ramu’ deurg*. The villagers then collected money and bought a water buffalo (*kerbau*), specifically for the purpose of transporting the *ramu’ deurg* from the fringe of the jungle into their village. Since the collection was so small, they just managed to buy an old *kerbau*, which lacked energy and was always unhealthy. The penghulu’ then discovered that the royalty in their trust fund was as much as $3,000. They asked the English man in-charge of the fund, known as Tuan Gudin, to withdraw some of that money so they could buy a pair of young *kerbau*. Tuan Gudin approved the withdrawal of $200. The villagers sold their old *kerbau* for $50, and bought a pair of young ones for $160. They used the balance to organise a communal feast.
The pair of kerbau was raised by the penghulu. In an agreement with the villagers, the penghulu agreed to divide all the kerbau born from that pair between all the villagers, at least one kerbau for each extended family. He also agreed to give the first kerbau to Mara’ Nile’, his biras. However, when the kerbau were born, the penghulu kept giving them to his own children, Serimah, Ternok, Bah Bei, Bah Dajeng and Bah Dag. No villagers, including Mara’ Nile’, got their share. Together with the other Denak villagers, Mara’ Nile’ was quite unhappy with the penghulu, especially when those kerbau ate all the plants in his garden. Finally, Mara’ Nile’ decided to move away from the village. Before he made up his mind where to go, a relative named Long Derus, or Bek Ransom, invited him to live in Bekau. Mara’ Nile’ refused because he was thinking of moving to the Perah area. He regarded this area as his own saka because it was worked by the gu of Ata’ Dayung, who were his relatives. He remembered that only one of his relatives, Bek Kai, had recently opened a selai in an area of Perah called Bareh Chiq. Apart from this area, Mara’ Nile’ thought that the rest of the area was untouched. However, he did not realise that Long Jeroneh had already settled in Kundur Itek and Baring.

Before Mara’ Nile’ moved to Perah, he went to see the Penghulu Mukim of Parit, named Raja Yusuf (but not the Raja Yusuf whom Pawang Uda and Tok Gerak Machang served). He asked permission from Raja Yusuf to open a settlement in the Perah area. Raja Yusuf agreed to permit Mara’ Nile’ and his family to settle in the area because the territory or mukim was inhabited by very few people. Raja Yusuf suggested that Mara’ Nile’ settle permanently and plant rubber. According to him, as narrated by Ata’ Bek Makar, the ‘white man’ encouraged people to cultivate rubber because it could make money for the country. The Seng-oi could not just rely on rattan because the commodity would soon be exhausted as there was no replanting programme for it. Mara’ Nile’ agreed with Raja Yusuf’s advice. He had had a deep interest in rubber cultivation since he had been in Denak, where he had only cultivated this crop on a very small scale due to lack of land. With Raja Yusuf’s permission, he intended to double his efforts and wanted to engage seriously in the industry in Perah. Ata’ Bek Makar recalled that his father might have moved to Perah in 1925 or 1926. H.D. Noone, a field ethnographer and protector of aborigines in Perak, in a report dated 10 October 1940, stated that this contact occurred in 1925.
After he obtained permission from the Penghulu Mukim, Mara’ Nile’ moved to Perah together with his son, Ata’ Menik Ridek, and two of his sons-in-law, and settled in an area called Ulu Paye, which was then known as Panchor. Together they cultivated their rubber field in 1926, a year after settling in Panchor. Their rubber was planted on their former selai, which they had opened in the first season. Each field was about two acres in size. One year after settling in Panchor, Mara’ Nile’s other sons, Ata’ Bek Jasin, Ata’ Bek Gerak, Ata’ Bek Pakai, Ata’ Bek Makar and Ata’ Bek Atang, who lived in Temboh Bekett and Gumpey or Sungai Galah, came and joined him in Panchor.

Ata’ Bek Pakai still remembers the year he moved to Panchor. According to him, soon after he and his younger brother, Ata’ Bek Makar, came to join his father, a great flood occurred. That was in 1926. Ata’ Bek Pakai could not come with his father in 1925 because he was still at Jawi school in Denak.12

Long Apon

Long Apon was born in Teaw Batu’ in 1922. His father, Ngah Pok Kulop Lalu, was a mai pasak of Teaw Batu’, while his mother was a mai pasak of Perah. Both originated from Salu’ but become separated when Long Apon’s maternal grandfather followed Long Jeroneh to Perah while his paternal grandfather settled in Teaw Batu’. The people of Teaw Batu’ originated from mai ditah area, from Salu’, Pale’ and Bipog (or Sahom and Gopeng areas). While the three groups moved to Teaw Batu’ independently, their reasons for doing so were the same—the land was fertile, the river was rich in fish, and the area was rich with jungle products, especially rattan.

The people of Salu’ came into the area after the mining industry had been established in Malaya, but before it arrived in their area. According to Bah Empe’,13 the Raja Bendahara of Perak, referred to as Yamtuan Teja, and named Marhum Kurus, gave the Seng-oi permission to live in the area. Prior to settling in Teaw Batu’ village, the Seng-oi moved around in small groups scattered around the area, and one of these groups was Long Apon’s family. The leader of these Seng-oi groups then developed close contact with Marhum Kurus, who allowed the Seng-oi leaders to see him at any time they wished. During each visit the Seng-oi leaders presented him with jungle and farm products, birds, game, and domestic animals. This relationship then continued with To Megat Jalil, who replaced Marhum Kurus (who died in the late 1880s).
Like the other groups, the elders of Long Apon’s family had heard about the presence of the British in the state, but had never met a white man (*Mai Byeq*). After a while living in the area, a member of Long Apon’s group met a *Mai Byeq* for the first time. Long Apon recalled the story of his grandfather:

One morning, an old man came back from visiting his family in Salu’. On the way to Teaw Batu’, he met a group of *Mai Byeq* surveying the route for a road. Immediately after he arrived home, he relayed the news to the group: I met the *Mai Byeq* building the road. They were very white, their skin, their hair, their beard and moustaches are all white. Many members of the group were intrigued and decided to go to the road site to see the *Mai Byeq*. The left home on foot at mid-day and arrived at the proposed road in the late afternoon. However, they were very surprised to find that all the people working there were black, and not a single one of them was white. They began to guess why the workers were black instead of white. One of them came out with a suggestion: they might have become black because of sun burn! Eventually, they found out that the black workers on the road track were Indians (*Lel, Pantel*), who had been brought by the British to Malaya to be their coolies. Just as they had never encountered the *Mai Byeq*, they had never met an Indian before, and therefore they were puzzled about where this race had come from.

After the events in this story took place, Long Apon’s family members were able to see a *Mai Byeq*, especially after the British persuaded all the Seng-oi groups in the area to settle permanently in one place. Following this the elders of each group got together and visited the Yamtuan Teja. They sought an explanation about their situation. During the meeting, the Yamtuan Teja asked all Seng-oi groups who shifted within the area to establish a permanent settlement, and cultivate rubber and other permanent agriculture. The Seng-oi were then given an area of 200 acres, in which they established their village named Teaw Batu’.14

Long Apon was told by his father, Ngah Pok, that Teaw Batu’ was established as a permanent settlement in the early 1900s.15 In the early period of the settlement, the population numbered about 400 people. However this increased rapidly due to natural growth and migration, especially due to people from Salu’, Pale’ and Bipog, who came to join their relatives in the village. The fertility increased with permanent settlement. The people had access to medical facilities, and health services for pregnant mothers were provided by the British. The medical facility was originally provided for the mining workers. The British then broadened their service to include the villagers of Teaw Batu’. This contributed to the population growth of Teaw Batu’.
The villagers also had access to English language lessons from the beginning of their settlement in the Teaw Batu'. An Englishman from Kampar town, who was interested in the Seng-oi, was willing to teach English language to the villagers. He taught two or three times a week, depending on his free time. Every time he came, he brought along his guitar. After the English language lesson, he taught English songs. These included "Baa Baa Black Sheep", "Jingle Bells", and "Are you sleeping". After some time learning English, three of the villagers were able to speak English very well. These three were Ata' Minyak, Bah Ganjak, and Tok Muda. The rest of them, such as Ngah Pok and Itam Bek Udang, were not very fluent. They understood the language but could not speak it fluently. Referring to his father, Long Apon said: "ie lentarg nyeh," meaning, his father’s tongue was ‘heavy’. However, the English language lessons stopped when the English man transferred to another post, though some said their English teacher was going back to England.

Teaw Batu’ was considered to be a well-planned village. Plank houses were built on both sides of the road, which crossed the middle of the village. The British then allowed the villagers to plant rubber. The villagers used their own effort to plant this crop, and each family planted their own rubber. The rubber was divided into plots; basically each family owned one rubber field. Plots varied in size from two to ten acres. In total, the rubber fields covered about 200 acres. While waiting for their rubber to be ready to tap, the villagers engaged in collecting rattan. However, they stopped this activity quite soon since most of the rattan areas had been cleared due to the mining activities. The villagers then became small scale miners. Their mines, which were operated according to traditional methods, were called kelit or, in Malay, lampan. They opened their kelit only in the area that was allocated to them. The income from this activity was tremendously high. They sold the resulting tin to the nearest town, Malim Nawar, once a week. In each transaction, the villagers managed to get about $40-50. That was a very large amount, and more than enough to cover household expenses. The men were therefore able to buy long pants, long sleeve shirts, baju' kot (coats), kopiah (a Malay hat), leather shoes, make-up items, especially hair grease, known as minyak melaya or minyak lilin, and bicycles. In the evening, the young men would put on their western dress, smooth their hair with minyak melaya, and cycle along the road in the village to show off to the young girls.16
The mining industry made the people of Teaw Batu’ richer than the Seng-oi elsewhere in the State of Perak, especially in the 1920s. Every family had a bicycle, which was very prestigious at that time. That new mode of transport gave more access to travel, including visiting family and relatives in their old villages. Long Apon’s father, Ngah Pok, occasionally visited his father-in-law in Perah. He also visited relatives in Temboh Bekett and Gumpey. Sometimes, Ngah Pok and his friends cycled as far as Ipoh City and Kampar town just for leisure or cha’ pinui (in Malay, makan angin). Long Apon recalled their last visit to Perah in 1935 when he was about 12 years old. He and his father went to Perah to pay their ‘last tribute’ to his late uncle named Ata’ Minyak.

The people of Teaw Batu’ continued their involvement in kelit activity until the mid-1930s. At that time their rubber was ready to tap; however they had become more interested in kelit mining due to the good income they could garner. This Seng-oi involvement in mining began to arouse major concern in the British Administration, especially the Department of Forestry. Although the Seng-oi had been given the privilege to operate mining in their own area, and that precedence was stated in the official memorandum (G.N. 6158 of 29 August 1930), the Seng-oi who lived in the areas of Batang Padang, Korbu, Keledang-Sayong, and Kinta (where Teaw Batu’ was situated) were reported to have carried out mining activities in the Forest Reserve. Knowing the problem, the people of Teaw Batu’ stopped their kelit activity and began tapping the rubber. Before long, however, their area was ‘sold’ to a Chinese tycoon from Kampar, locally known as Bah Puug, and this put an end to their activities. Later, the villagers heard by way of rumours that the ground under their village was full of tin ore, and this was the reason the Mai Byeq sold it to Bah Puug.

The British paid the villagers a small amount of compensation, and resettled them in a new village, called Gedong Batu’, which has now become a sub-village of Bota. The British also replanted their 200 acres of rubber in Gedong Batu’. However, only a few villagers were keen to move to Gedong Batu’. The rest wanted to move elsewhere including returning to their original villages. They separated and moved to various places, such as Teaw Mencharg and Kelubi of Kampar, Bipog of Sahom, Mendang of Cenderung Balai, Bekau of Kuala Kangsar. Long Apon’s family moved to Perah. According to Long Apon, they
Plate 5.2: The History of Teaw Batu

Bah Empe' (who was born and grew up in Teaw Batu', but moved to Prenggeurb) showing British $10 notes for Malaya and Borneo, which he obtained from kelit activity. He keeps the money as he thinks that the Mai Byeq will return to govern the dengri' adeh, so he has the money to spend. I than told him that his thinking was wrong.

Plate 5.3: The Collapse of a Royal Palace

Arrow showing the site of the former palace of the Raja Bendahara (Yamtuian) of Teja, which was affected by mining (reproduced from Halim, 1981: 114). The colonial power put the importance of the mining industry above all the people's rights and pride.
moved to Perah between 1936 and 1937. During that time he was already a teenager, aged about 14 or 15 years.

Perah in the Early British Era

At the time when Long Jeroneh and his people moved to Baring in the 1920s, the area on the other side of the Perah river, which is now called Keramat, was converted into the Keledang-Sayong Forest Reserve. Long Jeroneh and other elders did not know about the new status of the area. They started their life peacefully, since they were deep in the interior and far away from outsiders. After about two or three seasons living there, Long Jeroneh passed on his leadership as *penghulu* and *pawang* to Alang Tek. Long Jeroneh did that because he was getting older and ‘lacked the energy’ to handle the situation which had become more complicated and challenging. His nephew, Alang Tek, was still young and had attended English lessons while living in Teaw Batu’.

Alang Tek’s appointment was made by the *Penghulu Mukim* of Tanjung Belanja, Mat Alit. After his appointment, Alang Tek asked the *Penghulu Mukim* to measure their occupied area and produce an Occupying Permit or *geran* for his village. However, the *Penghulu Mukim* told Alang Tek that the *Seng-oi* need not have a *geran* because the *dengri* belonged to them. The *Seng-oi* could occupy any area they chose, especially in the jungle, such as the Perah area. Nonetheless, the *Penghulu Mukim* suggested that Alang Tek and his people establish permanent settlement because it would be easy for the *Yamtuan* to visit them. The *Penghulu Mukim* also advised them to carry out permanent agriculture.

During their early settlement of Baring, Long Jeroneh and his people had a peaceful life. They did not have to worry about new demands which existed in town, such as licences, taxes, rent, trials in court, jails, etc., which were brought about by modern influences. They also faced no problem with regard to the TOL issue. They carried on opening *selai*, collecting and selling rattan. They sold their rattan to a small town near Ipoh city called Papan. They went to Papan on foot, and it was about four hours walk for adults and five to six hours if they walked with children. They carried the rattan all the way to town and came back with a bundle of consumer goods. They did not plant rubber because this was against British regulations.
After a few years in Baring, the Sultan of Perak came to the village for a camping trip. The Sultan came to visit his *rakyat* in the interior, and at the same time he wanted to hunt wild game, especially mouse deer. He travelled by elephant while his guards went on foot. They, together with the villagers, went to the upper Perah river and camped in an area called *Jenalik*, but later renamed *Starr Raja*’, which was located about one and a half miles from Baring.19

On his second visit, the Sultan slept overnight at the camping site. On the way back home, he left a metal chain called *kusa’*, which was used to tie the elephant, with Alang Tek, the *penghulu*’ of Perah. According to the Sultan, as narrated by Andak Jameah,20 he left the *kusa’* because it would be easier for them to travel in the coming trip. Otherwise, his guards had to carry that heavy metal chain all the way from Kuala Kangsar to Perah. Long after his second visit, the Sultan visited *Starr Raja*’ for a third time. Andak Jameah did not remember whether the Sultan made a visit after that or not. All she remembers was that her father, Long Jeroneh, died a few months after the Sultan’s third visit to *Starr Raja*’, which was probably in the mid or late 1920s.

On every visit, the Sultan did not allow the villagers to perform a formal welcome ceremony because, as it was told by the late Itam Langsat, his visit was informal. Almost all the men in the village accompanied the Sultan at the camping site. They voluntarily cleaned the site, built the camp, and also hunted with his guards. They did that to show their appreciation of the Sultan, who was willing to visit his *rakyat* in the interior.21

After Long Jeroneh died, Andak Jameah could not recall any camping trip by the Sultan or raja at the *Starr Raja*’. She only recalled that, about two or three years after her father died, she married Itam Bet, a handsome young man from Teaw Batu’. She also recalled that, about the same time, the people from Denak came and settled nearby their village. The group, who were led by Mara’ Nile’, settled nearby in an area called Panchor, also known as Ulu Paya. In contrast to the villagers of Keramat, Mara’ Nile’ and his people were allowed to plant rubber because they had settled on Sultan’s land, and their presence in the area was permitted by Raja Yusuf, the *Penghulu Mukim* of Parit.
Mara' Nile' and his people were quite successful in their rubber planting in Panchor. They planted the crop every year on their ex-selai. However, their selai were rather small, about one to two acres, due to the small size of the households of the villagers. A few years after that, when their first plants were ready to tap, Mara Nile' went to Parit and reported the development to the Penghulu Mukim. At that time, the Penghulu Mukim was Raja Semai, having replaced Raja Yusuf. Later, Raja Semai visited the village to confirm Mara’ Nile’s report.

About one week after that, Raja Semai called Mara’ Nile’ to his office. Raja Semai had produced a confirmation letter which stated that Mara’ Nile’ had carried out rubber planting systematically. Raja Semai asked Mara’ Nile’ to forward that letter (report) to the District Officer (DO) of Parit in order to get the necessary coupon. The DO of Parit, named Tok Setia, agreed to grant Mara’ Nile’ a coupon, and forwarded the matter to the officer in charge, named Haji Salleh, who was referred to by the villagers as tuan kupon. According to tuan kupon, in order to get the coupon, rubber smallholders must have planted at least five acres of rubber, and have a Licence for Planting and Selling Rubber. Mara’ Nile’ was quite sad because his rubber field was less than five acres and none of his people had planted that much. However, tuan kupon wanted to help him, and gave the coupon,\(^{22}\) on the condition Mara’ Nile’ and his people increase the acreage of their rubber fields to five acres within that year. Tuan kupon also helped Mara’ Nile’ to obtain the Licence for Planting and Selling Rubber, the office for which was located in Parit town. After obtaining that licence, tuan kupon gave Mara’ Nile’ the coupon. As a start, the tuan kupon just gave him a coupon to the value of 50 catties. Before leaving the office, tuan kupon once again reminded Mara’ Nile’ to work together with his people to increase the size of their rubber fields.

In Panchor, Mara’ Nile’ delivered tuan kupon’s advice to his people. He and his people then doubled their effort and opened broader selai, which were then planted with rubber. Meanwhile, many more of Mara’ Nile’ relatives from Denak and Gumpai settled in the village and took part in planting rubber. Two or three years after that, when each family had five acres or more of rubber fields, once again Mara’ Nile’ reported the development to the Penghulu Mukim of Parit, Itam Dain, who had replaced Raja Semai. At that meeting, Mara’ Nile’
asked the Penghulu Mukim to measure their rubber fields. The Penghulu Mukim put the matter to the DO, who was still Tok Setia. Tok Setia agreed with the proposal and forwarded the matter to Land Officer. After that, the District Office produced an occupying permit which named Mara' Nile' (by his real name, Mat Dohon) as a leader, to be referred to as tok ketua, of the Seng-oi group of Parit, a sub-district of Kuala Kangsar, with an area of 200 acres.23

The occupying permit received by Mat Melaka gave him a great chance to increase his involvement in the rubber industry. After that time, he and his people opened about 80 acres of rubber fields.24 He also obtained an increased value of coupon from 50 catties (half a pikul), during his first trade in the early 1930s, to more than one pikul a year. That amount was increased every year, and he managed to get six pikul in 1940. However, it is unclear how these coupons were allocated to him. According to Bek Tambun, the coupons were given to rubber growers quarterly, or four times a year, and were not consistent in amount. His grandfather received them according to the weight of rubber he sold in each quarter in a particular year. "Sometimes it was more but sometimes less," Bek Tambun explained. Mara' Nile' shared the coupons with other rubber smallholders in Panchor, most of whom were his relatives. With the money they got from selling rubber and the coupons, Mat Melaka managed to build a wooden-plank house. The income from rubber was high and more than enough to cover household expenses. The surplus allowed the villagers to buy portable receivers (with vacuum tubes), referred to as rediew, clothes, and bicycles, although there was still no road access into the village, only a walking track. This prosperity also enabled Ata' Bek Pakai to marry his first wife, a daughter of Mara' Hallaw of the Teaw Batu'.

The people of Panchor did not experience the first rubber crisis, which occurred between 1922-1928, because at that time they had just become involved in the industry, i.e. had just started planting the crop. When they began selling the crop in the early 1930s, the second crisis hit them. In an attempt to restore prices, the British issued them with coupons to regulate the supply of rubber. They, however, viewed a coupon differently due to lack of knowledge. They perceived the coupons as gifts from the government in response to their involvement in the industry.25 They also thought that the coupons were a glorious symbol of the
rubber industry. The allocation of coupons encouraged them to become more actively involved in the planting industry.

In Parit, the coupons were given to smallholders by the Rubber Officer, referred to as *tuan kupon*. The coupon could be cashed with any rubber dealer when the smallholders sold their rubber, and the price of the coupons depended on current rubber prices. If the rubber price was 20 cents per catty, the price of the coupon was also 20 cents per catty. The extra income received from selling the coupons became a kind of incentive for them to increase the size of their rubber fields, and this resulted in a problem for the Controller of Rubber, Malaya.

A few months after Mat Melaka received his coupon for the first quarter of 1940, Tok Setia came to Perah with an Englishman (*Mai Byeq*). They first went to Baring and then came back to stay overnight in Panchor. According to Ata' Bek Pakai, his father and other elders had a long chat with Tok Setia and the *Mai Byeq*, who spoke a little Malay. Tok Setia had to become a translator to assist the *Mai Byeq*. In the discussion, the *Mai Byeq* asked Tok Setia to tell Mat Melaka in Malay that the Controller of Rubber, who was then referred to by Tok Setia as *tuan getah*, did not allow them to cultivate rubber and regarded their effort to be involved in the industry as illegal and against government regulations. Ata' Bek Makar paraphrased his father in reply, “We had never committed any wrong doing. The Sultan asked us to cultivate rubber. *Tuan* (he referred to Tok Setia) and *tuan kupon* agreed with us. *Tuan poris* (he referred to the Forest Officer) also encouraged us to plant this crop. *Tuan kupon* asked us to get a licence, so we got it! So what is the wrong doing?” Tok Setia translated Mat Melaka’s words into English. The *Mai Byeq* nodded his head. Mat Melaka then asked Tok Setia, “*Tuan*, who is actually the more powerful figure this country, the Sultan or the *tuan getah*?” Tok Setia replied, “Both of them are powerful now!” They then talked about the problem until midnight and went to sleep when the cock began crowing. Next morning, Tok Setia and the *Mai Byeq* went back to Parit. Before leaving the village, Tok Setia promised to solve the problem and asked Mat Melaka to carry on with what they were doing; tapping their rubber. He, however, advised them to hold back with plans to expand their rubber fields until the matter was resolved.
In the same year Tok Setia visited Panchor, the government introduced another form of subsidy, which was also referred to as a coupon (kupon). The *tuan kupon* gave the smallholders one unit of the new coupon for every one *pikul* of rubber they sold. If a rubber cultivator managed to sell 100 *pikul* per year, he was entitled to receive 100 units of coupon. With these 100 units, the government would plant for him one acre of rubber, free. In other words, with 100 units of coupon the smallholders were entitled to get assistance to plant one acre of rubber. However, the land for that free planting had to be provided by the smallholders. This subsidy was probably given from 1939 to 1940, the one year period in which five percent of new planting was permitted (Lim, 1977: 194).

Despite the total ban on alienation of land for rubber planting after 1934, the government still allowed replanting of this crop. Between 1934 and 1938, replanting was allowed on up to 20 percent of all acreage in production, and after 1938 it was allowed on almost all rubber acreage (see Lim, 1977: 89). Although this exception was mainly given to giant estates, a very small number of smallholders shared this opportunity to increase the acreage of their field because rubber was still economically reliable compared to other crops. Since restrictions were still in force, the *Seng-oi* smallholders of Panchor continued the replanting programme, or even planted new trees, secretly. They planted the rubber trees on their old *selai*, and this activity went on every year after their *selai* seasons. However, Mara’ Nile’ and his people did not benefit from the replanting subsidy because they had already been asked by DO Tok Setia to maintain the size of their rubber production, sale of which had never exceeded 100 *pikul*.

The benefits of the rubber industry enjoyed by Mat Melaka and his people in Panchor attracted their neighbours, the Baring villagers, who had started planting rubber secretly. They collected the rubber seeds from Panchor. According to Pertel, they knew that this activity was against government regulation because rubber was a protected plant. People who planted this crop illegally would be fined a sum of about $20 or $30 (*due tige puluh Ringgit*, equivalent to hundreds of *Ringgit* in today’s values). If offenders could not afford to pay the fine, they would be jailed for a month or two. The Baring villagers were aware of the consequences but they were confident that their ‘secret’ would not be exposed.
because the crop was planted in the interior, and was unable to be approached by officers. They also claimed that the rubber had grown from ‘flying’ seeds from Panchor. When the entire Baring area was planted with rubber, the people shifted their planting activity into their former selai on the other side of the Perah river, known as Pulau Keramat. They were, however, unaware that the area had already been converted into a Forest Reserve.

Later, about two or three years after Andak Jameah got married, the people of Baring decided to move to Pulau Keramat, which was wide and flat compared to the Baring area, which was small and steep. This decision was prompted by natural population growth. In addition to natural growth, the increased population was also due to the movement of people, most of whom were Andak Jameah’s relatives from both of her parents’ sides, who decided to join them living in Perah, such as Itam Bet’s (Andak Jameah’s husband) and Alang Tek’s families (and later Long Apon’s family) from Teaw Batu; and Itam Langsat’s, Ken Entiing’s and Mara Semae’s families from Temboh Bekett. There were also families from Panchor, one of which was the family of Bek Runggin who came and settled with Mara’ Nile’, moved and stayed in Keramat permanently (while his father, Alang Buyut, moved to Sungai Galah). In addition to population growth, a serious concern about land contributed to this decision. Pertel recalled that his father (the penghulu’), Alang Tek, was told by Mat Alit, the Penghulu Mukim of Belanja, that the area of Baring was under the TOL, and was given to Gop to work for wet paddy cultivation or bendang. Because the people were uneasy about paying taxes and wanted to avoid a possible crisis with the Gop, Alang Tek and his people decided to move to the other side of the river, or Pulau Keramat, an area which, according to the Penghulu Mukim of Belanja, was ‘empty land’, the forest of which was regarded as ‘the world of the Seng-oi’.

However, after a long time living and planting paddy and rubber in Keramat, their presence and activities in the area become known to the Department of Forestry and the Controller of Rubber. The latter sought cooperation from the Department of Forestry to eradicate the rubber trees. Soon after that, the Forest Officers and Rangers came into the area and destroyed all the rubber trees. The Rangers, however, just managed to pull out the small trees and left behind all the big ones. The penghulu’, Alang Tek, was charged. The Forest Officer brought him to Taiping and charged him in the Court there. That incident, which
probably occurred in the early 1930s, caused the villagers to live in tension as they were worried that they might be charged for the same offences. Alang Tek’s son, Pertel, was quite young at that time. He still remembers when his father was escorted by the Forest Rangers, and his mother and sisters were crying. Pertel recalled the incident in the old days:

> My mother was very worried about my father. She said, if my father was put in jail, we would lose our independence. But my father was cool. He told my mother not to worry. He would be back soon.

In court, Alang Tek was charged for leading his people to fell the trees in the Forest Reserve, which were considered as government property. Pertel recited his father’s argument before the court:

> My father told the court that his people were committing no offences. They were just exercising their tradition, which had been practiced for hundreds of years. If they did not fell the trees and plant paddy, what were they going to eat, and who was going to feed them? My father did not think the Department of Forestry would be willing to take that responsibility.

The case was then dismissed. The court also asked the Department of Forestry to allocate a piece of land for the Seng-oi of Perah. Alang Tek was allowed to go home. However, he had no money to pay the bus fare, and asked for some from the Forest Officer who had charged him. He took a bus from Taiping to Kuala Kangsar and then to Tronoh. From Tronoh, he continued his journey home to Perah on foot which took about five hours.

After this case, the Department of Forestry began to acknowledge the situation, which led to the issuing of an Occupying Permit to the Seng-oi of Perah in 1935. The main clause of the 1935 Occupying Permit allowed the Seng-oi (referred to by the British as sakai) to occupy an area of 200 acres in Keledang-Sayong Forest Reserve. The Seng-oi were not allowed to expand their activities beyond the permitted area. However, there was no clause prohibiting them from cultivating rubber. This occupying permit made the villagers feel more secure, particularly in regard to their settlement and source of livelihood. They had more freedom to plant paddy and vegetables, and to collect and sell rattan. According to the late Itam Langsat, it was ironic because the officer who gave them permission to occupy the land did not measure the area on the ground but just made an approximate measurement on a map. The villagers did not know
exactly where the permitted area was and had to base the location on their own guess work and interpretations.

This bad experience suffered by Alang Tek, and the tough rules regarding rubber cultivation discouraged the Keramat villagers from engaging in this activity, although there was no clause in the occupying permit restricting them from doing so. Only a small number were ‘brave’ enough to cultivate this crop secretly, while the rest were not. The people in the old days were afraid of going to court and spending time in jail, even for a short time. Due to this ‘anxiety’, the people stopped cultivating rubber, even in the permitted area. They only planted paddy and vegetables.

When Long Apon and his family moved into the village in 1936 or 1937, they had no land to work on. Almost the whole area, 200 acres, was owned by Keramat villagers. However, Long Apon’s father, Ngah Pok, managed to buy two rubber fields from people who had lost interest in planting the crop. During that time, land transactions were based on the concept *perjug kendrat* (meaning to return the energy expended by the field owners who planted the trees). Through this concept, the concern was not about land *per se*, but about the trees that existed on the land. The value of the land was based on the energy used to plant these trees, and it did not include the energy expended to clear the land because these crops, either rubber or fruits, were planted on former *selai*. The energy for clearing the former *selai* had been gained, or ‘returned’ from its previous harvests. According to Long Apon, the first land his father bought was only $80. That price was eventually paid for the 80 rubber trees planted on the land, which meant that the value of energy used to plant each rubber tree was $1. Later, Ngah Pok managed to buy another rubber field, on which he built his house.

Since the size of the population had increased, there were people, especially among the younger generation, who were frustrated by government regulations and restrictions. They were first denied access to their own territory when the Forest Department did not allow them to open *selai* in the so-called Forest Reserve, and then they were not permitted to plant rubber. Both of these restrictions denied peoples’ right to improve their economic position in life. Because of anger at this, the people ignored these regulations and restrictions,
and they once again became involved in planting rubber. Their interest was sparked when they saw that Mat Melaka made his living by selling rubber and coupons. The new generation of the Keramat population thus began to change their attitudes to government rules regarding rubber planting. In arguing the matter, the late Itam Langsat stressed:

If they did not plant rubber, their children in the future would die because they had no source of livelihood. If the government really wanted to jail them for offences regarding rubber, it could involve the whole population of Perah. I could not accept the fact that the Mai Byeq view us as breaking their rules. We just wanted to improve our life, and that was what the government had advised us to do.

Due to this renewed interest, the daring villagers replanted most of their area with rubber. When the permitted area of 200 acres was full of rubber, the people lacked land to plant paddy and vegetables, thus they started to encroach on the Forest Reserve to plant these. Some young and newly married couples cleared the forest to open the selai. They then converted these areas into rubber fields. This development once again aroused concern from the Controller of Rubber, who regarded that activity as illegal. In his memorandum, the Controller of Rubber stated that:

No new planting rights were surrendered in respect of these 80 acres and no new planting permits were issued to authorise the planting of the rubber. I immediately explained to the District Officer, Kuala Kangsar, that I am bound under the International Agreement to prevent all new planting in Malaya contrary to the Agreement including new planting on Sakai clearings, and asked him to assist in getting the illegally planted rubber eradicated.

In accordance with this memorandum, the D.O. (Tok Setia) and H.D. Noone came to Perah to carry out an investigation (and stayed overnight in Mara’ Nile’s house. Noone then delivered his report to the Controller of Rubber, in which he stated that:

3. I realise that the Controller of Rubber is bound under the International Agreement to prevent all new planting which is contrary to that agreement, but the circumstances of this case call for some solution other than eradication.

6(a) The group’s record since it was “permitted to occupy” land adjacent to, and within a Forest Reserve has been exemplary. And this, in spite of the fact that its tenure has been astonishingly insecure. In the first place they were “permitted to occupy” land on the territory which they had regarded as their own before the Forest Reserve was ever created. Further, this permit “could be cancelled at any time”, and was “renewable each year”, for good behaviour, as it were.
6(c). They form part of a chain of lowland aboriginal groups who are *(sic)* maintain close contact, and bad propaganda will effect all other groups.

8. For these reasons, I recommend strongly against eradication, if any other solution is possible. 31

However, this report was presumably rejected because, as a Protector of Aborigines, Noone was always concerned about the *Seng-oi*, and for this reason the British administration regarded him as 'biased'. This label had been given even earlier than Noone’s appointment as the Protector of Aborigines, as the State Forest Officer of Perak stated in its Official Memorandum dated 28 August 1937 that:

The Field Ethnographer's report shows some bias in favour of the Sakai and he emphasises the hard treatment they have received. 52

Due to the situation, the Forest Rangers once again came to Keramat to undertake a second eradicating operation. However, the rangers did not touch the rubber trees in the permitted area, despite the fact that the Controller of Rubber, Malaya, urged the Department of Forestry to eradicate all rubber trees planted by the *Seng-oi*. 33 They only destroyed the *selai* which were located outside the permitted area. Ngah Pitut, better known as Mara’ Asing, had his house, which he built in his *selai*, burned by them. According to Ngah Pitut, that incident occurred in the middle of 1941, not long before the Japanese came. During that time, he was living with his parents in the village because his wife had just given birth to their second child. The officer in charge told him that the Forest Rangers burnt his house down because it was built in the Forest Reserve. Ngah Pitut was then brought to Parit District Office and accused of encroaching on the Reserve. Ngah Pitut told the DO that he did not know his paddy field was in the Forest Reserve. He added that the Forest Officer had shown them the permitted occupying area merely on a map and not on the ground. He and the other villagers did not know the exact area on the ground. The DO then agreed that there was a problem and dismissed the case. The DO also ordered the Department of Forestry to pay compensation to Ngah Pitut, but it paid only $60.

After Ngah Pitut’s case, the villagers stopped encroaching on, and planting rubber in the Forest Reserve for a while. Soon after that, the Japanese came and occupied Malaya. This ended people’s involvement in the rubber industry.
In handling the Seng-oi involvement in the rubber planting industry, the government agencies seem to have contradicted one another. The Controller of Rubber was only concerned about rubber prices, and wanted all Seng-oi rubber fields in Perah to be eradicated. On the other hand, the Department of Forestry was concerned with preserving the forest, and encouraged these people to plant such crops as a way to stop shifting cultivation. This implicit interest was stated by H.D. Noone in his report to the Controller of Rubber dated 10 October 1940. According to him,

For the isolated, and more sophisticated groups of Sakai, cultivation of rubber is a powerful incentive to permanent settlement and consequent reduction in the damage to valuable forest. The headmen say that the local Forest Ranger, fearing that they might encroach on Forest Reserve, urged them to plant more rubber.34

However, the Controller of Rubber, Malaya, was bound by the International Rubber Regulation Agreement, which was followed by the Rubber Regulation Enactment (No. 37 of 1936), in 1936. According to these two documents, any planting of rubber had to be approved by the International Rubber Regulation Committee. Rubber planting undertaken by the Seng-oi of Perah was not in accordance with this rule, and was therefore regarded as illegal. The Controller of Rubber sought help from the Department of Forestry to eradicate all rubber planted by the people of Perah. Nevertheless, the cooperation of these two departments seems to have lacked coordination and was surrounded by confusion and conflict of interest.

The approach proposed by the Department of Forestry was supported by the DO, the Penghulu Mukim, and the Sultan of Perak, each of whom encouraged the Seng-oi to cultivate rubber as a way to persuade the people to live in permanent settlements. H.D. Noone, who shared these views, was strongly against the eradication. According to him:

... there is no desire to 'punish' these people, who were indeed unaware that the planting of rubber was 'illegal'. Yet, drastic eradication of it will cause something worse, complete bewilderment as to what the administration does want them to do, and a growing suspicion that economic progress is to be penalised.35

In supporting this view, Noone also stressed that the Seng-oi were healthy, hard working, tapping their rubber themselves, and not getting Chinese to do the work
for them. He also thought that any drastic action to destroy the Seng-oi’s new economic life would affect the Seng-oi groups in other areas. He recommended strongly against the eradication, and urged the state to look for any other possible solution.

The Resident of Perak was also involved in this issue, and advanced humanitarian grounds to oppose the eradication. In a letter addressed to the Controller of Rubber, the Secretary to the Resident wrote that:

3. Actually the planted acreage in Perak has been reduced by several hundred acres since 1938 owing to the considerable areas of rubber cut down by the Perak Government and I am to suggest that this is much more than an adequate set off for any rubber planted by Sakai in the Forest Reserve and the Resident thinks it ought to be, that such planting is something right outside the scope of the International Rubber Agreement.

4. Although the Perak Government is willing to do all in its power to discourage the Sakai from planting further rubber and has not therefore asked for them to be given export rights, it cannot but view with apprehension any proposal to destroy rubber already planted and the Resident feels that if the facts are put before the International Rubber Regulation Committee, they will agree that on humanitarian grounds this planting should be condoned, particularly as no injury whatsoever has in fact been done to the rest of the rubber planting industry, which on balance has benefitted considerably by the rubber cut down by the government. 56

This discussion shows that state agencies which tended to show some concern about Seng-oi rights had to face opposition from other state agencies whose interests conflicted with Seng-oi rights.

**Gumpey Luas in the Transition Period**

This section will take the same approach and cover the same period as the section on Perah. However, the discussion will be more general and the focus will be on Gumpey Luas, particularly Pengkalan Jering and Sungai Galah, because these people moved to Tangkai Chermin in the Post independence era. The focus in the transition period will be on the origin of the Long Tanjung families and their historical background, which led to permanent settlement in Sungai Galah. This will be followed by a discussion of the early British era, which will focus on family developments and economic activities. The discussion will cover the time of the early settlement of Pengkalan Jering and Sungai Galah to the beginning of World War II. The discussion will begin by tracing the origin of Panjang’s
father, Long Tanjung, followed by developing the history of Pengkalan Jering. The discussion will be based on the life history of Long Tanjung.37

Long Tanjung and His Origins

I first asked about the origin of the Tangkai Chermin villagers from Anjang Ngah Lesu, well-known as Anjang Makpin. It is the norm to ask the leader or *penghulu* first. He can then advise whom to see next. According to Anjang Makpin, Long Tanjung originated from Gorl. However, he was confused with Gorr, another Seng-oi area. To verify this, I asked the grandson of Long Tanjung, Keling Nawan, who holds the *penghulu* adat, and is one of the oldest people in the village. Keling Nawan told me that his grandfather came from Warr, and originated from Bertam, another Seng-oi area next to Gorl, located in the Cameron Highland area. During my visit to Kelubi, a neighbouring settlement of Tangkai Chermin, I had a chance to ask the oldest man of the village, named Panjang Uda, about the same issue. Panjang Uda, who is related to Long Tanjung, also said he came from Gorl. After gathering all the data, I concluded that Long Tanjung originated from Gorl, not Gorr.38

In addition to this confusion, another ambiguity arose among Long Tanjung’s descendants. I found this when I later spoke to the son of Long Tanjung, Panjang Long, the pawang and the only survivor of his generation in the village. Panjang told me that his father had not originated from Gorl, but from Temboh Bekett. However, he claimed that his father had a family link with the people of Warr, an area in the lower part of the Gorl area. Because of this ambiguity, I decided to make a second visit to Tangkai Chermin in April 1997 to clarify this matter. On this visit, I had the opportunity to meet Itam Wali, who had just ended his term as member of parliament.39

After a long chat with Itam Wali, I steered our conversation to my main interest by asking about a story concerning his grandfather. According to him, his grandfather, Long Tanjung originated from Temboh Bekett, which he referred to as Bota. His great grandfather, who was the father of Long Tanjung, married a girl from Warr. After many years of marriage, the couple still had no children. Because of their loneliness, his great grandfather finally prayed to a *keramat*, wishing for its blessing to give them children. Soon after that, his great
grandmother got pregnant and delivered Long Tanjung, who became the only child of that family. For this reason, Itam Wali, as well as Panjang Long, referred to Long Tanjung as *kenoon nyanitik*, meaning “the son of the supernatural being”.

When Itam Wali finished his story, I summarised the stories told by Keling Nawan and Panjang Long, which were slightly different from one another, and also different from the one he had just told me. Itam Wali explained to me that all the versions were right but seemed ambiguous because his brother and his uncle had told incomplete stories. His brother, Keling Nawan, who was also listening to our conversation, agreed with him. Keling Nawan then told me that he has forgotten some part of the story and suggested I get the full story from either his uncle, Panjang Long, or his brother, Itam Wali.

Itam Wali continued telling me the origin of his grandfather. According to him, there was a custom adopted by the Seng-oi in the old days where a husband was most likely to live in his wife’s house or village, and it was very rare to see a wife living in her husband’s home. However, a husband still had a choice since he could live in both places alternately on the condition that he was fair in dividing the time between each. In the case of Long Tanjung, however, his father adopted the first pattern of locality, and spent most of his life living in Warr. His family only came down to Bota occasionally to visit them, mostly on short visits. Long Tanjung had, therefore, grown up in Warr. When he became a young man, Long Tanjung was just like other Seng-oi young men, and decided to go wandering.

The explanation given by Itam Wali helped me to correlate the story told by Keling Nawan and his uncle, Panjang Long, and to clarify my confusion about the origin of their ancestors. Later, Pandak Basri helped me to draw a genealogical chart of Long Tanjung’s family and their relations to other families in the village.

**Long Tanjung and Gumpey Luas**

Long Tanjung came to the Sungai Galah area, which was originally known as Gumpey Luas in the 1800s, probably towards the end of this century. The area
received its name from a huge area *(luas)* of *gumpey*\textsuperscript{40} plants in the swamp, which covered about 60 per cent of the whole area. Long Tanjung also adopted the ‘wandering’ tradition, and moved away from his village looking for a new future. The main reason he came to Gumpey Luas was to look for rattan, which was rich in the area. He was also looking for an opportunity to build a new life, especially to have a family. During his presence in the area, people, mainly from Teaw Ba',\textsuperscript{41} opened *selai* in the area. However, these people did not settle in one area permanently, but shifted from one place to another. Long Tanjung met a group who came from Sengkuang, a place nearby Teaw Ba' (near Temboh Bekett), and became friendly with them. He then followed these people back to their permanent settlement, Teaw Sengkuang, after they finished their harvest. Not long after that, he married a local girl of that village.

After marriage, Long Tanjung and his wife’s family came back to Gumpey Luas, and moved around the area for quite some time. The soil in Gumpey Luas area was very fertile and suitable for paddy planting. The swamp around the area was also rich with fish. When he was living in this area, his cousin named Long Nyelam came from Warr and joined his group. Long Tanjung opened fields in areas such as Tanjung Tualang, Kampung Timah, and Tronoh Mines. However, he never went to the other side of Kinta river, which was located on the western part of Gumpey Luas. That area was known as Padag Kerikal, another territory which belonged to the *Seng-oi* of Kelubi.

According to Panjang Long, his father did not move to Padag Kerikal because the two groups had adopted a sense of appreciation of each other’s territory, which had been gained through mutual understanding. If people wanted to work in the other’s territory, they had to become a member of the group who owned the territory through marriage or by moving into the group. That was what his father did. When his father came into the area, Gumpey Luas still belonged to no group. However, there were groups from Bota working in the area. When Long Tanjung came, he had to join the group which came from Sengkuang, and became a pioneer in opening fields in the area. Only after that were Long Tanjung and his new group able to move around in that territory. Panjang Long added that, if the territory belonged to no group, and two groups came into the area at about the same time, they would divide the territory into two sub-territories.\textsuperscript{42}
In addition to Long Tanjung’s group, there were a few other groups, mostly from Bota, living in Gumpey Luas area. Each group comprised four or five families or kelamin. These groups then got together and formed a bigger group. At the time Long Tanjung’s group opened selai in Tronoh Mines area, for instance, they got together with another group of people from Temboh Bekett. According to Anjang Ngah Lesu, this occurred because one group or another lacked a pawang. Either their pawang had died or he had left the group. A group member who became the pawang was usually old. When the pawang became too old and had no more energy to do hard work such as opening fields, he would always withdraw from the group and go back to his old village. The absence of a pawang would leave the group supernaturally insecure, and for this reason, they would usually join another group who had a pawang. This process went on until all the groups got together and formed a bigger group. During that time, Long Tanjung was a pawang. His group therefore became a central reference point, and groups without pawang came and joined them.

When the group became bigger, it had the ability to cover the whole of the Gumpey Luas area. According to Anjang Ngah Lesu, their grandfather used to cultivate as far as Batu Gajah and the Ipoh area, but just for a short period because the area was affected by mining. They then came back to Gumpai Luas. After years moving around, they decided to settle in one place. At first, they settled in a place called Telok Buyong. Panjang Long was born there in the early 1900s. He told me that he did not know the exact year he was born, but when the historic great flood occurred in 1926, he was already a young man, but still had not married.

After several seasons cultivating in Telok Buyong, the people moved to Changkat Tin, an area which was close to Sungai Galah. While in Changkat Tin, they lived in a hillocky area, locally known as Chenan Worl. Keling was born in here in 1914.

According to Panjang Long, the people lived in Chenan Worl for about ten seasons before they moved to Pengkalan Jering, a high flat area located on the Kinta river bank. Pengkalan Jering was a strategic place. It was located in the middle of the trade route from Telok Anson (now Teluk Intan) to Bukit Pekan, Tanjung Tualang, Malim Nawar, and other villages along the Kinta river.
Chart 5.3: The Descendant of Long Tanjong
the people settled in Pengkalan Jering, traders from Teluk Intan dropped by and traded their goods. Before tin mining came into the Kinta valley, the water of the Kinta river was very clear and clean. A little further down river from Pengkalan Jering was a place named Tasik Bangsi. It was well-known as a Royal picnic area. Not long after that, the Gop came and settled in the area. They became friendly with the Seng-oi of Pengkalan Jering. Towards the middle of that decade, the people of Pengkalan Jering moved a little inland from the Kinta river, and settled in an area named Sungai Galah. Anjang Ngah Lesu was born here in about 1935 or 1936, the early period of their settlement in Sungai Galah.

**Gumpey Luas in the Early British Era**

The section will cover life in Pengkalan Jering and Sungai Galah. The discussion will once again be anchored by the life stories of Long Tanjung and members of his family. The stories intertwine because they originated from the same source, and were told in the same group (the genealogy of these families is shown in Chart 5.3).

**Pengkalan Jering**

In the early British era, the Seng-oi of Gumpey Luas were still moving from one area to another. The British fully ruled Malaya in 1919, during which the people of Gumpey Luas settled at Chenan Worl. The Seng-oi, however, did not know about the political changes that had occurred in the state. They only heard rumours that the white men (Mai Byeq) had come and bought their area for tin mining. They thought that the Mai Byeq had bought the area from the raja or Sultan. Nevertheless, they still had strong ties with the Gop leaders, and this relationship went on until they moved and settled in Pengkalan Jering.

While the Seng-oi lived in Telok Buyong, they engaged in selai activities and collected rattan. Fishing was carried out only for domestic use. They lived in this area for quite a long time. Panjang Long did not remember how long it was since he was still a boy. The people had opened a fruit orchard (dusut) on their former selai in Telok Buyong area. After the entire Telok Buyong area had become their former selai and was planted with dusut, they moved to Chenan Worl in the Changkat Tin area. Not much development occurred there. The people did not open dusut because the area was not suitable for fruit trees. After
about a decade of cultivation seasons in Chenan Worl, they had worked all the areas, leaving no more land available to work, except former selai. They then decided to move to Pengkalan Jering.

During their settlement in Chenan Worl, the Seng-oi group still had Long Tanjung as the pawang, and he was considered one of the group leaders. Long Tanjung, however, passed the headmanship (penghulu') to the eldest member of the group named Ata’ Bek Pari’, who held the post until they moved to Pengkalan Jering. According to Panjang Long, Ata’ Bek Pari’ and his father, Long Tanjung, used to accompany the Raja Muda when he stayed overnight in Tasik Bangsi. They teamed up with the ‘royal escort’ to fish and hunt mouse deer around the Tasik Bangsi area. Since Ata’ Bek Pari’ depended on fishing for his livelihood, the Raja Muda asked him to fish for prawn (udang galah) and Kelah fish (Tor tambroides; duronesis), while Long Tanjung was usually asked to accompany the hunting group, which was mostly made up of Seng-oi. The Raja Muda, however, wanted to have at least one Gop in the hunting group, so he could slaughter the game according to Islamic custom.

Turning to the life history of the leader, Ata’ Bek Pari’ originated from Sengkuang, which adjoined Teaw Ba’ village (now known as Suak Padi, a sub-village of Bota village). Ata’ Bek Pari’ was closely related to Long Tanjung’s wife. He joined Long Tanjung in his shifting cultivation around Gumpey Luas for tens of years. Since he was the eldest, the members of the group selected him as their leader. Due to this position, he was given the title Tok Maharaja by the Raja Muda of Durian Sebatang, who lived in Telok Anson Palace. The title giving ceremony was held in Chenan Worl, the place where Keling Nawan was born. During that time, Keling was still a boy, and did not remember much about it.

A few years after Tok Maharaja obtained his title, the people of Chenan Worl decided to move to Pengkalan Jering. Later, however, he decided to go back to his own village, Sengkuang, as he wanted to spend the rest of his life there. Before he left Gumpey Luas, Tok Maharaja proposed that one of the three elders take over his position, either his son, Senungang, or one of his two relatives, Long Tanjung or Itam Belit. Long Tanjung, well-known as Mara’ Chorr, refused to accept the post because he was already a rakna‘ umur, an elder who was
responsible for handling the Seng-oi tradition and beliefs. Itam Belit also refused because he was younger than Senungang. The withdrawal of Long Tanjung and Itam Belit left Senungang as the only person to fill in the position. Due to his appointment as the penghulu’, Senungang was then given the title Tok Singa Merjan by the Raja Muda of Perak. The title giving ceremony also took place in Pengkalan Jering, probably in 1928 or 1929. At that time, Keling was already a teenager, aged about 14 or 15 years old, and remembered some of the events, especially when his mother scolded him when he tried to follow his father to the ceremony. His mother did not allow him to go because she claimed that it was old men’s business, and that young men like him should stay at home. The ceremony involved rituals and supernatural beings, especially the keramat and the pangkal tiik of that area. It was therefore not wise for youngsters, whose ruwai were still weak, to attend.

The era of Tok Singa Merjan as penghulu’ of Pengkalan Jering was rather short. A few years after his appointment to this position, his father, Tok Maharaja, died in Sengkuang. Tok Singa Merjan then had to go back to Sengkuang because the people of this village required him to take over his father’s position. The headmanship of Pengkalan Jering was then passed to Itam Belit. At that time, Itam Belit was the father-in-law of Nawan, the fourth son of Long Tanjung. Itam Belit’s father was also said to have originated from Gorl and to have then established a family in Kelubi village of the Padag Krikal. Itam Belit’s family then moved to Teaw Ba’, the village where his mother’s family originated. Itam Belit grew up there and then married a local girl. He came to Gumpay Luas after his daughter got married to Nawan. His family became a member of Long Tanjung’s group when they were settling in Telok Buyong and Chenan Worl. Later, he succeeded as leader of the Pengkalan Jering, and was given the title Tok Singa Merban, also by Raja Muda. According to Keling Nawan, his grandfather received his title in the early 1930s, which was probably one or two years earlier than Mat Melaka of Perah received his title from Sultan Iskandar Shah.

Keling Nawan was a young man (lintau) at that time and managed to attend the ceremony. The ceremony started at about 8.00 pm because the Raja Muda arrived late due to the high water level. The current was fast and slowed the Royal boat. In the ceremony, the Raja Muda put his ‘royal weapon’ (Badik Diraja) into the water in a white bowl. The water was then poured onto the head of Itam Belit,
and at the same time the Raja Muda gave him the title Tok Singa Merban. According to Keling Nawan, that was the last royal visit into the area by way of the Kinta river, because after that the importance of the river as a main route for traders and travellers begin to decay due to the development of roads.

The population of Pengkalan Jering grew fast. Many people from other villages like Kelubi, sub-villages of Bota (especially Teaw Ba', Gedung Batu' and Bunut or Temboh Bekett), Denak, and Perah came and settled in the village. One of them was named Alang Buyut. He came from Perah and married a girl of Pengkalan Jering. After that, his brother's family joined him in Pengkalan Jering, and settled permanently. They came to the area attracted by conditions there—the land was fertile, the swamp was rich with fish and the area was full of rattan. The attraction was also due to the strategic location of Pengkalan Jering, which gave people the chance to be involved in trade. They could sell their rattan to dealers who traded along the Kinta river. They could also gain access to all kinds of consumer goods which were brought in by traders who operated along that river.

In regard to the economic life of the Seng-oi of Pengkalan Jering, Panjang Long said that the people in the old days did not engage in permanent agriculture because they lacked confidence in the security of their area. Their pessimism about the future of their land later became a reality when their dusut in Telok Buyong was destroyed by a dredger. They had slowly stopped selai activities because most of the high areas had been affected by, or ‘sold’ to mining companies. They were only ‘allowed’ to carry out non-agricultural economic activities because such activities did not involve the idea of possessing the land. As a result of this development, the inhabitants of Pengkalan Jering, especially the Seng-oi, were only involved in fishing and collecting rattan. Only a few of their neighbours, the Gop, were involved in these activities because most of them were attracted to work in the mining industry, especially in the dredger. That tendency left the Seng-oi as the only group who were attracted to other non-agricultural based activities.

The Seng-oi of Pengkalan Jering became the main group of rattan collectors and fisherman in the Gumpey Luas swampy areas. Of the two activities ‘allowed’ by the Mai Byeq, fishing became the main activity of the villagers of Pengkalan
Jering. They caught fish and prawns using a traditional trap called *bubu*. They preferred *bubu* to nets or fish-hooks because *bubu* could keep the fish alive, while nets and fish-hooks killed their catch. So, they could keep the fish fresh when it was to sold to the middle man, and the price would therefore be better. They moved through the swamp area by boat or raft, and set their *bubu* all over the swamp. They sold the rattan and fish to the traders who operated along the Kinta River. Starting from the early 1930s, however, the Kinta river was no longer a trade route because the *Mai Byeq* had built a road. Traders started using this because it was much easier and they could reduce the man power involved. Before the road was developed, the traders had to use many people to pole their barges up river, which was very costly. By using the road, they could reduce these transportation costs. The traders then used bicycles or horse wagons to transport their goods. The change in means of transportation, however, did not effect the mode of economy of the *Seng-oi* of Pengkalan Jering, who were basically engaged in traditional economic activities.

With the advent of the road, the *Seng-oi* of Pengkalan Jering changed their trade relationships with the dealers from the nearby towns. In relation to their fish trade, for instance, they dealt with four Chinese dealers from Tanjung Tualang known as Akit, Kelapak, Gemuk and Awa. These dealers demanded a large amount of fish every day, causing the *Seng-oi* to double their effort in fishing. They collected the fish from the *bubu* twice a day, that was in the morning and in the late afternoon. The dealers also came twice a day. Gemuk always came in the morning. Awa in the afternoon, while Akit and Awa alternated. When Gemuk arrived in the village, he would blow a buffalo horn, whose sound became a signal for the fisherman to come back. The price of fish was very cheap, between three to four *sen* per catty. At that price, however, a fisherman could manage to get $10-15 a day, which was a lot of money at that time. The Chinese transported the fish by bicycle all the way from Pengkalan Jering to Tanjung Tualang, a distance of about ten miles. The fish they bought in the afternoon would be sold in the market the next morning, while the fish they bought in the morning would be sold the same afternoon.

During that time, the demand for fresh water fish was good because salt water fish were rarely found in the market due to lack of transportation. The high demand for fish was also due to the growth of population, especially the Chinese
who lived in nearby towns such as Tanjung Tualang and Kampung Timah, and in quarters in the mining site, called kungs. There were also Gop who joined the Chinese in the mining industry, and these Gop gradually accumulating in the area. This mining community became the main consumer of fresh water fish, while the Seng-oi of Pengkalan Jering were the main suppliers of this commodity.

Towards the end of the period of settlement in Pengkalan Jering, there were a number of dredgers operating all over Gumpey Luas. The majority belonged to Mai Byeq companies, including French companies. Dredgers were effectively used in the swampy and low lying areas, where the soil was soft. In addition to Mai Byeq companies, there were also mines owned by Chinese companies. Almost all Chinese companies operating around the area were using the palong method, and operated in the higher areas, where the soil was tough and contained lots of rocks. Those two types of mining operation offered thousands of job opportunities. The Seng-oi of Pengkalan Jering began to be attracted by these jobs, especially the youngsters. That left only the old and married men in fishing and rattan collecting occupations.

Apart from job opportunities, the Seng-oi of Pengkalan Jering were fairly uncomfortable with the operation of those dredgers. The dredgers operated 24 hours a day non-stop and produced continuous sound pollution. The Seng-oi Pengkalan Jering, who used to live in a quiet environment before, could not stand the noise that annoyed them day and night. In addition to the noise, the Seng-oi had two hidden anxieties which made their lives uncomfortable. The first anxiety was a fear that the pangkal tiik and other supernatural beings in the effected area would be angry, and would cause ‘plague’ and death among the people who destroyed the area, including the Seng-oi who lived nearby.

The second anxiety regarded their security. They heard rumours that the dredger used to ‘eat’ human heads. They were told that if the dredger got stuck or its engine died, the Mai Byeq would ‘feed’ it a human head in order to make it move. If the engine ‘died’, the Mai Byeq would throw a human head into the fire plant inside the steam engine. If the dredger become stuck in one place, which made it look like it had been stopped by supernatural beings, the Mai Byeq would throw the human head underneath it. The people said the Mai Byeq preferred to
have Seng-oi heads because they were ‘long lasting’, meaning the dredger would be trouble-free for a longer time compared to if it was fed with non-Seng-oi heads. The Seng-oi ‘believed’ that they were head hunters (kanuh kui) who worked with the Mai Byeq, wandering in Seng-oi’s areas all over the state looking for Seng-oi heads. This anxiety continued until the 1970s.46

Towards the middle of the 1930s, the Seng-oi of Pengkalan Jering got the news that the area had been ‘purchased’ by a Mai Byeq dredging company. They also heard from rumours that there was an order to remove them and other inhabitants from the area. Due to that development, the Seng-oi ‘voluntarily’ fled from Pengkalan Jering and settled in an area called Sungai Galah, the only area which had not been purchased by mining companies. According to Panjang Long, his father, Long Tanjung, urged their leader, Tok Singa Merban, and his people to remain in the area and face whatever challenges came from the state because that was the only place available for them in Gumpey Luas. Their Gop friends moved elsewhere, and some of them settled in Balun Bidai.

**Sungai Galah**

Sungai Galah was named after a small Kinta tributary which was used by the Chinese to transport pole stick wood (sungai means river, and galah means pole). Before the Seng-oi of Pengkalan Jering moved to Sungai Galah, the area was a thick undergrowth forest (rima’), full of tiny trees. The Chinese used to get into the area by wooden boat through the small tributary of the Kinta river which lay at the fringe of the area. They went into the area to cut small trees, which were used to pole their barges (tongkang), especially on their way to up river areas. The Seng-oi then named the river and its area after that activity.

In Sungai Galah, the people carried on the same way of life. Most of the youngsters worked in the mining industry. The old and family men, and a small number of young men, still engaged in one of two traditional economic activities—fishing or collecting rattan. The renewed interest in collecting rattan was due to the Mai Byeq who had encouraged the Seng-oi to collect all the rattan before the area was mined. According to Panjang Long, the same encouragement was also given by the Department of Forestry, which asked the Seng-oi to collect all kinds of jungle products in the area that had been approved for mining. The
Plate 5.4: The Destroyer
Dredgers are seen as a major source of environmental destruction in Gumpei Luas. These not only destroyed the *dengri'* of the *Seng-oi*, but killed their culture in general.

Plate 5.5: A Damaged Landscape
Active mining has caused the Gumpei Luas area to turn into swamp and pools. The main supernatural guardian, *Pawang Dengri*', is believed to have flown from this area to a ‘cooler’ place.
Seng-oi, however, just concentrated on collecting rattan because other jungle products were very rare in the swampy area. The ‘clearance’ permission from the Department of Forestry was originally given to the Seng-oi when they were still in Pengkalan Jering, and it remained when the people moved to Sungai Galah.

The group who engaged in fishing maintained their trade relationship with the same dealers, that is, Akit, Kelapak, Gemuk and Awa. Gemuk continued to call on the fisherman in the morning in the same way as before. When they moved to Sungai Galah, however, the price of fish rose to about 15 cents to 20 cents or dua kupang per catty. The price of prawns rose to lima kupang (50 cents) or even to enam kupang (60 cents) per catty, but they began to be rare and more difficult to catch. When this happened, the Seng-oi had to accumulate their catch and sell them once or twice a week.

During the time when the price of prawns was high, Anjang Makpin was growing up. He remembers once when his father took him to Batu Gajah town after he had sold prawns to Gemuk. They hired a horse wagon for $5 for a ‘to and fro’ journey from Tanjung Tualang to Batu Gajah. According to him, that was his first experience travelling by horse wagon, and the time was close to the Japanese occupation. The $5 his father paid to hire the wagon was probably equal to $50 in value today.

After this time, Changkat Tin started to grow as a mining village. Horse wagons were introduced or the main means of public transport, and started to operate the ‘to and fro’ route which connected that mining village to the nearest towns, especially Tanjung Tualang. The Seng-oi benefited from this transport, using their income from fishing and collecting rattan, as well as from working in the mining industry, to charter the wagon for leisure and shopping trips to bigger towns such as Batu Gajah, Kampar, and even Ipoh.

Jungle products, especially rattan and fish began to become scarce in the area as early as in the late 1930s. This forced the people to look for alternative sources of economic support. The middle-aged married men began to join the young working in the mining industry. They, however, preferred to work in mines which used the palong method, which was considered less risky than the dredger.
According to Panjang Long, he was never interested in working in the dredger because he hated the night shifts. Most of the Seng-oi worked with the Chinese mining companies as night guards and in other sections of mining work.

While they were still in Pengkalan Jering, the elders and household leaders had predicted that they would very shortly face a shortage of sources of livelihood. Immediately after they moved to Sungai Galah, they tried to look for economic alternatives, but did not succeed. They did carry out paddy cultivation in Sungai Galah, but their area became smaller, and they had no new areas to make selai. They then started to engage in rubber cultivation, although they knew it was an offence. They had heard about rubber before, and had seen their Gop friends cultivate the crop. Some of their Gop friends in Balun Bidai (now known as Kampung Banjar) had gained coupons for their involvement in the rubber cultivation industry. Some of them, however, were not entitled to gain that privilege. The latter encouraged the Seng-oi to engage in the industry because they wanted to have company while breaking the rules. “If we are charged by the white man, the Seng-oi will be charged too. So, we have friends in jail!” This is what their Gop friends said, as narrated by Panjang Long.

After long consideration of their future, the Seng-oi of Sungai Galah approached their Gop friends, and got seed supplies from them. The Seng-oi then ‘illegally’ planted the seed in their former paddy fields. At first, there were only three or four households involved in the industry. This number then increased to fifteen. They became involved in the industry because there was no reaction from the Mai Byeq. They just heard rumours that the crop was protected, but they saw no enforcement activities on the part of the government. About one and a half years after that, however, officers from the District Office of Telok Anson came to make an inspection of their rubber fields. The officer accused them of planting rubber without permission. The session then became an argument between the District Office officers and the Seng-oi of Sungai Galah. Tok Singa Merban stressed that the Seng-oi would die if the Mai Byeq did not allow them to cultivate rubber. He told the officer that they lacked a source of income because most of their traditional area had been affected by mining. The officers were then sympathetic, and suggested Tok Singa Merban and his people apply for a TOL from Telok Anson Land Office.
A few days after Sungai Galah was visited by the officers from Telok Anson District Office, Tok Singa Merban, accompanied by Long Tanjung, Ngah Lesu and a few others, went to Telok Anson and met the DO, who was a *Mai Byeq*. In that meeting, the DO told them about the current rules for rubber cultivation, and this was followed by a long discussion with Tok Singa Merban and his people. The DO then asked Tok Singa Merban to put in their application for a TOL at the Land Office. The DO promised to grant them the TOL because it was in his power.

After forwarding their application, the *Seng-oi* did not waste any time and started cultivation straight away. About 15 heads of households became the pioneers of the ‘project’. Among these were Long Tanjung, Ngah Lesu, Uda Layang, Itam Julo, Yeop, Alang Lajin, Ngah Libo, Pandak Bako, Pandak Sulor, Nawan, Ahmad Padak Sulor and four others. However, Tok Singa Merban did not take part because he had enough with the involvement of his grandson, Nawan, and his *bisat*, Long Tanjung. According to Anjang Ngah Lesu, Tok Singa Merban had adopted a typical *Seng-oi* attitude from the old days. They were very tolerant and not greedy. As a result of that attitude, their rubber fields were very small. Each of the ‘participants’ cultivated two to four acres of rubber, depending on their ability. “If the people nowadays had a chance like that, they would have planted five times more than their grandparents did,” Anjang Ngah Lesu added.

While waiting for their rubber to grow, the people who were not working in the mining sector nor involved in other commercial economic activities, such as selling fish and rattan, went to open paddy fields in areas of Tangkai Chermin. At that time, the area of Tangkai Chermin was divided into small three sub-areas, known as *Chenan Gungke, Tembeq Labu*, and *Jengka’ Leq* respectively.

The relationship between the *Seng-oi* and the state leaders began to change. When the *Seng-oi* moved to Sungai Galah and engaged in rubber cultivation, they started a new relationship with the *Mai Byeq*. At the same time, their relation with the *Gop* leaders declined. The affairs of the *Seng-oi* of Sungai Galah, which before had been handled by the Raja and Sultan, were taken over by British Administrators. The change in ‘administration’ was due to a change in political circumstances due to British rule in Malaya in 1919. In addition, the area of Sungai Galah was not located in a Malay Reserve. If it had been, the
Seng-oi would have been under the administration of the raja or Sultan because it was subject to Malay custom. Sungai Galah, however, was located in 'State Land', and was administered by the DO. These two facts contributed to the breakdown of the relationship between the Seng-oi of Sungai Galah and the Palace of Perak.

After the Seng-oi of Gumpey Luas had lived permanently in Sungai Galah for more than ten years, World War II broke out, and the Japanese occupied Malaya in 1941. At that time, the population of Sungai Galah was quite big, being about 200 or 250 inhabitants, or approaching 40 kelamin.

A Generalisation on the Pattern of Settlements and Its Maintenance

The chermor of the Seng-oi of Perah and Tangkai Chermin have introduced the concepts of territory (dengri') and of group (gu) among the Seng-oi. The chermor also show the general pattern of how the traditional Seng-oi created their dengri', and how they maintained these territories. In general, dengri' means homeland, referring to a village and its surrounding area, in which the Seng-oi have traditionally depended for dwelling, farming, hunting and fishing. The boundary between these dengri' was rather loose as it only existed at the level of mutual understanding among members of the dengri'. According to the Seng-oi belief, each dengri' is looked after by a guardian, Pangkal Tiik or Mai Dengri', and should ideally consist of seven tributaries (kenoon teaw) or rivers (batang ari') that flow through that area. This belief probably served as the basis for the Seng-oi to identify particular dengri'.

In addition, there were two other categories of land, selai manah and saka', to which the Seng-oi related their dengri'. Selai manah refers to former paddy field areas in which no permanent settlements have been established. In the absence of permanent settlements, these areas are not regarded as dengri'. According to the Seng-oi's mutual understanding, these sorts of areas are free for others to work. For instance, there were selai manah, such as Changkat Pinggan and Kelidang, which had been occupied by others. The Changkat Pinggan area, which was formerly worked by Long Jeroneh’s gu, was occupied by the people of Kurug. The Kelidang area, which was the selai manah of Ata’ Dayung’s gu, was occupied by Bek Ransom’s gu, who later established the dengri' of Bekau.
Another category of dengri' called saka',\(^{50}\) refers to abandoned dengri' (see Gomes, 1990: 14-36). The people abandoned their dengri' for unavoidable reasons such as diseases, threats from outsiders or government orders. During the Malayan Emergency, for instance, the Seng-oi were forced to abandon their dengri' when the government tried to segregate them from the influence of the Communists. During this period, they were resettled in camps or forts, most of which become permanent villages, while their old dengri' came to be regarded as saka'. In principle, such an area belonged exclusively to its former settlers in the sense that the abandoned dengri' was free for the saka' holders to work and reoccupy. Despite this principle, other people still have a right to access the area, that is, to work on the land, on the condition that they first get permission from the saka' holders. In the context of Temboh Bekett, however, all of these saka' were located far away, such as Paloh, Busut, Batu Gajah and Teaw Batu', and are now occupied by settlers other than Seng-oi.

Each dengri' was inhabited by a gu (sometimes called pitak). According to Ata' Bek Jarah, the gu normally consisted of six generations or less: great grandparents, grandparents, parents, children, grandchildren and great grandchildren, because the life span of the Seng-oi in the old days was longer than today.\(^{51}\) He added that the traditional Seng-oi were likely to live in a small gu. If the gu became too large, a number of families from that gu would move, either to establish a new dengri' or to join other small gu. The main reason for these movements was related to the availability of fertile land and other natural resources: they moved when these resources began to become scarce, and were only sufficient for a small gu, who decided to live permanently in that dengri'. Such a way of life (pengham) made the gu small. Dengri' were scattered all over the place. This categorisation is slightly less inclusive than the one made by Dentan (1975: 61), who suggested that:

Gu comprises all the descendants of one's great grandparents' great grandparents. This description clearly derives from that of a jeg,\(^{52}\) viz., all the descendants of one's great grandparents. Since the Semai do not reckon descent as far back as would be required to demarcate a gu, and since people define their gu in territorial terms, a gu seems to be a territorial group with a kinship rationale, perhaps an idealized cluster.

Although Ata' Bek Jarah and Dentan have come up with a slightly different opinion, each categorisation seems to differ only in its scope of interpretation. Both categorisations explain how the Seng-oi social community may be defined.
Ata' Bek Jarah and Dentan's views converge, especially when considering the effects of British colonialism, when the Seng-oi lacked land to establish new dengri'. Although there was an understanding that each particular dengri' belonged to the gu of its founder, the disadvantages experienced under colonial rule forced them to redefine the scope of their gu from an extended family to a cluster, which is the meaning given by Dentan (1975: 61): "In effect, the gu seems to be the outermost limit of sen'oi hii, the we group." This new scope allowed the Seng-oi from one gu to become members of other dengri' either by moving into, or marrying a member of, that gu. On the other hand, members of the founder gu could also move out from their dengri' and become members of other gu or dengri'. From this period on, each of the Seng-oi villages was inhabited by two or more gu, as in Perah. This situation brought about a shift in people's self-consciousness: they came to identify themselves with reference not to their gu but to their dengri'. For example, the descendants of Long Jeroneh no longer claimed to belong to their gu, but identified themselves as the people of Perah, or mai Perah.

In terms of leadership, each gu had an elder who was a master in adat and healing (pawang). Later, the leaders of new emerging dengri' developed close contacts with the rulers of the ancient Malay State of Perak. Such contact led the Seng-oi to adopt the Gop leadership system and divide their leaders into two: pawang and penghulu'. From this point on the role of the penghulu' became prominent, especially as they were directly involved in strengthening Seng-oi people's relationship with the Gop chief of their area, including the Sultan and Raja Muda. The importance of the pawang became less obvious since his role was limited to domestic affairs. The penghulu's contacts consequently led the Gop chiefs to bestow titles on them which were awarded by letters of appointment. In such letters, the Gop Sultan or Raja stated the name of the title of that particular Seng-oi leader, and the dengri' which came under his administration. This letter of appointment was regarded by the Seng-oi as a 'letter of authority' or surat kuasa, and was seen as a political endorsement given to these leaders to govern their dengri' independently. Scholars such as Dentan (1979: 67) indicate that: "the regional headman wielded considerable influence over the Semai [Seng-oi] partly on the basis of the possession of such a letter".

162
Based on the *chermor*, it is possible to illustrate how *Seng-oi gu* maintained *dengri’s*, and compare it with the !Kung of Africa. The *chermor* indicate that the people of Berkei fled to Temboh Bekett in the late eighteenth century or early nineteenth Century. The first place they settled was Bunut, which is believed to be the oldest settlement in the *mai direh* area. They then worked their *selai* around the Bunut area. Later the whole area was converted into a residential site due to population growth, and was named Temboh Bekett (now, Temboh Hangat). In Temboh Bekett, the people still retained the same concept of rights to the use of land as their forebears. However, the people began to adopt a new tradition as they started to separate into small groups. Each group basically consisted of an extended family. These groups moved to the areas around the settlement to open *selai*. Their main settlement was regarded as a central and permanent base. In the early stages, the people lived alternately between the settlement and their *selai*. However, when the paddy started to produce grain, the people lived in the *selai* permanently to prevent the paddy from being attacked by birds and wild animals. They lived in the *selai* until the end of the harvest season, and after that returned to their permanent settlement and took a rest for a few months before the next season began. They then went back to their *selai* areas when the new paddy season began.

During the time they lived in the *selai*, the settlement was just occupied by old people who had no more energy to work, other community members who were unhealthy, or women who had just given birth. These members of the community would be given rice and vegetables by the ‘healthy’ members who had worked on the *selai*. This reflected the sharing of responsibility: healthy people having the responsibility to look after the welfare of the members of the community who were old, unhealthy, or disabled. The elders of Perah and Tangkai Chermin still believe this is an ideal economic system as it emphasises moral obligation which allows the weakest to survive.53

These narratives also show that a *Seng-oi* man tended to go wandering, establishing a family and a new life outside his home settlement or *dengri’s*. Long Jeroneh and Long Tanjung’s experiences show this tendency: after getting married they, together with a few of their wives’ family members, went to new places for *selai* activities. They finally established new *dengri’s* in those areas, which were isolated from both their own and their wife’s settlements.
This pattern of creating *dengri'* among the *Seng-oi* in the old days, with its emphasis on family networks, seemed to be similar to that of the !Kung. According to !Kung's practices, the creation of territories was based on the creation of a social group, or band. In other words, before any territory, or *nlore*, was established, the !Kung first formed a band, or *kxai k'xuasi*. According to Marshall, (1976: 182):

!Kung families join together and form bands on the basis of consanguinity and affinity. Families are linked by the same relationships that form the nuclear family, the consanguineous relationships of parent and offspring and siblings and the affinal relationship of husband and wife. One of these relationships links every individual to a family, and one of these relationships links each family to another family in a band, in a chain-like manner. Clusters of related families which form segments of bands are linked to other segments also by one of the nuclear family relationships.

In describing !Kung's concept of space, or territory, Marshall (1976: 184) writes:

The band that inhabits any given territory is formed around a core of people who are established as belonging to that territory. They are called the *kxai k'xuasi* ("owners") in that territory (*nlore*): they are the "owners" of its resources. The people from other bands in other territories who join the band of a given core of people directly by marriage or through some chain of consanguineous or affinal relationship I shall call incoming members. Incoming members have rights to the resources of the particular band during the time they are members of it. They do not retain the rights to that band's resources if they leave the band. The rights of the *kxai k'xuasi* to the resources are inalienable.

*Kxai k'xuasi*, or incoming members, among the !Kung appear to be similar to incoming members among the *Seng-oi*. This is shown by the experience of Long Jeroneh and Long Tanjung, both of whom became members of the core settlement of Temboh Bekett through marriage. In *Seng-oi* tradition, however, Long Jeroneh and Long Tanjung retained rights over resources in their former *dengri'* even though they no longer lived there. This means that they could also collect jungle products or open *selai* in their old territory despite the fact that they had become members of new *dengri'*. In other words, by becoming members of their wives' *dengri'*, they had rights over resources in both their wives' and their own *dengri'*. In addition, the *Seng-oi* were also free to work in the areas around the core *dengri'*, and also free to go to other areas which belonged to no group. In establishing new *dengri'*, the *Seng-oi* were more likely to go to areas which were isolated from their own or their wives' *dengri'*. When new permanent settlements were established, the whole of these *selai* areas then became new territories, or *dengri'*. The group who became the pioneer in
establishing these new settlements would begin to claim, or recognise, territorial rights over the dengri'.

However, there are some differences from the !Kung. Among the !Kung, the peripheral settlements maintained their ‘loyalty’ to the core, while the core maintained its ‘domination’ over peripheral settlements. This bilateral relationship was maintained because the !Kung adopted territorial claims. On certain occasions, the core and peripheral settlements would get together to fight the other bands in order to defend their territory. However, such tribal wars or struggles over territory and resources never occurred among the Seng-oi as they believed in sharing. This pattern of relationships between the core and its peripheral settlements might appear in certain cases but not as a general pattern. Such a core-periphery relationship, for instance, could be seen in the case of Temboh Bekett. In this case, Bunut was the first settlement established in the area, which ‘qualified’ Temboh Bekett to be regarded as dengri’. Population growth had, however, resulted in the expansion of Bunut settlement to cover the entire area around. This larger area of settlement was then renamed Temboh Bekett, after its dengri’. Later, a few new settlements, such as Teaw Ba’, Teaw Sengkuang and Pai Teed, were established within the dengri’, each of which adjoined its main settlement, Temboh Bekett [in the context of the !Kung, Bunut (or Temboh Bekett) could be seen as the core while Teaw Ba’, Teaw Sengkuang and Pai Teed were peripheral settlements]. Bilateral ties between Temboh Bekett and its peripheral settlements were due to the fact that the people of the core and peripheral settlements originated from the same family root. In addition, peripheral settlements were regarded as the extension of the core and the people of these, therefore, became subjects of the same leader, or penghulu’, who lived in the main settlement, Temboh Bekett. Later, relationships between core and peripheral settlements began to change when new dengri’ were established far from Temboh Bekett.

The outmigration of the gu began when the entire dengri’ of Temboh Bekett had been cultivated due to many seasons of selai activity. As a result of this continuous selai activity, most of the area around and nearby Temboh Bekett became secondary forest, or selai nyam, and was mainly divided into two categories: selai manah and saka’. The people began to search for other areas for selai. However, most of these were far from Temboh Bekett because the areas
nearby had been occupied by other settlers, including the Gop. Since the new areas were too far, the people, who had split into gu, decided to establish permanent settlements in their new selai areas.

Later, leaders of these emerging dengri' established close contact with the leaders of the ancient Malay state of Perak: leaders of Perah had contact with the Sultan of Perak and the Penghulu Mukim, while Gumpey Luas (Pengkalan Jering and Sungai Galah) had contact with the Raja Muda. This contact afforded the Seng-oi leaders the authority to govern their dengri', which made possible their symbolic independence from Temboh Bekett. However, such independence did not become an obstacle for them, neither the people of Temboh Bekett nor of the new emerging dengri', to move out from one of these dengri', and join another. In contrast to the !Kung, who always maintained their kxai k"xuasi to a particular nlore, the Seng-oi could belong to all dengri'. They have no clear genealogical inheritance, and no gu has absolute rights, over a particular dengri'. Although there were some cases which required the new comers to obtain permission from the gu who established the dengri' or owned the saka', the communal-based system of land holding, as well as the sharing-based of way of life, gave the right to all Seng-oi to access any dengri' they wanted to work on or settle on. This system allowed the Seng-oi to move from one dengri' to another, and it seems to have been very important in sustaining the dengri' with a sufficient size of population. It also means that one particular dengri' was not only maintained by one particular gu, but also by members of other gu who were moving into and out of that particular dengri'. This situation once again shows that the dengri' of the Seng-oi were maintained by the entire Seng-oi people instead of one particular gu. Traditionally, these on-going movements in and out, referred to as dynamic movements, became a way of maintaining the dengri', as well as sustaining these areas as the dengri' of the Seng-oi. These dynamic movements are illustrated in the sketches below. To simplify the representation, I will just focus on the movements of the main gu.

Sketch 5.1 shows the movements of the gu of Long Jeroneh. Long Jeroneh’s family left Salu’ for Teaw Batu’. Later, Long Jeroneh went wandering and married a girl of Temboh Bekett. After opening selai in Temboh Bekett for several seasons, he and a few families from his wife’s side went looking for new selai area in Changkat Pinggan. At the same time, another gu led by Bek
Period - MYTH

Period - TRANSITION FROM MYTH TO HISTORY

Period - HISTORY

Sketch 5.1: Pattern of migration of the Gu of Long Geroneh
Ransom, who was also a relative of Long Jeroneh’s wife, moved far north of Temboh Bekett to work in the Bekau area. After more than ten years working in Changkat Pinggan, Long Jeroneh and his gu moved from Changkat Pinggan and went to join Bek Ranson in Bekau via Batu Gajah, Siputeh, Ulu Lengkuas (near Busut) and Temboh Bekett. They worked in Bekau for several seasons and decided to look for a new site when the Bekau area was no longer sufficient for selai. They finally moved to Perah, leaving behind Bek Ransom and his gu as the founder of Bekau.

Later, a member of Bek Ransom’s gu, named Ba Ie, moved to Perah and became a member of Long Jeroneh’s gu. He lived in Perah for about 20 years, when he finally decided to go back to his homeland, Bekau. His land in Perah was taken over by Derboh. During the Malayan Emergency, Long Dahaman went back to his grandmother’s homeland, Temboh Bekett, and got married there, but then came back to Perah. In addition to these movements, there were many other movements undertaken by members of Long Jeroneh’s gu: either by his own relatives, who moved from Teaw Batu’ to Perah (such as Bek Cheti, Ata’ Bek Mehin, Ngah Gudang, Long Raja and later Ngah Pok), or on his wife’s side, who moved out from Temboh Bekett to Perah (such as Ata’ Bek Andak, Long Chiban, and Ata’ Bek Semae, Ata’ Peringai and Long Teluk). These families rejoined Long Jeroneh after he and his gu were established Perah. Some of these, such Ata’ Bek Andak, went back to Temboh Bekett. Later, his son, Bek Gimbol, also went back to Temboh Bekett when he married a girl there. (Lines for the later movements, however, are not drawn in this sketch to avoid confusion.).

Sketch 5.2 shows the movement of the gu of Mat Melaka. Mat Melaka’s ancestor moved from Sanglop to Paloh and established a dengri’ there. The expansion of mining activity into the Kinta area forced this gu to abandon Paloh. They moved to the Ulu Lengkuas area via Bitam area on the lower part of Perah river, and established another dengri’ in Busut. There their leaders, Tok Gerak Machang and Ata’ Pawang, established good contact with the local Gop chief, Raja Yusuf. After these leaders died, the gu, including Mat Melaka’s father, moved to Denak. Mat Melaka was born and then established a family in this dengri’. When Mat Melaka reached middle age, he moved to and established Panchor (Perah) when he had a family crisis with his bisat. Later, one of his sons who lived with him in Panchor, Kulop Jasin, went back to Denak. After World
Sketch 5.2: Pattern of migration of the Gu of Mat Melaka
War II, Kulop Jasin’s son, Bek Tambon, came back to Panchor and inherited his father’s land. Mat Melaka’s other two sons, Ata’ Bek Pakai and Ata’ Bek Makar, followed their own ‘routes’. Ata’ Bek Pakai moved to Teaw Batu’ when he married a daughter of Mara’ Hallaw. After a few years living in Teaw Batu’, Ata’ Bek Pakai came back to Panchor. Later, he moved to Gumpey Luas, then to Bekau and finally came back to Perah. Ata’ Bek Makar began his ‘journey’ to Gumpey Luas, then to Denak and finally came back to Perah. In addition to Mat Melaka’s gu, Ata’ Dayung’s gu had their own pattern of migrations. There were also other movements such as undertaken by Alang Buyut who moved out from Perah to Sungai Galah and lived there permanently.

Sketch 5.3 shows the movement of Long Apon and his father, Ngah Pok. Long Apon’s route was straight forward, and it occurred prior to World War II and during the Malayan Emergency. They moved to Perah in the 1930s after Teaw Batu’ was taken away for mining. During the Emergency, Long Apon went to Temboh Bekett and got married there. Less than a year later, he moved to Kelubi when his marriage broke up. From Kelubi, he moved to mining quarters in Manong and married a girl from Denak. He then joined the para-military forces and retired in 1960. He and his father finally ended their ‘journey’ in Perah via Denak and Temboh Bekett.

Sketch 5.4 shows the movement of Long Tanjung, who became the founder of Sungai Galah. Long Tanjung’s father was believed to have come from Temboh Bekett and was married to a girl of Warr. Long Tanjung’s father spent most of his life in Warr and died there. When Long Tanjung became a young man, he adopted the wandering tradition and went to Gumpey Luas. There, he joined a gu from Teaw Sengkuang and married one of its members. After being a member of Teaw Sengkuang’s gu for a while, Long Tanjung decided to form his own gu comprised of his wife’s family members. Long Tanjung and his gu came back to Gumpey Luas, and formed a new dengri’ in the area of Teluk Buyong, Chenan Worl, Pengkalan Jering and finally Sungai Galah. In addition to his movement, there were other separate moves made by members of his gu such, as Tok Maharaja, Tok Singa Merjan and Tok Singa Merban. There were also families from Perah (Alang Buyut) and Denak and Teaw Batu’ who came and resided permanently in this dengri’.

168
Sketch 5.3: Pattern of migration of the *Gu* of Long Apon
Sketch 5.4: Pattern of migration of the Gu of Long Tanjong
Sketch 5.5 shows the pattern of migration of other *gu*. When Teaw Batu' was taken over for mining, some of its population returned to their former villages, Doug, Papart, Bipog and Salu', while others moved elsewhere. For example, although Derboh was closely related to Bek Enggek, his family joined Long Jeroneh's *gu* and moved to Perah (while the *gu* of Mnek Enggek returned to Teaw Menchaq). A few of Long Apon's relatives, such as the family of Mnek Doll, Ken Kungkang and Ken Linchot, moved to Teaw Menchaq, Mendang and Kelubi, while the majority of them, led by Mara' Beul, were resettled by the British at Gedong Batu' (Temboh Bekett).

If all lines in Sketches 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, and 5.5 were put together they would show how enormously complex was the pattern of movements which went on up until early in the 1960s, when the Seng-oi returned to their *dengri'* after the Malayan Emergency. The pattern shown would be even more complicated if the movements of *gu* other than the main ones were represented. These movements contrast with the concept of territorial rights held by the !Kung. It is also different from the shifting cultivation systems practiced by the Orang Ulu (or Dayak) of Sarawak, whose movements from one cultivation area to another are more systematic and end up in a complete circle. The messiness in Seng-oi movements shows how dynamic the movements were, regardless of *gu* barriers or boundaries. The barrier might be only a way of 'becoming a member' of another *gu*: to do this, or to work on land of the *dengri* that belongs to that *gu*, one must first get permission from, or marry, members of that *gu*. Such permission would avoid misunderstanding or crisis between the *gu*, as well as sustain these dynamic movements as a way of life. The Seng-oi marriage system was another factor that contributed to these movements. According to this system, a couple had to live alternately in both husband and wife's *dengri*', and the length of their stay had to be equal. The couple also had the same right to live in the *dengri* where their grandparents, both maternal and paternal were living. The Seng-oi did this to reunite families since the families were scattered due to exogamous marriages, especially when the marriages occurred among the third or fourth generation of the descendants of those grandparents.54

Generally, these dynamic movements appeared to be the way the Seng-oi maintained their *dengri'* during the time prior the transition period. These also occurred during the early British era but began to decline when the land laws
Sketch 5.5: Pattern of migration of Other Gu.
were introduced, which restricted such kinds of movement or displaced the people from their *dengri*. In addition, these land laws also contributed to a change of the concept of land holding. Before such laws were introduced, land was regarded as a communal holding. One might only need to ask permission before working on someone else's land. This tradition, however, changed when people began to face a shortage of land. The people began to regard *selai* areas as belonging to families. As a result, they began to adopt a new kind of land transaction through the concept of *perjug kendrat*.

In addition to these dynamic movements, the *Seng-oi* also maintained their *dengri* through dynamic relationships. Although new *dengri* were established independently from Temboh Bekett, such 'independence' did not affect social relationships between the people of these two *gu*, i.e. the people of Temboh Bekett and the people of the new *dengri*. As far as the *chermor* are concerned, these people—both the members of *gu* who still remain in Temboh Bekett and those in the *gu* who established Bekau, Perah (and Panchor), Denak, and Telok Buyong (then Chenan Worl, Pengkalan Jering, Sungai Galah, and now Tangkai Chermin)—strongly believe that they are related to one another, and originated from the same family root. The people of these *gu* maintained their family connections, which are still strong today. This network is maintained by visiting one another. This seems to be similar to the !Kung who maintain relationships among the *kxai k"xuasi*, or solidarity between the core and peripheral areas (or surrounding settlements), by emphasising visiting. According to Marshall, (1976: 180-181):

> Visiting has very important functions in !Kung life. The !Kung visit a great deal. They visit relatives and friends, but mainly relatives. They visit for many reasons, for the pleasure of seeing people they like to be with, for change of scenery, to take gifts, to receive gifts, to arrange marriages, to take news of marriages, births, and deaths, for solace in grief, and to participate in rituals.

Visits among the *Seng-oi*, however, carry a broader meaning than the !Kung. It appears to be a very important means of interaction between people who are separated by geographic barriers. Visits always take place during the *Ngenggulang* feasting days, marriage ceremonies, and funerals. They also serve other purposes, such as delivering news, delivering and receiving gifts, especially fruit, and other ordinary social visits. There are some social norms and systems which require the involvement of relatives from other settlements. Marriage, for
example, has become an event which requires the people from other dengri' to pay a visit to the dengri' where the marriage is taking place. In this system, the relatives (waris) play an important role in negotiating the adat and arranging the wedding ceremony. The visit occurs when the waris, some of whom live in other dengri', are invited to carry out their responsibilities to their nephew, or anak mas, as is required by the adat. On the wedding day, all relatives, either local or from other dengri', come and help organise the ceremony. Another purpose of visiting is to give and receive gifts. During the 1995 durian season, for instance, Derboh invited his relatives to come to Perah to eat fruit. In addition to these occasions, the people also visit their relatives and friends for 'leisure' from time to time, both between the old and the new dengri', and among the new dengri' themselves. In the old days, the people had to walk for hours, or even days, to make their visits. Their journeys were full of risks from wild animals, especially tigers, bears, wild dogs, wild buffalo, and snakes. Today, travelling times might be shorter due to the use of motor vehicles but involves some expenses for fares and petrol. It still remains risky as well. For example, Mara' Semae was killed in a road accident while on his way to visit his family in Gedong Batu' as his motorbike was hit by a bus. Although it is risky, time consuming, and costly, the Seng-oi regard visiting as socially significant. According to Derboh, the main aim of a visit is not only to strengthen family relationships, but to unite the Seng-oi at large. By maintaining the unity of the people, the Seng-oi can maintain the existence of their dengri'.

Conclusion

The transition period from the nineteenth to the twentieth century had a great impact on Malaysian political history. The ancient Malay state 'collapsed' and was replaced by a colonial power. This period also witnessed a great social change in the Seng-oi community, especially among the lowland people or mai direh. In this period, they shifted from small 'nomadic' groups to bigger settlement communities. Tribal groups in Perah or the Gumpey Luas territory gathered together and opened permanent settlements. When they settled in these settlements, people of both Perah and Gumpey Luas established good relationships with the ancient Malay state of Perak, which led the Sultan and the Raja Muda, as heads of the State, to confer political endorsement on Seng-oi leaders by giving them titles or gelar. The Sultan and Raja Muda also considered the people of these two settlements as their rakyat, and afforded them equal status.
with the *Gop rakyat*. This relationship went on after 1919 when the British took full control over Malaya. The British, however, slowly took over all internal affairs including issues regarding the *Seng-oi*. Starting from the 1930s, the *Seng-oi* began a new relationship with British Administration officers such as the DO and the Head of the Department of Forestry. These new relationships caused the *Seng-oi* to lose their connection with the ancient Malay rulers of Perak.

During the early British era, the *Seng-oi* began to face problems regarding their land due to the introduction of State Land Laws. Apart from their settlements, the rest of *Seng-oi* traditional territories were taken over by the British, and were gazetted according to the state’s interest. Perah areas were gazetted as a Malay Reserve and Forest Reserve, while Gumpey Luas was gazetted as State Land. This situation ruined the dynamic movements which appeared to be the most important *Seng-oi* way of life in maintaining their *dengri*'. Moreover, the *Seng-oi* were also moved from their permanent settlements in order to make way for mining activities, which served the state’s interest. At the same time, the influence of the cash economy started to penetrate their community. These factors led them to become involved in cash economy activities and to undertake permanent agriculture, especially rubber cultivation, as an alternative source of income.

Lack of land and engagement in rubber cultivation indirectly changed people’s perception in regard to land rights. This change took place in the early twentieth century, when each family in either Perah or Sungai Galah came to regard their rubber fields as their own family property and the future source of their family income.

1 Most of the *chermor* narrated by the *Seng-oi* indicate their story of migration, which began from Mekah or mengkah to Peninsula Malaysia, referred to as *dengri adeh*. In the *chermor* about the first migration, however, there were very few place names, only Mekah or mengkah, *dengri*' adeh, Melaka, and China. This was then followed by a second stage migration which occurred within *dengri*' adeh, especially from coastal areas into the interior. In this stage, the version narrated by Ata' Bek Makar, Bek Tambun and Mara' Semae has given place names starting with Melaka and followed by names of areas within the state of Perak. According to this version, the *Seng-oi* moved out from Melaka to the interior in a number of migrations when newcomers came and occupied their land. The last exodus headed to Lambor in the state of Perak, and included Hang Tuah, who was sad after the killing of his brother, Hang Jebat, and was trying to get away from the chaotic situation in Melaka. This migration appears to have happened during the rule of Sultan of Muzaffar Shah, in the middle of the fifteenth century (see Shellabear, 1967).
When the Gop accumulated in Lambor, the Seng-oi fled to Sakai Jadi, and later to Temboh Bekett. From Temboh Bekett, some groups of families, or gu, moved to Bekau, Denak and Changkat Pinggan. The families who moved to Changkat Pinggan then moved to Bekau, and ended up in Perah in the early twentieth century. This version shows that Seng-oi migrations were mainly caused by external forces, such as increased population, loss of land, escape from chaotic situations, and fear of the influences of Islam. In many ways, this might be due to the Seng-oi way of life, reliance on avoidance relationships, which has frequently been described by anthropologists. Of all these, only the migrations from Temboh Bekett to Bekau, Denak and Changkat Pinggan; and from Changkat Pinggan to Bekau, followed by Bekau to Perah, were due to economic reasons, i.e. to look for areas rich with natural resources, such as fertile land, rivers rich with fish, and areas with plenty of rattan.

In addition, Ata' Bek Jarah offered another version describing Seng-oi migrations. His version of the early migration, however, gave fewer names of places, only Mekah, Dengri' China' (China), and other general areal references, i.e. dengri' adeh, coastal and interior area. This version offers place names when describing the migration from Lambor to the interior of Perak. It indicates that the Seng-oi moved from Lambor after their land was taken over by the Gop. The Seng-oi split into two groups and fled interior. One of the groups moved to Sakai Jadi, and were involved in the movements as narrated by Ata’ Bek Makar, while another group moved to Sanglop in the Larut District of the central state of Perak. In the mid seventeenth century, the Dutch, or Belanda, came and took over Sanglop for mining. This indirectly forced the Seng-oi to flee from their settlement. They once again split into small gu and moved to various places, most of which were highland areas, such as Salu’, Papart, Doug, Bipog, and Keledang Mountain. Only two gu moved to lowland areas, which were Batu Gajah, and Paloh of the Kinta district. The gu who moved to Batu Gajah then moved to several places within that area, and ended up in Denak. While the gu who moved to Keledang finally moved to Denak after a clash with the British administrator in Papan town in the late nineteenth century. The gu who moved to Paloh later moved to Busut, via Perah area, after Paloh was effected by mining early in the eighteenth century. Later they rejoined their long separated family in Denak, but finally ended up in Perah. When the Belanda pulled out from Sanglop in the late eighteenth century, the gu of Salu’, Papart, and Doug came down to reoccupy Sanglop but were disappointed because the area had been destroyed due to previous mining activities. They then moved south and settled in Teaw Batu’ of the Teja territory (mukim). In the early twentieth century, probably the 1930s, they were forced to abandon Teaw Batu’ after the settlement was purchased by Chinese mining interests. At that time, Chinese capital was regarded as economically significant for the British administration in Malaya and the two spheres frequently worked hand in hand. The majority of people moved to several places, including Teaw Mencharg, Kelubi, Mendang, Gedong Batu’, and Perah. Others moved back to Papart and Doug.

In both versions, the narratives seem to show that external reasons were more convincing in causing the Seng-oi migration than internal reasons. This contrasts with the statement made by most anthropologists, who claim that the Seng-oi adopted a tribal way of life, brought about by their mode of economy, based on so-called shifting cultivation, and hunting and gathering; or by other cultural practices. This might be true of other Seng-oi groups, such as the mai ditah (highland people), or the Negrito people (see Rambo, 1985), but in the case of mai direh, this generalisation seems to be inaccurate because most of the reasons which forced them to migrate were created by outsiders. This seems to be similar to the experience faced by the Illongot during the kakapun, the people who migrated because of their concern to save their lives from the Japanese army. However, the Seng-oi experienced these external forces a very long time ago, or manah entiem, while the Illongot experienced it during World War II, within a period of contemporary history.
They were Ata’ Garerd, Itam Langsat (the son of Long Raja), Pandak Kecil (also known as Bek Mehin, the great grandfather of my adopted sister’s husband, Pak Yan), Long Chiban (father of Ken Enting), Uda Mat (the elder brother of Alang Padek), Uda Dada, Chu Sarip (also known as Bek Berngal), Bek Keuh (also known as Mara’ Chrug Senta’), Ngah Pitut, Busu Long Pawang (also known as Ata’ Perigai), Moyet, Long Telok, and Bek Buyong. Of these, Bek Buyong died and was buried in Kundur Itek. Later, Itam Bet, who was still a bachelor, came from Teaw Batu’ to join his father, Ata’ Garerd.

Of these, Bek Buyong died and was buried in Kundur Itek. Later, Itam Bet, who was still a bachelor, came from Teaw Batu’ to join his father, Ata’ Garerd.

After telling me about these categories of Seng-oi, Ata’ Bek Makar was very amused and laughed loudly. He then asked me not to write about the categorisation in my ‘book’ because he feared the people from Bipog would not accept it and would accuse him of slandering them. I then asked him the reason these people were referred to as Pale’ and Gelang Simpat. Ata’ Bek Makar replied that he did not know. According to him, these were just reference terms. The mai bareh would refer to the mai ditah as Gelang Simpat, while the mai ditah would refer to the mai bareh as Pale’. For example, if a Gop comes looking for a herb which was not available in the lowlands, the mai direh would suggest that the Gop seek it from the mai ditah, and the conversation would be: “Go and ask the Gelang Simpat people.” These people, however, did not use this term to address each other openly. “It’s just like the term ‘keling’ for the Indians,” added Ata’ Bek Makar. These terms therefore, seemed to carry connotations of teasing and slandering.

Uda Semuk was the grandfather of Ata’ Bek Jarah.

Some said Pandak Kace and Tok Gerak Machang did not die but ‘disappeared’ (raib or nyeb).

Their presence in the area and in the pekan was reported by Leonard Wray, who was attached to the State Museum of Taiping in the 1880s, in his letter to Walter William Skeat and Charles Otto Blagden (Sekat and Balgden, 1906:528-9). Wray also reported that the Seng-oi of Batang Padang took the train to Telok Anson to sell their rattan, as they could get a better price than selling it to local dealers in Batang Padang. [Note: Leonard Wray was appointed Superintendent of the Government Hill Garden in 1881, and Curator of the State Museum, Taiping in 1883 and retired in 1908 (Menon, 1976: 5)].

Bah Empe’ was born and grew up in Teaw Batu’ and now lives in Sungai Peria of Sahom.

This information was provided by Bah Empe’.

During that time, Ngah Pok was a young boy, and his father, Kulup Laru, also well-known as Mara’ Hallaw, was middle-aged, probably round 50 years old. Long Apon still remembers how his father told him about how his grandfather got his nick name Mara’ Hallaw. His grandfather was a healer or pawang of the village, and possessed many nyaniik as his gunig. When the group were still leading a traditional life, i.e. before they settled permanently in Teaw Batu’ village, his grandfather possessed the gunig from a
human *kikmoij* and from a tiger's *nyaniik*. However, when they settled in Teaw Batu', he obtained a new *gunig*, which originated from the *kikmoij* of a Mai *Byeq* who lived in Kampar town. During his trances in the *kebut* ritual, he used to call his English *gunig* with the words, “Hallaw! Hallaw!” (Instead of “hello!” in English). He was thus given the nickname, Mara’ Hallaw. In his trances, he used to ask for some money from his white *gunig*, and he always got a $10 (*sepuluh ringgit*) note. During that time, $10 had great value, rice being only 50-60 cents (*sen*) per *gantang* (equal to five catties), and sugar 10 *sen* per catty. Mara’ Hallaw received that gift from his *gunig* for quite some time. However, since the *kebut* ritual was only performed occasionally and only for specific purposes, such as to heal sick people, or to perform the *Ngenggulang* ritual, Mara’ Hallaw had few chances to ask for financial assistance from his white *gunig*. Unfortunately, the white *gunig* stopped giving financial assistance to Mara’ Hallaw when the *pawang* used the money to gamble with the Chinese in Malim Nawar town.

Among the villagers, there was a middle-aged man named Bek Belakang, who had some amusing stories. When he first bought a bicycle, he practiced all the time, including at mid-day. After the knew how to ride the bike, he tried to ride to Malim Nawar town, which was located about three miles from the village along a sandy track. On that day, he dressed up in western style all in white—long pants, long sleeved shirt, and coat. Only the *kopiah* was black. He started cycling from home at about eight o’clock. On the way to Malim Nawar were vegetable farms owned by the Chinese. Every morning, the Chinese men were busy looking after their farms. Half way to the town, there was a small dried up river. The Chinese had built a small plank bridge over it, about two feet wide, and about six feet long. When Bek Belakang came to that bridge, there was an old Chinese man passing over it carrying two pails loaded with liquid human waste, which he used to manure his vegetable plants. Bek Belakang became panickey and ‘forgot’ to brake. They collided in the middle of the bridge. Both of them fell down and got soaked with the liquid human waste. Bek Belakang’s dress turned brown because of the liquid. The Chinese man was very angry, and cursed Bek Belakang using the Chinese words, “Tiew la ma!” (roughly meaning, “fuck your mother!”). Bek Belakang went back to the village where every one kept away from him since he was very smelly. His second attempt to ride to Malim Nawar by bicycle was successful, but he failed in his third journey. On his second journey, he stopped at that bridge and carried his bike on his shoulder. On his third journey, however, he tried to ride over the bridge on his bike. He once again became panickey and lost control. He fell down into the dry river, and this time his white clothes turned ash-coloured because of the sand and mud.

In the late 1920s, a *Gop* from Tapah town named Pak Aji Kassim, came into the village and introduced *ronggeng* (Malay dance) and *bangsawan* (Malay theatre) to the villagers. Pak Aji Kassim joined his good *Seng-oi* friends in the village, and his presence was not rejected by the other villagers. Pak Aji Kassim was good in the sense that he did not display any degree of ethnocentrism, and showed no sign of disgust at the *Seng-oi*. Pak Aji Kassim had a deep interest in theatre and music. In Teaw Batu’, he recruited the interested villagers and young girls to become involved in the ‘entertainment world’, which was very new to the *Seng-oi*. After a while training the *Seng-oi* in theatre and music, Pak Aji Kassim managed to form a *bangsawan* group, and produced talented *Seng-oi* musicians. He then organised a regular show in a few towns such as Malim Nawar, Batu Gajah, Kampar, Tapah, Telok Anson, and Ipoh city. The show started with *bangsawan* and ended with *ronggeng*. The young *Seng-oi* girls became the female partners or *peteri’, and sat on the stage. The men who wanted to dance with the *peteri’* needed to buy tickets, each of which cost *sekupang* or 10 cents. In the mid-1930s, however, the show collapsed due to the coming of modern cinemas. The *ronggeng* or *runggin* tradition, however, has been continued by the *Seng-oi* until today, with a change in musical instruments. In the old days, they were *biola* (violin), *gendang* (the Malay drum), and *gong*, while today the instruments are electric guitars, amplifiers, and modern drum sets. For example, Derboh’s family members have their own musical group, lead by
Bek Dayu. On top of that, Derboh’s only son, Uda (Pak Sofee) is a good singer (see Plate 5.6).


At the camping site, there was a big sour fruit tree called *starr* (in Malay, *kundang*), and the villagers named this place after this fruit tree and its visitor, the Raja.

Andak Jameah was also a young girl during that time, but still unmarried. I asked Andak Jameah about her age at that time, but she did not know. “I was as old as her,” she answered while pointed at her grand daughter, Wa Encorn, who was cooking in the kitchen. Wa Enchorn is rather small in size but she is already 19 years old. Andak Jameah lived in Perah most of her life. Occasionally, she and her parents visited their relatives in Temboh Bekett or Bekau.

The women were not involved at all in the programme. It was quite funny when young girls hid inside the house because they feared the Sultan or his people would be attracted to them and ask to get married, as always narrated in the *chermor*. According to an old woman, Ken Enting, who was young in the 1920s, she was afraid because if the Sultan or raja wanted to take one girl to be their inferior wife or *gundik*, the girl could not refuse. If she did, her behaviour would be interpreted as an insult, and for that behaviour her entire family would be exiled. Another funny story was about a man who suffered a serious ringworm called *gars chieq*, or ‘elephant ringworm’ (in Malay, *kurap gajah*). He was the happiest man every time the Sultan visited *Starr Raja*. His happiness was not for the royal visit, but for the elephant that the Sultan travelled on. He would busily collect the elephant ‘drippings’, which were believed to be effective to heal the *gars chieq*.

Coupons represent export rights, which were issued by the British to regulate the production of rubber: only cultivators with coupons were allowed to sell their rubber (and, in the same respect, dealers could only buy rubber from cultivators who had coupons). Furthermore, the British only allowed dealers with coupons to export this product. The British employed this method to control rubber production and maintain its price.

At first, Ata’ Bek Pakai said that the occupying permit, referred to as *geran*, was delivered by the Sultan of Perak, Sultan Iskandar Shah, in one of his visits to Parit town. However Ata’ Bek Makar and Bek Tambun said that the occupying permit was delivered by the DO, Tok Setia. Ata’ Bek Pakai was then not sure about it. All he remembered was that, he had once been asked by the *Penghulu Mukim*, Itam Dain, to prepare food for one of the Sultan’s visits to Parit town. On that visit, his father was given the title Mat Melaka. Ata’ Bek Pakai then told me about the goodness of Sultan Iskandar Shah. According to him, Sultan Iskandar Shah was a little different from previous Sultans. He liked to visit his rakyat, and did so at the end of every year. He sailed down river from his Palace in Kuala Kangsar and dropped in at every village along the river, and then stopped in Telok Anson (now Teluk Intan). From there, he moved to Tanjung Malim, and came back through an inland road up to Grik in the upper part of Perak river. From Grik, he sailed back to Kuala Kangsar along the Perak river. On his way, Sultan Iskandar Shah would call in at all the places along the road. On his visit, he would receive offerings (*persembahan*) from the rakyat, and then deliver advice to them. At the end of the session, he would give titles to his rakyat leaders.

At the time his father received the title, Ata’ Bek Pakai was already married. The day before the Sultan visited Parit, the *Penghulu Mukim* of Parit asked him to work together with the *Gop* in Parit town to prepare food for that occasion. Ata’ Bek Pakai and his wife were asked to cook *lemang*, sticky rice cooked in bamboo. He and his wife spent the whole night cooking that dish, and they were hot and tired. The next day, the Sultan sailed down from Kuala Kangsar. In the morning he dropped in to a *Gop* village at the estuary of Bekau river and met the rakyat there, including the *Seng-oi* of Bekau. From there, he sailed down and reached Parit in the afternoon. In his meeting with the rakyat, the Sultan called the leaders of the *Gop* villages in the district one by one, followed by the
leaders of the Seng-oi. At that meeting, the leaders with their people came to the front and
delivered their offerings. After the Sultan received each offering, he would ask the leader
about the developments and problems that had occurred in his village during the past year.
Then the Sultan delivered his suggestions to improve that village. If there were problems
which related to the District Administration, he would call the relevant officers, either the
Penghulu Mukim or the DO to come to the front and ask them to pay attention to the
problem faced by that village. That session went on for a very long time, sometimes it
took days to end. The session with the Seng-oi followed soon after the session with the
Gop had finished.

The session with Mara’ Nile’ was held in the late evening, before nightfall. Before Mara’
Nile’ was called, the Sultan asked the Penghulu Mukim, “Mane ketue orang kite darat?23
Ade ke?” (Where is the leader of the darat (inland) people? Are they around?). “Ade,
Tuanku!” (“They are, My Lord!”) Replied the Penghulu Mukim. “Ini tok ketue orang
Changkat Perah, Mat Dohon namenyel!” (“This is the leader of the people of Changkat
Perah, his name is Mat Dohon!”). The Penghulu Mukim introduced Mara’ Nile’ to the
Sultan. Mara’ Nile’ and other elders came to the front, carrying their offerings—rice,
vegetables, and jungle fruits. After accepting these items, the Sultan continued the session
by talking to Mara’ Nile’.

The Sultan started his conversation by asking Mara’ Nile’. “Berape kelamin dekat
kampung tok ketue?” (“How many families are in your village?”). “Ramai, Tuanku, 15
kelamin” (Many, My Lord, 15 families.) Mara’ Nile’ replied. “Ape yang tok ketue
tanam?” (“What have you planted?”), asked the Sultan back. “Getah, Tuanku.”
 (“Rubber, My Lord.”) Replied Mara’ Nile’. “Bagus, saye memang suke semue rakyat
macam tu.” (“Good, I like all the people to live that way.”) The Sultan was impressed.
The session then continued with the Sultan giving advice and motivation to Mara’ Nile’.
He then delivered a title to Mara’ Nile’, declaring to the public, “Saye berikan gelar pade
tok ketue ini Mat Melaka kerane kite datang dari tempat yang same, Melaka!” (“I gave
him a title Mat Melaka because we came from the same place, Melaka.”) After his
conversation with Mara’ Nile’, the Sultan asked the Gop to accept the Seng-oi as their
friends. He also advised the Gop not to address the Seng-oi as sakai since he himself
-treated both the Gop and the Seng-oi as his rakyat. He said he would punish anyone he
found looking down on the Seng-oi.

On a later visit, as told by Bek Tambun, Sultan Iskandar was very angry at one of his
Gop rakyat. During that visit, the Sultan called the Seng-oi leader to come to the front. Since
the Seng-oi sat at the back, they had a problem getting through the crowd while carrying
offerings. Suddenly, a Gop man shouted, “Ketue sakai, mane?” (Where is the Sakai
leader?). The Sultan stared at the section of the crowd where the voice came from and
ordered the man to come to the front. However, the man disappeared, as he was ‘hidden’
by the Gop crowd. Sultan Iskandar once again reminded his Gop rakyat not to look down
on the Seng-oi, and to accept them as relatives (saudara).

24 This acreage was estimated by H.D. Noone in his report to the Controller of Rubber,
Malaya, dated 10 October 1940 (source: File No. 1B in F.S.1180/40; No. 8B in
Ad.F.200/36; No. 11 in KK.D.135/40. Arkib Negara Malaysia).

25 This view contrasted with the aim of the British administration. In its response to the
restriction proposed by the International Rubber Regulation Committee in the mid-1930s,
the British administration introduced the coupons as a way to control the export of the
commodity. According to Ata’ Bek Pakai, coupons were only allocated to smallholders
who owned licences for planting and selling this crop. Following the allocation of
coupons, dealers were only allowed to buy rubber from smallholders who had a coupon in
their possession.

This restriction was taken following the second rubber crisis which occurred between 1934-
1940. According to Nonini (1992: 85): “From 1922 to 1928 and again 1934 to 1934,
rubber production in Malaya was not determined by the price vagaries of an international market, but by two rubber restriction schemes organized by agreements between large capitalist producers and colonial states. The aftermath of World War I brought on a major recession in the colonial economy, lasting from 1920 to 1922. Depressed demand by United States industrial consumers sent the price of rubber plummeting. As the perturbation spread, the plantations, as was true for other sectors of the Malayan economy, were hard hit. In an attempt to bolster rubber prices, the Rubber Growers Association—the major interest group of British proprietors of rubber plantations operating in Malaya and Ceylon—sought in London to have the Colonial Office impose restrictions on Malayan rubber production and to negotiate a restriction agreement with the government of the Netherland East Indies, where there was a large rubber industry.

In 1922 the Colonial Office started implementing the restriction recommended by the Stevenson Committee, which was called the Stevenson scheme. Under this scheme, or restriction, the Stevenson Committee proposed (cf. Mills, 1942: 191-192; Nonini, 1992: 85-86): “Malayan rubber production [be] limited by law. Plantation and smallholder production in the year 1920 were to serve as the Standard Production, a base for setting each year’s export quotas for both sectors as percentages of this base figure. Each year, quotas were set according to the prevailing international price for rubber in the proceeding twelve months.”

Although this restriction was rescinded in 1928 due to nonparticipation by the Netherland East Indies, the rubber industry recovered the international market. Smallholders, who suffered the most in this crisis, began again to become involved in the industry. This recovery did, however, not last long because the industry was hit by a second crisis four years later. In this 1934-1940 crisis, the International Rubber Committee played a major role in stabilising the industry by stabilising rubber prices. Aside from this, the International Rubber Committee had another major goal: to protect European capital in plantation companies in Malaya, Borneo and the Netherland East Indies from competition arising from the production of rubber by natives at a fraction of the cost involved in European-owned estates (Rubber News Letter, 30 September 1936 cf. Lim, 1977: 193). This then resulted in the implementation of a second restriction, which once again hit the smallholders. The International Rubber Committee urged colonial states to control smallholders production in whatever way they could. The British administration of Malaya allocated coupons and licenses as a means of control.

26 For example, when Mara’ Nile’ first traded, he sold his rubber weighing one and a half pikul (or 150 catties). At the same time, he also sold 20 catties of his coupon. The dealer paid him for one pikul and seventy catties (or 170 catties) of rubber.

27 The Mai Byeq was H.D.Noone, a Field Ethnographer and a Curator of Taiping Museum, who at that time was appointed as Protector of Aborigines, Perak.

28 Andak Jameah got married quite late, probably in the late 1920s, when she was in her 30s. She married Itam Bet, the fifth son of Ngah Gudang, three or four seasons (years) after her father, Long Jeroneh, died. During that time they had already moved to Keramat and the Japanese had yet not come to Malaya. She gave birth to her first son, Long Dahaman, between the late 1920s or early 1930s. I asked Long Dahaman about his date of birth and his age. He did not know his real age, or his date of birth. He was probably born in the 1930s and his age by now is 60 plus. On his identity card (locally called pespot), his date of birth is given as 1940, while his mother, Alang Jameah, is recorded as being born in 1929. He disagreed and accused the officer who was in charge of doing their pespot of just making ‘random guesses’ about their dates of birth. During that time (1940), he was already a young boy. “If the Registration Officer guessed right, that means my mother was only eleven when she gave birth to me,” urged Dahaman. Long Dahaman felt annoyed because the officer, who was assigned to fulfil that job in 1962, just took their affairs for granted.
This concern (warning) was told to Ngah Pitut when he was charged in Parit in 1941.


I chose Long Tanjung because he remained in the group until he died in Sungai Galah. In contrast other leaders, such as Tok Maharaja and Tok Singa Merban, went back to their old villages and died there.

Gorl and Warr are *Seng-oi* terms of reference for areas located between Tapah Town in the State of Perak and the Cameron Highlands in the State of Pahang. The people of Gorl live along the Batang Padang river, known by the local *Seng-oi* as *Teaw Gorl* (*Gorl river*). Warr refers to an area along the Woh river, locally known as *Teaw Warr*, a tributary of *Teaw Gorl*. The Warr area is located in the south-eastern part of Batang District. It extends from the 7th milestone of the Cameron Highlands road in the north, where the estuary of the *Teaw Warr* is located, towards the hilly areas of Bidor in the Southeast. The Gorl area is next to the Warr area, and is located in the eastern part of the Batang Padang District towards the hilly areas of the Cameron Highlands. Both of these areas were gazetted as Batang Padang Forest Reserve.

Gorr, which Anjang Ngah Lesu confused with Gorl, is another *Seng-oi* area lying next to the Bipog area, a neighbouring area of Gorl in the north. It is located in the central east of the Kinta District. Gorr inhabitants basically live along the Raia river, locally known as *Teaw Gorr*, in the Kinta District. The Gorr area is sandwiched between the *Seng-oi* area of Bipog and the Temiar area of Genta’ (the area along the Kinta river, or *Teaw Genta’*). The inhabitants of Gorr are therefore a mixture of the *Seng-oi* of Bipog and the *Temiar* of Genta’.

During that time he, together with his brother, Keling Nawan, his cousin, Bek Lin, and others were preparing a bridal dais (*pelamin*) for the marriage ceremony of his daughter, Elwalisa with Dr. Bahari, a local man who was the first *Seng-oi* to obtain a Ph.D. He invited me to attend the ceremony, which was scheduled for 7 September 1997, but I told him that that was quite impossible because during that time I would be in Canberra.

Gumpey is a reference term for a plant that floats on the water.

These 'tribal' groups probably included Long Jeroneh.

An example of this can be seen in Perah. One group named their sub-territory Panchor, and the other named theirs Keramat. Those sub-territories were divided by the Perah river. Each group referred to their neighbour as *mai englang teaw*, meaning "people of the other side of river."

*Rakna’ umur* refers to the most senior member of the community, who has a deep knowledge in both *adat* and healing (*pawang*), and was appointed as a community leader, especially to handle these two traditions. Today, this position has been recategorized as *rakna’ adat*, *penghulu’ adat*, or *pawang*, due to the sharing of responsibility in handling the *Seng-oi’s* tradition.

In regard to this relationship with the Palace of Perak, the *Seng-oi* of Pengkalan Jering paid their tribute to the Palace of the Raja Muda by sending annual offerings. According
to Anjang Ngah Lesu, their elders in the old days just went down to Telok Anson and paid their tribute to the Raja Muda, who lived in the Palace of Durian Sebatang. They had never gone to the Palace of Perak, which was located very far up river in Kuala Kangsar. However, they did meet Sultan Iskandar Shah once when the Regent visited the Palace of Durian Sebatang.

During that time, people aged 14 years were legally allowed to be involved in the labour market, which means they were allowed to work in the mining industry too. Those labour rules enabled Keling to join the labour market when he was 14 years old. He worked in one of the nearby dredgers which operated in an area about four miles from Pengkalan Jering. Together working with him were his cousin, Mni’ Dodi, and another young chap of his village. The salary was low, between $2.00 to $2.50 for eight hours work, and it was based on the seniority of workers in that dredger. There were also villagers working with the Chinese companies, mostly as night guards.

In addition, the Seng-oi said that the Mai Byeq ‘fed’ heads into the fire plant of a steam train for the same reason as the dredger. Moreover, the people also said that the Mai Byeq used to sacrifice heads when constructing bridges and dams in order to make them constructions strong and long lasting. Without this, the guardians of the construction sites might be angry and ‘shake’ the behumi’, collapsing the bridges and/or dams. Headhunting literature seems to have been similar elsewhere in Southeast Asia. In the early part of the 20th century, scares over the head raiders shifted from indigenous people to foreigners. According to Hoskins (1996: 31-32), ‘Tensions with the national government, foreign missionaries, and international business have been reflected in a new series of headhunting scares that focuses on what Metcalf calls ‘the unprecedented’ in regional development: Pertamina oil drills standing off the shores of Borneo, huge stone cathedrals in Flores, dams in West Flores, bridges and irrigation projects constructed on Sumba or Timor... Rumors about raids carried out by headhunters (penyamun) to provide human bodies to place in the cement foundations of new public-work construction projects have been reported on Borneo since 1894 (Haddon, 1901: 173-175) and have spread not only among peoples of the interior but also among Chinese and Malay coastal dwellers.”

Ngah Lesu and his friends occasionally chartered the wagon for a journey to Kampar and Ipoh, which was considered far from Changkat Tin. Kampar town is considerably nearer in terms of location but there was still no bridge over the Kinta river at Tronoh Mines, only the one in Malim Nawar township. So, if they wanted to go to Kampar, they had to take a detour through the Malim Nawar township.

Panjang Long said that accidents could easily happen if the workers fell asleep while they worked. “If I wanted to work in mining, I would rather work in the palong mines which stopped operations at night,” he said clarifying his opinion of the night shift. Many workers, none of them Seng-oi, died due to accidents in the dredger, especially during the night shifts.

Bisat is a Seng-oi word which they borrowed from Malay, besan, meaning a relationship between people whose children have married.

The life span of the Seng-oi these days is shorter, and therefore, one gu in today’s situation would probably comprise five generations or less, from grandparents to great grandchildren. I asked Ata’ Bek Jarah’s why he claimed that the life span of the Seng-oi was shorter today than the old days, given that the Seng-oi these days have access to modern medical facilities. According to him, the world today is full of chemicals, referred to as racut. Foods are full of fertilisers and pesticides, the air is full of poisonous smokes, while the water is contaminated with all kinds of chemicals. This contrasts with the old days when medicines were made of herbs and had no side effects. The living environment was also clean and fresh, which contributed to a healthy life. “No air and water pollution,
no contaminated food and no chemical medicines. Those facts made the people live longer than now," he added brilliantly.

Ata' Bek Jarah claimed that modern medicine could not guarantee a longer life span. He agreed with me that the Seng-oi today have access to modern medicine but argued that the medical facilities provided to the poor are different than to the rich. This is obvious among the Seng-oi, particularly in the interior, where they have only obtained basic facilities which are rather low in quality. He stressed, "For us, most of the medicines are just pain killers, to relieve the pain rather than to cure the illness." He took Perah Clinic as an example. During its operation in the old days, most of the medicines available were just aspirin and panadol (paracetamol). "If we had a more serious illness, we were advised to go to Gombak Hospital. There, we would be given panadol too," he argued. He recalled a case of a doctor who came from Cambodia and worked at the Gombak Hospital in the 1980s. Most of the time this doctor prescribed his patients panadol, and for that reason, the Seng-oi called him "doktor panadol." He argued that most modern medicines are made from chemicals, and bring side effects which contribute to the shortening of the life span. "Other than diseases, the people nowadays might die from the medicines," said Ata’ Bek Jarah, referring to the danger of the side effects of modern medicines.

52 Jeg is the category of people with the same great grandparents as ego (Dentan, 1975).
53 This is similar to the practice adopted by the Vietnamese before the Vietnam War, which was discussed by James Scott (1976).
54 The same trend is seen in the activities of the Seng-oi elsewhere, such as the people of Salu', Bipog, Papart, and Doug, who came from these dengri' to open selai in the Teaw Batu' area. The mining industries then forced these groups to get together and establish the Teaw Batu' settlement, which appeared to be the most advanced Seng-oi community in the early twentieth century. However, they had to go back to their former permanent settlement after Teaw Batu' was taken away for mining. Some of the people moved to Gedong Batu', a permanent settlement established by the state, while the rest moved elsewhere, especially to the dengri' established by their family members. Long Apon, for instance, moved to Perah to join his maternal grandfather, who was one of the pioneers in establishing the Perah settlement.
Chapter Six

HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS
Japanese Occupation and Emergency

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the experiences faced by the people of Perah and Sungai Galah during the Japanese Occupation and the Malaysian Emergency, covering the period of about two decades from 1941 to 1960. The discussion begins by describing the general situation during the Japanese Occupation, followed by the situation in the Emergency period (see also Appendix C).

Perah in Two Eras

Japanese Occupation

Before the arrival of the Japanese, the people of Keramat had received an Occupying Permit for an area of 200 acres after the detention of Alang Tek. Many people came and settled, including some from Teaw Batu’. Alang Tek then opened a small sundry shop with goods which provided the basic necessities to the villagers. The people of Keramat were still afraid of the Forest Rangers. At certain times they would hide in the bush when approached by them. If not, the rangers would stop them, check their belongings, and seize their machetes. The Seng-oi would suffer a big loss if their machetes were taken away because they would need some time to collect the money to buy new ones from the town. They would have to borrow machetes from other people to work or to peel tapioca, to cut other food, firewood, or defend themselves from wild animals. The Forest Rangers did not think about that. All they had in mind was to prevent the Seng-oi from cutting the trees in the Forest Reserve. The Seng-oi, however, needed to continue living although their activities were against government regulations. As a result, the Forest Rangers undertook a second operation in the early 1940s, and the authorities burned a house belonging to Mara’ Asing which had been built in the Forest Reserve.
Before the Japanese came, the people used to go to Parit town to buy salt, tobacco and machetes. At that time, Parit town was developing. Many shops, however, still used palm roofs though they were slowly being replaced by zinc roofs. There were horse wagons parked in front of the shops, mainly owned by shop owners to transport their trading goods. Once in a while, cars, either ‘umbrella’ roof models or black painted super saloons, probably Austins, passed through the town. Later, the bus became the means of transportation to connect Parit with other towns. One of the services was from Parit to Beruas town, and the junction to Perah was located on this route. The service, however, only operated two or three times a day. Since the service was rare, the people of Perah seldom took the bus but rather walked to Parit as the distance was only about two miles from the junction, and they could reach the town after about half an hour walk out.1

The people of Panchor heard the news about the war on rediew, broadcasted from Singapore, stating that the Japanese would soon attack Malaya. They then passed on the news to Keramat. The people of Keramat, however, did not take it seriously because they believed the British had strong armed forces which could defend the country. They heard the same news from the Malay shopkeeper who lived in Bekor village. According to Pertel, the Malay were happy to see the Japanese expel the British from Malaya because the British gave them problems. One of them was the Land Law which required them to pay tax. “If the Japanese come, the White men would become coolies,” Pertel recalled his father being told by a Malay who always spent his time in an Indian Muslim or mamak coffee shop in Parit town.

One day, Alang Tek came back from town with a small gunny of salt on his shoulder. A Malay shopkeeper told him that the Japanese had landed at Kota Baharu in Kelantan and would soon come to their area. The shopkeeper also asked him to buy stock but Alang Tek had no transport to carry many items. He just managed to buy important goods such as salt, tobacco, and matches. The people of Keramat and Panchor became panicky. Everyone wanted to buy salt, tobacco and matches but Alang Tek refused to sell them all because he wanted to keep some of his supplies for his own family. A few days after that, however, no Japanese attack occurred in the area. Some people teased Alang Tek, saying that the Malay shopkeeper just frightened them as a way to sell his goods. Alang Tek tried to persuade the people to move to the interior but no one was willing to
listen as they regarded his action as an overreaction. Finally, Alang Tek and his family moved to the interior of the Keledang-Sayong Forest Reserve and settled in an area called Cheba' Bemban. In Cheba' Bemban, they just lit resin (damar) at night, which produced a dim light, because they were afraid the Japanese would detect them.

Four or five days after that, the people of Perah heard that the British had destroyed Nordin Bridge, which was built across the Perak river at Tanjung Belanja, in order to stop the Japanese troops. Two days after that, the Japanese army arrived in the area, and cross-fire started between Japanese and British troops. Many war aeroplanes were flying in the sky and dropping hundreds of bombs; at the same time firing machine guns at the ground. The people heard the bombs explode but the blast was only faintly audible because the clash occurred quite far away from the village. The Japanese were bombing areas along the road from north to south as the British pulled out southwards. Nevertheless, the people of Perah could still feel the earth, as well as their hearts, vibrate each time the bombs exploded.2

About three days after that, the people of Panchor fled to their old villages. Ata’ Bek Pakai was unwell during the war and went to Gumpey to seek traditional healing. Long Jasin, together with his son Bek Tambun, and his relative, Bek Hanit, went back to join their family in Denak. The others went back to Temboh Beket. Panchor village was almost empty at that time, only Mat Melaka and his son’s family, Ata’ Bek Makar, Mni’ Bas, and a few others remained. A few days later, Alang Tek returned to Perah after he found no danger from the Japanese in the village. Nevertheless, life in Keramat and Panchor became quite stressful. Alang Tek stopped his business due to a lack of goods. He also feared the Japanese would suspect him of assisting the Chinese of the MPAJA. Both villages began to face shortages of food and other basic needs. The people of Panchor also stopped tapping rubber because they had no place to sell it since their Chinese dealers in Parit town had been killed by the Japanese. The situation alienated them from almost all their trade activities except rattan, which was still sellable. Rattan was still used as a traditional building material for use in houses, fences, jetties, etc. The people of Keramat and Panchor collected the rattan and sold it to Chinese dealers in Papan and Siputeh. They went to sell the rattan in these towns through jungle tracks in order to avoid the Japanese. They were
afraid to meet the Japanese because they heard that the Japanese army was very cruel.\(^3\)

The income from selling rattan was low because the Japanese currency was undervalued. The currency was referred to as *duit chap keneng teley*, meaning the money with print of a banana tree. The Japanese used to carry their money printing machine with them. They would print money immediately it was needed to pay or to buy anything from the people. The money the people got from selling rattan was just enough to buy salt and tobacco. They had to accumulate their saving to buy machetes.

About six months after the Japanese occupied Malaya, the Chinese started to come and hide in the outskirts of Keramat village. The Chinese claimed that they were friends of the British soldiers who had survived the war, and identified themselves as members of the MPAJA. The people, however, met no *Mai Byeq* in the group, only Chinese. According to Bek Tambun:

The Chinese who joined the MPAJA were divided into two groups. One group was the Kuomintang, locally known as *Bintang Satu*, and the other was the Communist group, which was well-known as *Bintang Tige*. Areas of Perah and Bekau, or in general, all areas of the northern part of Tembuh Bekett up to Tronoh town were under the control of *Bintang Tige*. This group was active in a secret society or *kongsi gelap* and was more aggressive. On the other hand, areas from Temboh Bekett to the south, including Denak, Gumpey, Padag Kerikal, Gorl, Warr and others were under the control of *Bintang Satu*. This group cooperated with the British. They once received a supply of fire arms air-dropped by the SAS in Bidor area. These two groups of Chinese assigned their own leaders and assistants for every troop in their control area, most of whom hid in the *Seng-oi* villages. In Tembuh Bekett, for instance, their troop leader was locally known as Asam. He was then replaced by Achok Kew, who also led troops in Gedung Batu' and Bekau. In some villages, the Chinese appointed local *Seng-oi* as their assistants. Later, however, the Chinese support to *Bintang Satu* declined, affected by the situation in China where the Kuomintang was defeated by the Communists in a power struggle. This situation allowed *Bintang Tige* to dominate Chinese representation in the MPAJA.\(^4\)

In Perah, the MPAJA platoon was led by a Chinese locally known as Alek. Alek and his troop preferred to camp in Keramat rather than Panchor because there were only a few families living there, and its location was closer to the main road. The MPAJA decided to live in areas with a larger number of people because they could then hide their movements within the *Seng-oi* population. If the Japanese came into the area, the Chinese would easily gain access to that
information from the local population, and could then slip away into the deeper area of the jungle. Due to this development, the people of Panchor lived more peacefully than those in Keramat.

When Alek first came into the village, he approached the penghulu', Alang Tek. He visited the penghulu' almost every day to persuade him to support the MPAJA, and to 'chase' the Japanese out of the country. Finally, Alang Tek came under their influence. He unintentionally became involved in the group because of the involvement of the Mai Byeq in the MPAJA. Alek then gave Alang Tek a rifle and bullets. The rifle was, however, not to fight the Japanese, but for hunting. He asked Alang Tek and the villagers to hunt wild boars and sell the game to them. He also persuaded Alang Tek to cultivate rice or tapioca and vegetables and sell these commodities to them. Alek and his group were thus successful in their first attempt to persuade the Seng-oi to become involved in trade relationships with them, which meant they could obtain their food supply from the villagers. The Seng-oi had no problem with that trade relationship because they could sell their farm products locally, and at the same time, they could avoid going to town to face the Japanese.

Due to that commitment, the Seng-oi of Keramat started to cultivate tapioca and vegetables. Alek advised them to conduct their activities secretly and hide them from the Japanese. He also discouraged the opening of new selai because those slash and burn activities would attract the attention of the Japanese. The people were only allowed to work on their old selai and so did not plant paddy because old selai were not suitable for growing this crop. Each family grew vegetables, maize, and tapioca on their own old selai, and the money they gained from selling these commodities to Alek were used to buy rice from Papan or Siputeh township. Lack of rice supplies changed their diet. Tapioca began to become staple, while rice was considered luxury food.5

After dealing with the Chinese, however, some of the villagers became unhappy living under the Chinese patronage and tried to stop assisting the MPAJA. This development led Alek to change his 'tone' from persuading to forcing, and from advising to warning. He warned the Seng-oi that the Chinese would not hesitate to kill any villagers who were reluctant to support the struggle, or who became spies of the Japanese. In addition, Alek and his troop always launched hit-and-
run attacks on Japanese interests, and then hid back in Keramat. If that secret was exposed, the Japanese could sentence all the villagers to death for assisting Alek’s troop and the MPAJA. The people however could not get away from the situation, in which they had become involved and were sandwiched in the middle of a struggle, which was meaningless to them.

The people became worried when they heard that the Chinese had killed three *Seng-oi* in Gumpey, whom they suspected of spying for the Japanese. This was followed by another murder in Gedung Batu’. The villagers started to blame Alang Tek for cooperating with the Chinese. Pertel told me about the dilemma faced by his father in the old days, rephrasing his father’s arguments to the villagers:

My father faced two pressures at one time, from the Chinese and from the villagers. He had to calm them down and explain the situation. At that time they had only two choices, to cooperate with the Chinese or to die. He told the villagers that the same situation existed in other *Seng-oi* villages all over the country. As a leader, he had to tackle this situation very carefully, otherwise we would all be finished! My father then let the villagers make their own decision, and to choose one of the two choices they had. The villagers understood the situation and in desperation decided to continue their ‘insincere’ cooperation with Alek and his troop.

The Japanese suddenly surrendered in 1945. The villagers of Keramat wondered how it could have happened because they had seen no battle. Alek and his troop were very happy. Pertel recalled the reaction of Alek and his troop on the surrender day. “*Ini kali kita pigang ini nigili*” (meaning, “This time we will control the state.”) Alek told his father, Alang Tek, in Malay but in his strong Chinese accent. “*Ei kawan, lu tatak suka ka?*” (meaning, “Are you not happy, my friend?”) Alek asked Alang Tek while tapping his shoulder. “*Tentu suka!*” (meaning, “Of course I am happy!”) Alang Tek sourly replied just to please Alek and his troop. Pertel then told me that, in a real sense, his father had nothing to celebrate. All he hoped was that the fall of the Japanese would allow Alek and his troop to pull out from Keramat and let his people live in peace. That would be a great relief which they could celebrate as they would then be free from threats from both the Chinese and the Japanese who had endangered their lives for a long time. Alek and his troop disappeared from their camp the next morning, and probably left the area at dawn. Alang Tek heard rumours they had gone back to Tronoh. “My father wondered why Alek and his troop went back to Tronoh since Tronoh town was the home ground for *Bintang satu*, while Alek
and his troop were *Bintang tige,*" Pertel said, recalling his father’s confusion about the Chinese movements.

Of all the Perah villagers, Bek Tambun had the worst experiences with both the Chinese and the Japanese. All those experiences, however, occurred outside Perah (see Appendix C).

As regards *Seng-oi* land rights, the Japanese occupation period could be regarded as a continuity of the earlier British era. During this period, the Communist Chinese, who represented the MPAJA and relied on the *Seng-oi* for food supplies, prevented these people from opening up new areas and only allowed them to work on their *selai*. This restriction seems to be similar to the land laws introduced by the British. Both denied the people’s right of access to their own territory. The people had no choice but to work on their old *selai* permanently. Each family went back to their own old *selai* for at least three years until the Japanese surrendered. Although there were no permanent crops, such as rubber and fruit, planted on these *selai*, the people began to regard each of these plots of land as belonging to individual families. This change resulted from the long attachment of an individual family to a particular area, which created a fond feeling toward their own *selai*. This ownership was then recognised by the entire village as the villagers began to appreciate each other’s *selai* and its harvest. In general, the whole crisis experienced by the people of Perah during the Japanese occupation could be seen as two sides of a coin. On one side, the people experienced a dilemma between supporting the Japanese and supporting the MPAJA. On the other side, however, this crisis promoted a cultural transition. MPAJA’s restrictions on the opening of new lands, and permission to only work on old *selai* familiarised the people with the idea of family ownership instead of communal ownership. This seemed to be a continuation of their involvement in the rubber cultivation industry in the early British era.

**The Malayan Emergency**

After the Japanese surrendered and Alek withdrew his troop from Keramat, the villagers begin to rebuild their lives. The people of Panchor cleared their rubber fields to start tapping. Ata’ Bek Makar and his father, Mat Melaka, went down to Parit to check on dealers to whom they could sell their rubber. However, they
found the town still in disorder. People were busy repairing their ruined shops. One of the Chinese shopkeepers told them that the town was still not secure. The shop owners were still afraid that the Communists might raid and kill them for running their businesses during the Japanese occupation. He then advised Bek Makar to delay selling rubber until peace was fully restored.

The people of Keramat had their rubber grown and ready to tap. They were also busy clearing their fields. However, they did not start tapping since rubber was still not sellable. For the time being, the villagers continued with rattan collecting because this was a commodity they were able to sell. They sold their rattan in Papan, as well as in Pusing and Siputeh, two other small towns located between Papan and Parit. In these towns, they could sell the commodity for a higher price than in Parit. Eventually, they developed good trade relationships with a dealer in Papan, whom they had known since the pre-war period. At that time, rattan was needed by miners to build the palong. The villagers went to Papan, as well as to Pusing and Siputeh, on foot through a jungle track.6

One year after that, the villagers established another contact with two Chinese, both of whom ran a small sundry shop in a Malay village, Bekor, locally known as Cheba’ Bekau. Those Chinese, known as Akai and Ateng, also bought rattan from Seng-oi from Bekau village and Malays from Bekor. The people of Perah switched their trade relationship to Akai and Ateng of Cheba’ Bekau because those dealers were willing to buy the commodities at a better price.7 The distance between Cheba’ Bekau and Perah was also much nearer than to Papan, Pusing or Siputeh.

Alang Tek had slowly to restart his sundry shop business, but on a small scale due to a lack of capital. Since his business was slow, he was also involved in cultivating paddy and expanding his rubber field. In the meantime, rubber had began to become a sellable commodity again. The people of Panchor focused their economic activity on tapping rubber. So did the people of Keramat, who began to rely on that commodity for their livelihood. Some of them even started to learn how to tap the trees.8 They sold their rubber sheets to Cheba’ Bekau. In addition to Ateng’s sundry shop, there was another shop run by a Malay, a headman or ketua kampung of the Bekor village, named Haji Hashim. He also bought rubber from Perah villagers, and gave them two rubber flattening
machines. In exchange for those machines, he asked the people to sell their rubber sheets to him, and buy consumer goods from his shop. However, the price of rubber was not stable due to political instability and competition from synthetic rubber. The decrease in rubber prices caused the people of Keramat to lose confidence in the commodity, and some of them switched back to rattan. The people also opened *selai* once again outside the permitted occupying area in order to supplement their rice needs. At that time, they just relied on their own paddy, vegetables, and rattan as sources of livelihood. The recession, however, did not prevent Bek Bab from marrying his girlfriend.

Soon after that, Mat Melaka passed away. His children and their families came back to pay their last tributes. After the funeral, some of them left Panchor, while the rest remained in the village. Ata’ Bek Pakai went back to Sungai Galah because he worked as a gardener in the mining camp there. He then went back to Denak to join the Home Guards, a para-military troop established by the BMA.

Although the price of rubber was low, the people of Keramat went on with their efforts to become involved in rubber cultivation. The people did that for the future market. According to Pertel, his father went on planting the crop, hoping that the price would increase by the time they had their field ready to tap. They cleared their old rubber field and planted new saplings in their *ex-selai*. Mara’ Asing, however, was not interested in planting rubber. Ngah Pok asked for his former *selai*, where his house had been burned down by the Forest Rangers before the war, to plant crops because he had no other land to work. Mara’ Asing had no problem giving the former *selai* to Ngah Pok because he had planted nothing on that land. Mara’ Asing’s energy in opening that land gained him a good harvest. In addition, he also obtained compensation for his burned shelter.

At that time, most of the villagers became more ambitious and ‘brave’ as they realised that the *Mai Byeq* were busy with labour strikes and MCP movements in towns. They cultivated rubber in their former *selai* immediately after they finished harvesting their paddy. According to Alang Tek, the year 1946 to 1947 was a suitable time for them to cultivate the crop because the *Mai Byeq* had no time to care about what happened in the jungle as they wanted to regain control of the towns. That opportunity allowed Itam Langsat to cultivate about six acres.
of rubber in new areas within two seasons. Andak Jameah’s husband, Itam Bit, was also able to plant about the same acreage as Itam Langsat. Itam Bit had a total of about 10 acres of rubber fields after he added the four acres of his old field, which he replanted after his first crop was destroyed by the Forest Rangers.

The villagers’ paddy and rubber planting occurred for only two seasons between 1946 and 1947. Their activities stopped in 1948 when they heard Alek and his group were going to come back into the village. They became worried once again. Some of the families in Panchor fled to their old villages. The people of Keramat, however, remained in the village and tried to maintain life on their home ground because they were not interested in squatting in other villages.

The Communist guerillas came back to Keramat in 1948 after the British banned the MCP. The troop, however, had a new leader named Akau. Akau and his troop had a new mission, that was to attack their former ally, the BMA. His approach to the villagers was totally different from Alek’s. There was no persuasion. He forced the people straight away to support the communist struggle. He wanted the villagers to continue the trade relationship that had been practiced during the Japanese occupation. The Chinese threatened that they would kill any of the villagers who refused to cooperate, or who were spying for the BMA, or who exposed the secret of Communist movements in the area.

As a penghulu, Alang Tek once again faced a dilemma. He had to carry three responsibilities at one time. The British sought his cooperation to fight the Communists, the Communist Chinese forced him to fight the BMA, and the Keramat villagers wanted him to regain their freedom, which included free access to land, and the freedom to interact with whoever they liked, to establish trade relationships, and to live in peace and to practice their way of life. The British took away their freedom of access to land, while the Communist Chinese took away the rest of their freedoms. Since Alang Tek was running a sundry shop, Akau used him to get food supplies from town. During the Emergency, the government required Alang Tek to report to the police station all the goods he bought, their volume, and uses. If they knew he had been used by Akau, the British would have put him in prison for assisting the Communists. On the other hand, if he refused to help the Communists, Akau would kill him. He had to handle that situation carefully for his own life and the lives of his people.
A few months after the Communists had hidden in the village, Akau asked Alang Tek to buy a gunny of wheat flour. Akau wanted to collect the flour the next day. While having dinner with his family, Alang Tek was talking to himself to devise answers for the authorities. For that volume of flour, the police would question him closely. He then thought of a solution. He was going to say that they wanted to use the flour for a cultural feast. His son, Pertel, did not agree with his father’s constant submission to Akau and the Communist guerillas. He strongly believed that they had to take sides in the struggle in order to solve the problem. “If we did not take sides, I believe we might have been trapped in the struggle forever, and that would not have been any good,” Pertel explained. He then embarked on a secret plan to solve the matter.

The next morning, Alang Tek went to Parit to buy the things ordered by Akau. When his father disappeared, Pertel started his secret moves. He went to Tronoh to report the matter to the Police Station. He decided on Tronoh instead of Parit Police station for two reasons. Firstly, he did not want to meet his father in Parit. He was afraid his father would ask why he was there. Secondly, there were Seng-oi from Denak who were members of the Jungle Scouts attached to Tronoh Police Station. They were Ngah Dani, Bah Dag and Paksi. With their help, Pertel could explain the matter properly, and that would avoid any repercussions, especially accusations by the Police of assisting the Communists. The Officer Commanding Police District (OCPD) of Tronoh was a Malay named Enchik Pilus who agreed to send a troop and ambush the Communists. Before he left the station, Pertel asked Enchik Pilus and his troop to come at nightfall, and to keep the secret of his action from his father.

Pertel returned to the village about 2.30 pm, and pretended that he had done nothing special. Two hours later, his father came back from Parit with a gunny of wheat flour. He put his purchase inside a house he had purposely built to store his working tools but which was then used by the Communist as a place to collect their orders. They normally collected their orders at night or dawn. Enchik Pilus and his troop, a combination of Special Constabulary (SC) and Jungle Scouts (JS), arrived in the village at about 7.30 pm. They came on foot in order to avoid detection. His troop took position straight away to ambush the Communists along a track they usually used to collect their orders. The Jungle Scouts took one position at the edge of the village, while the Special Constables positioned
themselves between the Jungle Scouts and the targeted house. Enchik Pilus and his Sergeant, a Punjabi, went to Alang Tek’s house to discuss the matter. Alang Tek told Enchik Pilus about the dilemma he had faced since the Japanese occupation. Enchik Pilus understood the matter and promised that the government would protect the villagers. Alang Tek then surrendered his rifle, which he had been given by Alek during the Japanese occupation. Enchik Pilus advised the villagers not to panic and to stay calm. The villagers, however, started to pack their belongings and prepared to evacuate the village. They were afraid it would become a battle ground between the two troops, and that they would be trapped in the cross-fire.

The SC and JS squads guarded the track the whole night. By dawn the next morning, everyone had fallen asleep, including Enchik Pilus and his Sergeant. As everyone was asleep, they were not aware that two of the Communist members had passed along the track. On the way to the house, the Communist walking in front saw that some of their signals had been changed. Realising something had gone wrong, he became suspicious about the presence of armed forces in the area. He then asked his friend to retreat and they ran back into the jungle. Their ‘rough’ move awakened Paksi from his sleep. Since the guerillas had passed through the ambushed track, Paksi just managed to shoot them from behind. One of them died on the spot while the other member was injured but managed to escape. The blast from Paksi’s shot gun awakened the other members of SC and JS, each of whom opened random fire. Paksi ordered them to stop shooting and told Enchik Pilus that there was only one guerilla dead. Paksi called a few members to track down the injured guerilla. Before they commenced the tracking operation, however, the Punjabi Sergeant went to the dead Communist member whose body was lying face down to the ground; he twisted the dead man by his leg to look at his face. Unfortunately, no one knew that the dead guerilla had a live hand-grenade in his hand. Before he was shot, he had pulled the pin to throw the hand grenade at the armed forces but was shot and fell to the ground with the hand-grenade still held in his hand underneath his chest. When the Punjabi Sergeant turned the body over, the hand-grenade was released and exploded. The Punjabi Sergeant died on the spot while three of the Malay SC members were injured. Due to this tragedy, Enchik Pilus cancelled the tracking operation.
Enchik Pilus and his troops came back into the village. When they reached it, the villagers had already gathered in front of Alang Tek’s house. They then discussed their security with Enchik Pilus and looked for alternatives. They believed that the communists would come back in a bigger troop to revenge their dead member. Finally, Enchik Pilus decided to evacuate all the villagers of Keramat and Panchor from Perah. He then made radio contact with Tronoh Police Station, asking for transport and a temporary camp for the villagers. Enchik Pilus got a reply from his station informing him that the villagers could be temporarily placed in Ipoh. Enchik Pilus then asked the villagers to pack only important belongings as they wanted to leave the area as soon as possible. The situation became chaotic. Children began to cry. Andak Jameah tried to bring along her ceramic kitchen ware, but was not allowed to by the SC. Her husband, however, managed to bring along all his condensed milk. He told Enchik Pilus that the Communists would collect the milk if he left it behind. This chaotic situation caused Alang Tek to leave behind their most important document, the occupying permit given by the Department of Forestry.

The villagers reached Ipoh in the late afternoon. They were placed in an abandoned bungalow. The government then assigned a Gop woman to look after their welfare in that temporary camp. The Gop woman taught them how to use the flush toilet, to switch on and off the lights, ceiling fan, and helped them to cook their food. In addition, the government gave them a small weekly subsidy. The family men were given $10 to $15, depending on the size of their family, and unmarried adults were given $5 per week.

After one week in the bungalow, another group from Changkat Pinggan came and joined the Perah people. They included the family of Mat Arif, a Seng-oi leader who the British used to dub “Sakai Mussolini” because of his vocal and nationalistic struggle for land rights for the Seng-oi. He was a relative of Itam Bit and Ata’ Bek Makar. They lived together there for one week. After that, the Perah villagers transferred to Selat of Layang-layang Kiri, an area located on the other bank of the Perak river about two miles down stream from Parit town. Mat Arif and his family were taken by a Mai Byeq named P.D.R. Williams-Hunt, also known as Bah Janggut, to Maran in the State of Pahang. The British sought Mat Arif’s help to resettle the Seng-oi, who lived scattered in the Maran forest areas, into a camp built by the British at the outskirts of the Maran town.
Alang Tek and the people of Perah were temporarily transferred to Selat and grouped together with the Seng-oi from Selinsing. They lived there for about one and a half months while waiting for their permanent camp in Kangor to be ready for occupation. While there, Andak Jameah and her daughter, Uda, and a few other villagers worked with Gop to pound paddy. The Gop asked the Seng-oi of Selat to help them in that work because some paddy mills had still not restarted operation. The Gop gave them rice in exchange for their labours.

When their permanent camp was ready for occupation, the DO of Parit, a Mai Byeq who replaced Tok Setia, asked the people of Perah to move into Kangor. The Kangor camp was located further upriver from Selat and was about two miles in the interior of the Perak River. In front of the camp was a small guard-post which was guarded 24 hours a day by two SC personnel. Each pair guarded the post for eight hours and were then relieved by another pair of personnel. That rotation went on alternately, involving three shifts within 24 hours.

The Perah people, as well as the Selinsing people, were not completely happy living in Kangor. They were not allowed to cultivate rice because the area was not theirs. The Seng-oi therefore just depended on cheap subsidies and on jungle products, especially rattan for their livelihood: they sold rattan to buy rice. They also planted tapioca near their houses to supplement their carbohydrate needs. After one and a half years living in the camp, rattan began to become scarce in the surrounding area. The SC, however, did not allow them to look for rattan in the deeper areas of the forest for security reasons. Starting from that period, their health began to decline. They were always ill, probably due to lack of nutritious food. In addition to lack of food, the hala, such as Alang Tek, Ata' Ridek and Ata' Long Wahid, said that they were unhealthy because the ground that they lived on did not belong to the Seng-oi. The main supernatural guardian of the Kangor area was said to be a Gop keramat who was not 'accustomed' to the Seng-oi, who were 'un-Islamic' or kapir. The keramat was therefore not very helpful in protecting the Seng-oi from bad spirits.

There was also a Seng-oi chermor about the early inhabitant of the State of Perak. According to this chermor:
There were two groups of ‘people’ who first came into the State of Perak: the Seng-oi and the mengrik. The Seng-oi were human beings while the mengrik were superhuman beings, well-known as mai tepaz (in Malay, orang bunian). The mengrik is said to look like a human being except it has a tail, a wedge-shaped head with a pair of oval-shaped eyes, no nose but just a pair of fine nostrils and a small mouth. The Seng-oi and mengrik came together to the state along the Perak river. They then decided to stop and establish a dengri'. However, they disagreed about which side of the river to establish the dengri'. The Seng-oi wanted it to be established on the bank in the direction of sunrise, which was close to the mountain so that, if the batak~ came, they could run to the mountain. The mengrik, on the other hand, wanted the dengri' to be established on the other side of the river, which was close to the sea so that, if the batak came, they could run to the sea and sail elsewhere. This disagreement ended in a misunderstanding, and they decided to split into two: the Seng-oi occupied the inside part while the mengrik occupied the outside part of the dengri'. The Perak river became the boundary between the two occupied areas. They also swore not to occupy each other’s dengri' and if any party broke this ‘oath’, the trespasser would be affected by a curse, and would get ill, or even die.

In this case, the Seng-oi were located on the other side of Perak river, which meant that they had trespassed on the dengri' of the mengrik, and therefore, they believed that their illness came from this curse. Due to the decline in their health in Kangor, the people could not live in the camp any longer, and moved to Padang Changkat, where the people of Temboh Bekett and Teaw Ba’ resettled.

The DO of Parit was very angry at Alang Tek and his people because they moved to Padang Changkat without permission from the authorities. The people tried to defend their move and explain to the DO that the Kangor camp was ‘hot’, and was supernaturally not suitable. The DO, who was just concerned about security, did not accept that and tried to force them to go back to Kangor by threatening to cut off their subsidy. The bureaucratic attitude of the Mai Byeq DO, who did not want to understand the Seng-oi spiritual relationship with the land, made the people unhappy. They would rather move elsewhere than go back to Kangor. Andak Jameah recalled her cousin, Alang Tek, arguing with the DO:

Look sir, if you think your money is important, you can keep it. But for us, our life is more important than your money, so let us keep our life away from those supernatural threats.

The DO did not accept any of the people’s explanations and arguments, and still wanted them to go back to Kangor. The people, however, ignored the DO’s orders, split into groups according to families, and fled to various Seng-oi areas. The break up of Perah’s groups occurred in 1952. Ata’ Bek Makar moved back to Denak and then to Sungai Galah, where he worked with a dredging company.
Long Apon moved to Gedung Batu' and then to Tronoh. He also worked in a dredger but then joined the para-military forces. The families of Alang Tek, Andak Jameah (Itam Bit) and Itam Langsat moved to another camp, Suak Petai, which was located nearby Manong town, where 25 families of Bekau people were resettled, but later they moved to various places, and end up in Bekau in 1958.\(^2\)

In 1959, peace began to be restored in Malaya. Many insurgency or black areas were declared white. However, the British still maintained security measures in the interior and therefore assigned part-time police Aboriginal guards (PAG),\(^2\) well-known as Home Guards, to take care of Bekau security. As part of these precautionary measures, the British transferred Ata’ Bek Pakai, a PAG who was assigned in Denak, to Bekau. The growing peace situation allowed the people of Bekau to start tapping their rubber again. The people of Perah did the same thing in Keramat. Alang Tek, Itam Bit and Itam Langsat went daily to Perah to tap their rubber. They spent about three hours walking on foot from Bekau to Perah and a little longer on the return journey because they had to carry the rubber sheets they had worked on that day. They continued that mode of working for more than one year until the middle of 1960. After the Emergency ended on 31 July 1960, Alang Tek asked permission from the DO of Parit to return to their village, Perah. The DO then proposed this to the Director of the Department of Aborigines of Perak Branch, R.C. Corfield (Tuan Kupil), and the OCPD. About two months later, the DO and Tuan Kupil gave permission to Alang Tek and other Perah villagers to reoccupy their old home ground. Soon after that, Ata’ Bek Pakai resigned from the Home Guard and went back to Panchor in Perah, followed by his brother, Ata’ Bek Makar (who had spent most of his time in Sungai Galah),\(^3\) his nephew, Bek Tambun, and others.

During the Emergency, five Perah villagers—Long Dahaman, Bek Tambun, Long Apon and his father, Ngah Pok, and Ata’ Bek Pakai—joined the security forces to fight the Communist guerillas, no longer willing to put up with the hardship brought about by Communist activity (see Appendix C). This crisis forced the people of Perah to evacuate their village for security reasons, which alienated them from their *dengri’*, i.e. their houses, rubber fields, and *selai*. In addition, unfair treatment by the government during the crisis made for a poor quality of life and health. These were the major reasons for the people’s
Plate 6.1: A Memory of Friendship
Pandak (left), a brother of Mara’ Asing, and Long Apon (right) in 1956, while they were still working with a dredging company near Tronoh town. Both of them later joined the armed forces, Jungle Scouts, to fight the Communist guerillas. Pandak was shot dead by Communists in 1959, while Long Apon retired in 1960 and returned to Perah.
separation from their main group, since they split up into various groups and moved from one place to another in search of security and a better quality of life. After about a decade of this, the people regrouped when the emergency ended in 1960.

**Sungai Galah in Two Eras**

This section will explore the same issues and experiences faced by the people of Sungai Galah during the two eras of political development in Malaya from 1942 to 1960.

**Japanese Occupation**

According to Keling Nawan, about four or five months before the end of the early British era, they heard rumours that the war was going to come to Malaya. Later, they heard that the Japanese and Germans had defeated the British and the Americans, and their allies in Europe. As a result of that triumph, the Japanese were going to take over all Mai Byeq colonial states in the *apah medeh*, which means “towards here”, a description for the direction of the Southeast Asian states, including Malaya.

Shortly before the Japanese war occurred, many of the Mai Byeq’s mining companies around Sungai Galah stopped their dredging operations and retreated south to Singapore. Due to that ‘closure’ of the dredger operations, Keling Nawan and other Seng-oi colleagues had to stop working in the dredger and return to catching fish and collecting rattan. One day, while they were selling fish, their Chinese dealers, Gemuk and Awa, told them that the Japanese army had landed in Kota Baharu and that the war had began.24

About two or three days after Gemuk and Awa told them about the war, they saw many aeroplanes in the sky, together with the sound of bomb blasts and cross-fire far away in the town area and along the main road. The people could see the clash clearly from Sungai Galah as no big trees remained around the area to block their view.25 All the big trees had been destroyed by the mining operations, which left the area clear, a flat and huge sandy area which looked just like a ‘desert’.26
About one week after the clash, Ata’ Bek Pakai, known as Bek Maju in Sungai Galah, arrived from Perah and told the villagers about the impact of the war, especially about the situation in Parit town, the loss of lives, and the destruction of infrastructure and other public amenities along the way from Parit to Tanjung Tualang. However, the villagers were able to live in the village as normal for about one month after the clash. Ata’ Bek Makar also managed to obtain traditional healing from local *hala’* to cure his illness. However, they could not sell their fish because none of their dealers came to buy the catch.

One month later, the villagers heard from their Malay neighbours and friends who lived in the Buluh Bidai village, that the Japanese were going to come into the area to take over the operation of the dredgers. The Malay also told them about the cruelty of the Japanese army. The people of Sungai Galah began to be fearful and decided to move far away from the village. The elders had a brief meeting about where to go, and finally agreed to move far interior to Lout Chengres, an area near the Temboh river on the northern side of Sungai Galah. They moved there in mid 1942 together with Ata’ Bek Pakai. They then opened *selai* in the area as their lives were fully dependent on paddy and other natural resources available around the area.

After one paddy season living in the area, the Chinese Communists began to be active nearby. The *Seng-oi* then received an order from the Japanese, asking them to come back to their village, or to face actions from their army as they were suspected of assisting the MPAJA. I asked Panjang Long about where they obtained the news of that Japanese order. He just did not know, telling me, “*Ie gah ajeh bi’ keb ya mai ngra’ jiik padey juga!’*” (meaning, “the order was received by one of our elders here!”). I continued my questioning, asking him how that particular elder had received the order. “Had he established contact with the Japanese?” Panjang Long just replied that he did not know. I asked the same question of Keling Nawan, and he also replied he did not know about it. According to him, he just followed whatever the elders asked them to do. “If the elders decided to move, we packed our belongings and stood-by for further orders. If they urged us to remain in the area, we stayed!” Keling Nawan told me, showing the attitude of the youngsters in the old days as they never challenged the elders.
They moved back to Sungai Galah in mid 1943. At that time, the dredgers continued their operations under Japanese management. Some of the Mai Byeq, such as the engineers, still remained and continued working in the dredgers. A few weeks after they had resettled in the village, a few Chinese who identified themselves as members of MPAJA came into the village. Their leaders, locally known as Keng Lai and Along, urged the villagers to support their struggle to liberate Malaya from the Japanese. The Chinese (referred to as China' ludar27) asked the villagers to sell food to them, including fish, wild game, rice and tapioca. The Seng-oi of Sungai Galah agreed in principle to that trade relationship but they did not realise that it was a commitment which restricted them from dealing with the Japanese and non-Communist Chinese. They thought that they had the freedom to sell their goods to whoever they wished. As Panjang Long said:

If I had a choice at that time, I would support none of them because they had no right to take control over the dengri’. Why support those sources of trouble? Whoever we supported, we would be the losers. The Mai Byeq miners were just interested in taking over our land, while the Communist Chinese and the Japanese were just interested in taking away our lives. No good words came out of their mouths except kill, kill, and kill!

The Seng-oi of Sungai Galah were therefore not siding with any of these powers but just hoped to establish good and fair relationships with all of them.

The Japanese manager who took over the management of the dredging company near Sungai Galah was good and more tolerant than the Japanese army. He came into the village several times. On his early visits, he asked the villagers about their economic activities. The villagers told him that they caught fresh water fish, and that the catch was for their own consumption. The Japanese manager asked the villagers to sell some of their catch to him and other mining workers in the camp. He also offered the villagers work in the dredger. Some of the villagers started selling their catch at the camp, but none accepted the offer to work in the dredger. They tried to avoid any direct contact with the Japanese as they were afraid the Chinese would misinterpret that ‘industrial relationship’ and accuse them of spying for the Japanese. The people were aware that any relationships they tried to establish with either one or both sides of these two conflicting parties would produce the same degree of danger, both of which threatened their security. They, however, did not have much choice as they were
surrounded by the dilemma resulting from the conflict between the Chinese and the Japanese.

Motivated by the desire to live in a community, the *Seng-oi* finally established trade and social relationships with the Japanese and other residents who lived in the mining camp nearby Sungai Galah. These relationships, however, provoked anger from the Communist Chinese, and led Along to kill the people whom he suspected to have worked and cooperated with the Japanese. On his orders, three of his followers, Chicai and two women members, came into the village to arrest Bek Chakchom, Alang Apat and Bah Glon one-by-one at their homes. Long Tanjung asked Chicai the reason they arrested those villagers. Chicai told them that his leader, Along, just wanted to interrogate these three people as they were suspected of spying for the Japanese. Chicai and the two women members then brought their victims to an unknown place and murdered them there. According to Panjang Long, there was nothing they could do to save their people at that time because Chicai and the women were armed with semi-automatic rifles and machine guns, while the villagers just had *parang*, which they used to cut rattan. Later, the Chinese Communists murdered two *Mai Byeq*, both of whom were engineers of the dredger.

Following these murders which occurred in late 1943 or early 1944, the villagers of Sungai Galah became frightened, especially after learning that their village was surrounded by Chinese settlements. They then decided to take refuge in the neighbouring village of Kelubi, the village where Tok Singa Merban originated. Tok Singa Merban asked the people to move to Kelubi because he had old land there where they could establish their settlement. His land was located in the central part of the Kelubi area. At the time they moved there, the area was just a former *selai* located next to a rubber field owned by a family related to Tok Singa Merban. During their stay in Kelubi, most of the Sungai Galah people depended on rattan and joined the locals to collect and sell that commodity. Panjang Long and a few other families decided to move to a jungle area called Tok Kacheed. This area was located nearby the Temboh river, and was not far away from their former *selai* of the Lout Chengres. The main reason they wanted to move into this area was to open *selai* as rice had become their staple. During their stay in the Kelubi, they had no problem with protein supplies because the swamp areas around that village were rich with fish. They, however,
faced a problem with the rice supply. They could not open *selai* in Kelubi because most of the area was former *selai* and owned by local villagers. There were areas available in the Changkat Pinggan but these were far away from Kelubi and dangerous as Chinese Communist movements were active in the area. Their income from selling rattan was not enough even to buy rice. That situation led them to live an unhealthy life. In addition, Panjang Long in particular, needed more food to support his big family. At that time he had six children, including a one-year-old son.

Tok Singa Merban and his family, including his son-in-law, Nawan, and his *bisat*, Long Tanjung, remained in Kelubi. Keling Nawan, who was young at that time, joined local young men collecting rattan and catching fresh water fish. His catch was mainly used for his own family consumption, but the money he got from selling rattan was for his own pocket. Since Tok Singa Merban was a local of Kelubi, he managed to get a small piece of land for Nawan and his father, Long Tanjung, to open *selai* for two seasons, and its harvests were enough to feed his family for those periods of time. That was eventually the reason Nawan and his family did not accompany his younger brother, Panjang Long, to Tok Kacheed, and was able to remain in Kelubi for about two years after that 'separation'. Nawan and his family were still living in Kelubi when the Japanese surrendered. Less than one year later, they went back to Sungai Galah.

The experience faced by the people of Sungai Galah in relation to land was slightly different from the people of Perah during the Japanese occupation. During the war, the people of Sungai Galah had to evacuate their village due to the serious threat from the Chinese MPAJA. The desire to gain a more secure life forced them to flee to Kelubi village; thus security reasons alienated them from their *dengri*'. This alienation went on until 1948, the year the Chinese Communists concentrated their subversive activities against British interests in towns. This situation then allowed the people to reoccupy Sungai Galah since it was free from this threat.

**The Malayan Emergency**

The people of Sungai Galah remained separated from their village, Sungai Galah, for about three years, and some of them longer than that. They went back to
Sungai Galah in different groups and at different times between 1946 and 1948. The villagers who were ‘brave’ and ‘loved’ their village came back earlier than those who were not very confident about their security in Sungai Galah. Nawan and his family left Kelubi in 1947, after his father, Long Tanjung, died. He and a few families of his relatives, including the family of Ngah Lesu, decided to move to Mengkuang, an area which used to be occupied by his ancestors before Gumpey Luas. Tok Singa Merban, however, did not come along with them as he wanted to spend the rest of his life in Kelubi village.

Their movement from Kelubi to Mengkuang, however, did not make them feel secure. Nawon and others still suffered a psychological depression because they feared intimidation from the Communist Chinese. According to Keling Nawon, during the early settlement in Mengkuang, they slept in the bush because they feared Communist attacks. At one time, they were even scared of the fire-flies which they thought were the lights of tobacco smoked by the Communist Chinese. On that night, they ran into a wooden boat (perahu) and tried to escape, but came back after they discovered that it was fire-flies. After a few months there, Nawon decided to move back to Sungai Galah because he found that the Mengkuang area was not suitable to establish a permanent settlement. However, he was not confident about the security of this village. As a precaution, Nawon and his group moved towards Sungai Galah by stages. They first moved and settled temporarily in an area nearby Gungke, locally known as Tungkul, and later to Tulin, which was closer to Sungai Galah. From these places, Nawon and other head of families investigated the situation in Sungai Galah. A few months later, they were convinced that there was no Communist threat in Sungai Galah, and decided to move permanently into the village. Nawon’s group, including Ngah Lesu’s family, were among the first group to return to Sungai Galah. This was then followed by Panjang Long and a group of families, including Bek Maju, came back into the village after their last harvest in Tok Kacheed. A few months before that, Panjang Long heard his brother had moved back into Sungai Galah but at that time he and his family had just begun working in their new selai. They then decided to rejoin their extended family after finishing their harvest. Immediately after they resettled in the village, Ata’ Bek Pakai got a job as a gardener in a bungalow belonging to the manager of the dredging company named Tuan Baker.
When Nawan and his group reached Sungai Galah, they found only two or three dredgers still in operation. The others were idle due to labour strikes led by MCP. Keng Lai, Along and their troop were not there as their movements were concentrated in towns. The absence of the Communist Chinese from the area allowed the people to regain a peaceful life as soon as they moved into the village. Long Tanjung and his son, Nawan, started to clear their rubber fields. They later started tapping and selling the commodity. However, the price was very low and not worth working fulltime. In order to complement their income, Nawan and other tappers also engaged in catching fish and selling it to the miners. A few months after that, rattan became sellable once again. Many of them therefore engaged in this activity as they established contact with new dealers. The women worked in the gardens near their houses. They planted vegetables and tapioca to supplement their family’s need for rice. Later, Keling rejoined the Mai Byeq mining company, which he was with before the war, and continued working in the dredger until he retired in 1956. Other villagers rejoining the labour market, did the same.

Three or four months after Panjang Long rejoined his family in Sungai Galah, BMA declared the Emergency in Perak, followed by a nationwide declaration. The Emergency, however, did not very much affect the people of Sungai Galah. As Bek Maju or Ata’ Bek Pakai told me, “Musim Cina’ Jeres chanuk jeh, ma hentok lek ie kenachau ku Sungai Galah” (meaning, “During the Emergency, there was no trouble at all in Sungai Galah.”) Towards the end of 1948, the British launched an operation to register all Malayan citizens. Each citizen was given an Identity Card, locally known as pespot or sometimes called caping. The people of Sungai Galah were very pleased to have that pespot which could distinguish them from the Communist guerillas.

During the Emergency period, life in Sungai Galah was more peaceful than in other Seng-oi villages, including their neighbour, Kelubi. The main reason for this was the location of the village. The British assigned armed forces troops to protect all their interests in the state. In Sungai Galah, the British assigned an SC squad to guard the camp and mining area. Since Sungai Galah was next to that camp, the village was also protected by the SC. In addition, there was no jungle around the village for the guerillas to hide in, only swamps and a huge ‘desert’. There was jungle to the north, where other Seng-oi villages like Denak, Temboh
Bekett, Perah and Bekau were, but it was quite far away from Sungai Galah, and regularly reconnoitred by the Intelligence Scouts and patrolled by the military. The guerillas therefore concentrated their operations in other areas of deep jungle, especially in the northern mountains nearby the Thailand border. Although they were safe from guerilla threats, the people of Sungai Galah still felt insecure about their village and agricultural land. Their insecurity began as soon as they began to reoccupy the village.

In mid 1948, the Mai Byeq began to transport the component parts of a dredger into the area. When all the parts had arrived, the Mai Byeq started assembling the dredger, which took about one year to complete. It was then known as Dredger No. 3 or kapal numbor tige. About half a year after its assembly, the dredger started its operation around Teluk Buyong area. Later, another dredger was assembled in the area. This dredger then operated on the other side of the Kinta river. The miners diverted the flow of the Kinta river into a human-made channel, and continued to dredge the Pengkalan Jering and former Kinta river areas, including a former royal picnic site, the Tasik Bangsi. At the same time as the dredger dredged the front areas, it poured sand and mud through its ‘tail’ which refilled the area behind. After a while, the former Pengkalan Jering area was refilled by sand. The company then built quarters on the refilled area as an extension of the previous quarters in order to shelter the increased number of workers. The camp consisted of worker quarters, officer bungalows, a management office, a workshop and a row of shops. Since the camp was huge, its compound extended to the border of the Sungai Galah village. The two areas were at first divided by a fence. According to Panjang Long, H.D. Noone visited Sungai Galah in the early 1950s. At that time, he negotiated with the dredging company to build a fence around Sungai Galah, and to include the village in the scope of their security. The company did this as a security commitment to the villagers, some of whom were company workers.

Although Tok Singa Merban, who lived in Kelubi, had successfully claimed a small amount of compensation for his jack-fruit dusut in Pengkalan Jering, that amount of money could not sustain him for a long time. People like Nawan were, however, more concerned about their life in that area in the long term, and the security of their land for future generations rather than compensation. These people therefore began to fight for their land rights as early as the dredger...
operations started in Teluk Buyung. Nawan and other elders of the Sungai Galah were very worried about their *dusut* in the area as the operation might destroy their fruit trees. This concern led Nawan to launch a complaint to the engineer of the dredger. The engineer replied that his dredger just operated in his own area, and the *Seng-oi’s dusut* were not affected. Nawan tried to explain that the *dusut* were indirectly affected because the dredger poured sand and mud into their *dusut* area. Their fruit trees also died because of the chemical waste, especially grease and ‘oil’, that came out from the dredger. The engineer then agreed with Nawan’s complaint but the matter was beyond his power and responsibility. He asked Nawan to forward that complaint to the state. According to Keling:

> There was nothing my father and the people of Sungai Galah could do at that time, except just wait and see. We waited when the dredger headed to our village, and we saw the destruction of our traditional area, which used to be our main source of livelihood!

At the end of the 1950s or in the early 1960s, the people heard rumours that the area of Sungai Galah village was going to be taken over for mining. According to Panjang Long, the villagers started to become panicky at that time. Some of them started to explore the Gungke area (now Tangkai Chermin) as a possible new settlement site. The *penghulu*’ and other elders met the Forest Officers and the officers of the Department of Aborigines, and asked their permission to open a settlement in the area, in case their village was taken over by the mining companies. This was followed by a series of discussions between the villagers, the Department of Aborigines and other authorities. The government finally turned down the proposal to mine the village as they were afraid the *Seng-oi* would give their support to the Communists and join the struggle. According to Panjang Long:

> It was lucky that some of the British Administrators adopted that pre-conceived idea about us, that we would support the Communists if the government took over our village for mining. The British probably did not know the essence of our values. If we have a choice, we would reject all sources of violence without considering who they were. Well, that is what really happened, but it might have been Nyenang’s will! Despite their violence to us, the Communist had indirectly helped us to save our village!

Other than the depression it caused regarding the security of their land, the development of the mining industry in Sungai Galah offered hundreds of job opportunities to the villagers and the people nearby. However, not many of them worked in the dredgers as they found the working conditions very risky and
dangerous, especially in the night shifts. Most of them engaged in outside work. Anjang Makpin's father, Ngah Lesu, had once taken a sub-contract job from a Chinese who had the main contract to clear the jungle and secondary forests which were going to be the operation areas of the dredgers. Ata’ Bek Makar of Perah also engaged in outside work offered by the dredging company. In addition, the camp became the major place for the villagers to become involved in trading. There, they could sell their catch and agricultural products. They also could buy things from the shop in the camp without the need to go to town, which was far away from the village and time consuming.

The people who were not working with the dredging (mining) companies worked with other mines, especially those belonging to Chinese companies which used the palong method. Most of them worked as miners and night guards. The rest of the villagers continued their traditional economic activities such as catching fish, collecting rattan and cutting kachar and lungkut wood. At that time, there was a Chinese who logged in the Gungke area. He cut the logs into sleepers and sold them to the Mai Byeq. The sleepers were used as the base for railway tracks. He then married a Seng-oi woman of the village named Ajaak Apong, and become a dealer in kachar and lungkut wood. Although the price of the kachar wood was only 15 cents, and 25 cents for the lungkut woods, the income from that work was high and more than enough to fulfil a family’s needs.

When the Department of Aborigines was established in 1953, many of the villagers, especially the young men, joined the department. The rest of them joined the Senoi Praq troop, especially in the 1958 intake.

Due to their peaceful life during the Emergency, the people of Sungai Galah managed to achieve much progress. In 1949 or 1950, the penghulu of Sungai Galah, Ngah Lesu, went to the Department of Education in Taiping, asking the officer in charge to provide education facilities for his people. In his early 'proposal', Ngah Lesu wanted a school to be built in Sungai Galah for Seng-oi children. The Department of Education then decided to build the school near the camp because they wanted to include other Malayan citizens who lived in that mining camp. The officer said that these people also had the right to get the same access to education. The dredging company allocated a piece of land nearby the camp for the school. The Seng-oi of Sungai Galah worked together
with residents of the camp, including the father of Datuk Radhi, a former State Executive Committee member (EXCO) of Perak. All parents on both sides were required to donate $7 each, and this collection was then used to buy second-hand furniture and a used plank wall from an old building of a former Chinese school in Tanjung Tualang, and to buy other teaching equipment. The *Seng-oi* of Sungai Galah then agreed to provide a palm roof for the school building since the zinc roof of the old Chinese school was damaged. The villagers and residents of that mining camp worked together to build the school’s building, each group stimulated by the hope of seeing their children achieve development in education, and to change their pattern of life in the future. The school was then named Sekolah Kebangsaan Sungai Galah (meaning, Sungai Galah Primary School).32 The Department of Education provided teachers. A few years after that, the palm roof started to leak and the pupils got wet during the monsoon season. Ngah Lesu and the father of Datuk Radhi met the manager of the dredging company to ask him to replace the school’s palm roof with a zinc roof. The manager agreed. He also urged the people of the Sungai Galah and his workers in the camp to work together in order to achieve their own progress.

The *Seng-oi* of Sungai Galah also made political history when Nawan joined the Independence of Malaya Party (IMP), a multi-racial party formed by Dato’ Onn Jaafar, the founder of the UMNO. Dato’ Onn Jaafar had become dissatisfied with UMNO as a racially based party and had tried to make it multi-racial. He left UMNO in 1951 as its members rejected his proposal to open party membership to non-Malays. He and his close friend, Dato’ Dr. Haji Mohd Eusuff bin Mohd Yusuff, also known as Panglima Bukit Gantang and Dato’ Panglima Kinta, formed the IMP, a new multi-racial-based party (see Haji Abdul Rahman, 1987). The IMP, however, was not popular among Malayan citizens who believed in racially based parties. Since the main races, the Malays, Chinese and Indians, were not interested in a multi-racial party, the IMP had to explore matters with other races, including the minorities and the *Seng-oi*, who had no party to join. Nawan joined the party because of his close contact with Panglima Bukit Gantang, who frequently spoke up for the *Seng-oi* and fought courageously for their welfare (see Eusoff, 1995). Nawan attended a number of party meetings, mostly held in Ipoh. Invitation letters for meetings continued to arrive even after his death in 1962. According to Itam Wali, he was in the primary school at that time and used to reply to those letters and invitations on behalf of his father. While Nawan was still alive, a number of committee members of the
IMP visited Sungai Galah a few times, and tried to attract other villagers to join the party. Nawan’s moves to become involved directly in the mainstream political system, however, were not followed by other villagers as most of them still lacked political consciousness at that time. According to Anjang Makpin:

Nawan’s ‘political blood’ is now flowing in his son’s body, Itam Wali, who became a Senator of the Upper House representing the Seng-oi of Malaysia for the terms 1990-1993 and 1993-1996.

In contrast to the situation in Perah, therefore, the people of Sungai Galah were generally lucky to live in peace during the Emergency period. During this time, security reasons were a major concern in the British Military Administration (BMA), which abandoned its plan to mine the area for fear such action would make the Seng-oi angry and turn their support to the Communists. This situation allowed the people to maintain their rights over their remaining land. However, their rights over this land were limited to their village, ie. their residential area and rubber fields. The people had no rights to other traditional land in the Gumpey Luas because the government had converted the entire territory into State Land, which was subjected to state interests, especially mining. In other words, although the people of Sungai Galah largely escaped the ideological struggle in the Emergency period, they still lost land rights as they witnessed the loss of their traditional land throughout the Gumpey Luas due to mining activities.

Conclusion

During these two eras, the Seng-oi were trapped ‘in-between’ the struggles of two groups. At first, they were caught between the struggle of two colonial powers, the Japanese and the British, both of whom aimed to gain control over the country’s economic resources. When the British were defeated, the British cooperated with the MCP to form an alliance called MPAJA. Although these two groups had different goals, they formed an alliance in desperation to chase out another powerful colonial power, the Japanese. The Seng-oi in Perah and Sungai Galah were in a dilemma as they were forced to support the MPAJA against the Japanese, and at the same time, the Japanese forced them to act against the MPAJA. As a result, three Seng-oi of Sungai Galah were murdered by Chinese Communist members as they were suspected of being Japanese spies. This incident forced the people to take refuge in Kelubi.
When the Japanese surrendered, the MPAJA also collapsed due to the differences in ideological interests between the British and the MCP Chinese. The Seng-oi were once again trapped in another struggle, this time between two ideologies. The British tried to maintain a democratic system, while the MCP Chinese were struggling to introduce the Communist system and to establish a republican state. Both sides sought Seng-oi support. As a result, the people of Perah were evacuated from their village for about one and a half decades and many innocent Seng-oi of Sungai Galah, Denak and Kelubi were murdered by the guerillas. Finally, the Seng-oi had to take sides and support the dominant government.

These two struggles had a great impact on indigenous land rights as the Seng-oi were denied access to their land and other traditional areas. The Seng-oi could not work, maintain or develop their land and villages properly as they were evacuated or took refuge in other areas in order to save their lives. These conditions can be seen as a form of alienation. In addition to an alienation from land rights, these crises also alienated the Seng-oi from other rights, such as the right to live in peace, to gain individual and communal security, to establish social, economic and political relationships with outsiders, and to live in an integrated community. As a result, the people who were trapped, faced deep psychological problems and became timid, depressed, lacking in self confidence, and alienated from the outside world. Another great impact on Seng-oi life related to their non-violent or non-aggressive values. Their involvement in the armed forces eroded these values when they became aggressive in fighting the Communist guerillas.

These crises (World War II and The Malayan Emergency) can also be seen as turning points in the Seng-oi way of life, especially regarding land holding and its maintenance and between traditional and the emerging values. Before these crises, the Seng-oi had established dengri'. These dengri' were maintained by the entire Seng-oi people through constant movement. Although land laws were introduced prior to the Japanese war, the Seng-oi still continued to move. When these crises arose, however, these movements were stopped for security reasons. During these periods, most Seng-oi movements occurred due to government orders. Other moves were unofficial and aimed to maintain family networks. Therefore, these crises appeared to have had unintended consequences causing the Seng-oi to 'abandon' their traditional way of maintaining their dengri'.

210
In one incident, a family, who had just moved to Perah from Temboh Bekett, took a Parit-Beruas bus intending to get off at Nordin Bridge, where the junction to Perah was. When they reached the junction, all of them got down from the bus except one of their teenage daughters who fell asleep in the bus. When the bus had left to continue its journey to Beruas, the mother realised that her daughter was missing. The teenage girl only woke up when the bus stopped at the Beruas bus station, and she found all her family was not there. Since that was the first time she had been to Beruas, she did not know how to get back to Perah. She cried at the bus station. An Indian family took her to their home on a nearby rubber estate and then adopted her. When she grew old enough, she married an Indian from that estate. She and her family came back to Perah after the war and now live as Seng-oi.

At home, her family tried to search for her for months but they could not track her. “Her family reported her missing to the Parit Police Station but the personnel in charge did not take them seriously, probably because they were Seng-oi,” said Andak Jameah. Her family became more anxious when they heard news about the war from the people of Panchor. The parents increased their search for their lovely daughter but finally had to stop when the war broke.

Some sources indicate that this teenage girl was misplaced from her family in Batu Gajah town while they were on a rattan-selling trip. The girl, known as Ken Tumpok, had mistaken an Indian for her father, and followed him getting on a bus. The Indian could not return her to her family as they could not communicate with each other due to language differences. She was then adopted by that Indian who lived in an estate located between Beruas and Manong town. Later, she married an Indian from the same estate. She now lives in Perah, and is very old. She refused to give any account about her past. According to Derboh, she would not talk about it, not to me nor to the rest of the people, including her own children.

Fighting occurred in Parit area for only one day. On the evening of the clash, the machine gun fire and bomb blasts continued, but the impact of the blasts was small and there were no more earth vibrations towards the night. Although the cross-fire declined in the evening, the people remained alert. Some of them started to pack their belongings and move into the jungle. They feared the pilots would mistakenly drop bombs on, or fire randomly at, their village. Andak Jameah and her daughters, Uda, Ken Enchom and Ken Ajemi could not sleep that night as they were afraid the Japanese might come to attack them in the darkness. The villagers were still frightened and depressed the day after the clash. They were on stand-by to evacuate their homes at any time if the Japanese army come into their village. However, that day ended without any threats from the new colonial power.

Two days after the clash, Long Apon together with his father, Ngah Pok, and two young men of Perah went down to Nordin Bridge (now called Kem) to witness the impact of the war. On the way, they were joined by another young man from Panchor. After about three hours’ walk, they reached the site of the battle. They found dead bodies scattered all over the place, mostly Mai Byeq with some Punjabis and Malays. Long Apon felt dizzy and vomited as he could not stand the smell. They tried to have a look at the situation at Tanjung Belanja, which was located at the other side of the river. They saw people in chaos over there, moving fast here and there. However, they could not go across the river because the bridge was damaged. A Malay chap approached them and told about a battle in the area between Kuala Dipang and Kampar town which was bitter and killed thousands of British troops. While wandering nearby the ruined bridge, they found three unexploded bombs. One of the them had its ‘tails’ planted in the earth while the other two were ‘lying’ on the ground. According to Long Apon, his father tried to lift one of the bombs, which was about the size of a pail. As he said this, Long Apon pointed at a pail he used to store water in his kitchen. His father, however, had not enough energy even to twist the bomb. When the other young men saw Ngah Pok fail to lift the bomb, they wanted to lift it too. It then became a ‘contest’ in which everyone tried to test their strength to lift the bomb. Finally,
Ngah Pok became angry at their careless behaviour. He feared that if they knocked the cap, the bomb would explode and all of them would die there.

They then went into a ruined bungalow near the bridge which formerly belonged to a Mai Byeq. There was a piano in the living room, and for the first time Long Apon and his fellow Seng-oi had the opportunity to play that musical instrument. “Every one wanted to put their fingers on the keyboard, which produced no melody except kling, klong, kling, klong.” Long Apon recalled their humorous experience and was still amused about it. While they were busy with the piano, a few Japanese soldiers approached the bungalow and stared at them through a broken window. Long Apon and his companion did not acknowledge the presence of the Japanese army, but his father did. Ngah Pok then told them to stay put in the bungalow and not to show any strange reaction because he was afraid the soldiers would shoot them. Everyone was panicky and their skin became pale and their bodies started to shake. They feared the Japanese soldiers would punish them for trespassing into the house. The Japanese soldiers, however, did not bother about them playing the piano. The soldiers talked among themselves in loud voices and ‘rough’ tones in the Japanese language, which Long Apon and his ‘companion’ did not understand at all. The Japanese then laughed very loudly and moved away from the bungalow. Soon after the army disappeared, Ngah Pok asked them to leave the place and go back into the village. On the way back, they saw the Japanese army picking up dead bodies and loading them into trucks. Some of them collected cartridge shells and gathered them on the road side. Ngah Pok advised them not to be nervous and to walk fast.

3 Regarding the cruelty of the Japanese, the people of Perah heard from their Malay neighbours that the army would arrest and aggressively hit or punish any persons they suspected of hiding British soldiers or assisting the Communist Chinese. They abused the people, some of whom were innocent, based only on their suspicions. Some Malays had tragic experiences of cruel Japanese interrogations. When the Japanese failed to get information, they would ask their victim to drink water mixed with detergent. They then forced the victim to lie down on the floor. One of their soldier then got on a table and jumped onto the victim’s stomach. The Seng-oi of Perah regarded that kind of treatment as absolutely unacceptable because the Japanese abused their victims without any sense of human rights.

4 Bek Tambun gained this knowledge in briefings during his attachment to the Seng-oi Praq troop (1958-60)

5 Before this era, the people relied on rice as a staple, and tapioca as ‘snack’ food. Andak Jameah was uncomfortable at the beginning when she had tapioca as staple food. Her stomach became full of gas. According to her, it was very embarrassing when people, who were sitting with her, covered their nose (with their palm) to avoid sniffing her smelly farts. According to old norms, it was regarded as improper to fart in public. If one wanted to fart, it was a norm for a person to go away from that crowd. If there was a fart smell in public, it meant that the person had released it unintentionally, and it was not wise for others to cover their nose because it could embarrass that person. If a little boy or girl tried to say anything about that smell, their parents would scold, or even beat or pinch, them. This was important of maintain other people’s pride, and at the same time to preserve harmonious relationships. However, the people had to put this norm aside during the Japanese occupation since everyone had smelly farts and had to release them loudly in order to relieve their windy stomachs. When one person of a group farted, the other members of that group would either close their nose or move a distance away, and gather again when the smell disappeared. The person who farted accepted that ‘new’ norm without any hard feelings. Some men tried to make a melody with their farts while others teased, or made up jokes, over that melody. This became a source of jokes, which helped people to reduce tensions in relation to their relationship with the Chinese MPAJA.
The husband of Andak Jameah, Itam Bit, developed a habit of drinking milk. To support that habit, he had to carry heavy things on all his return journeys to town. From home, he had to carry the rattan all the way to Papan or Siputeh, and on the way back home he had to carry a box of condensed milk. He always asked his wife and his son, Long Dahaman, to help him carry other things he bought from those towns.

In addition, Ateng was a very good dealer. He gave the people who sold rattan to him free rice and dried fish and asked them to cook and have their meal there before they went home. He knew that Perah was far from Cheba’ Bekau and he was afraid that his business partners might be hungry on their way home.

According to Andak Jameah, during the learning time, she broke two tapping knifes (yoj mutong), and her husband was very angry about it.

Regarding political instability, the post-war years between 1945 and 1947 were a challenging period for the British since hundreds of strikes were launched by trade unions and labour movements, led by the MCP (see Nonini, 1992). Due to these strikes, the tin and rubber industries were paralysed. The government put most of their effort into overcoming these industrial actions, and had no time to implement programmes to promote economic growth. This situation caused the prices of all commodities to fluctuate.

This post is also known as Police Aboriginal Guard (PAG).

Similar evacuations occurred in Seng-oi villages elsewhere. According to Carey (1979: 159-169): “Thousands of aborigines were brought out of the jungle and resettled - that is to say, put behind barbed wire, without adequate facilities. Most of the people concerned had been brutally rounded up by the military or the police, put into trucks without any explanation, and transported in long convoys to the various centres of resettlement. Before leaving their village, the aborigines watched the destruction of their houses and the killing of their livestock.”

Meanwhile, the SC members were busy making bamboo stretchers to carry the dead bodies of their Sergeant and the guerrilla. When everything was ready, they began to move out from the village, together with about 30 families of Keramat and Panchor villagers. The SC moved in front, carrying the stretchers on their shoulders, followed by the villagers in the middle, and the JS squad at the rear. They moved to Tanjung Belanja where the trucks would fetch them for the trip to Ipoh. When they reached Nordin Bridge, they had to stop because the bridge was still damaged. They had to go across the Perak river by wooden boat (perahu’). Enchik Pilus hired two perahu’ from Malays of Tanjung Belanja. The first two trips transported the SC, JS personnel, and the dead bodies. All the villagers were left for the next trips.

While waiting their turn to cross the river, the villagers suddenly heard a loud whistle from behind them. Everyone ran and tried to take cover because they thought the whistle came from a Communist, giving orders to his friends to open fire at them. However, no shooting occurred. Another whistle then followed. The people then realised that the whistle was just the call of a Mynah bird (cheb tiung). After they knew the source of the whistle, their fear suddenly changed to humour. Everyone laughed and laughed until the perahu’ arrived to transport them across the river.

Seven Police trucks and one four-wheel-drive vehicle were used in that evacuation. The four-wheel-drive and two trucks transported the armed personnel and the dead bodies, while the other five trucks transported the villagers.

Many humorous stories occurred in the beginning settlement in that bungalow. On one occasion, Long Apon mistakenly switched off the main switch. He could not switch it back on because it was very dark and he could not find the switch board. The rest of the residents thought the Malay woman had purposely switched the lights off to avoid the place being detected by the Communists. The Malay woman then came with a candle in her hand, asking them why they liked to stay in the darkness. Itam Bit replied on behalf of
the residents that they thought that she had switched off the lights for security reasons. Long Apon then admitted his mistake, and the residents were angry at him. The woman, however, just smiled, looking at them and switched the lights on.


15 The Selinsing village is now renamed Kampung Air Hitam but the local people called it Balak (means log) because it was established on a former logging camp site. The village is located about three miles from Perah, and could be regarded as an extension of Perah village.

16 In Kangor, the design of the houses was the same from one house to another. During their early settlement, the people were always confused about their homes and often went into the wrong house by mistake.

17 The *Seng-oi* were denied the right to live in their village. The colonial government tried to apply the same policy of resettlement to them as to the Chinese squatters, but subjected them to unequal treatment. The result of this policy was disastrous. The *Seng-oi*, who were used to living in the cool and healthy climate of a village, could not accept the fact of living behind barbed wire without proper shelter and lack of freedom. The *Seng-oi* also obtained inadequate food as they could not get used to a diet consisting of rice and salt fish, which was provided by the colonial government. In its struggle to gain control against the Communists, the state alienated the *Seng-oi* from their right to liberty. This proved to be a blunder of great magnitude since it caused the death of an estimated 7,000 of the 25,000 resettled *Seng-oi*, who succumbed to heat, disease and mental depression (see Idris, 1983: 60; Nicholas, 1990: 69).

18 This unhealthy situation and unfair treatment by the government was also reported by Carey (1979: 159-169), a former JHEOA Director-General: “Now they suddenly found themselves surrounded by barbed wire, guarded day and night, and without proper shelter. Unlike the Chinese new villages, these little villages hastily established for the aborigines resembled miniature concentration camps, although there was no overt cruelty - just ignorance and folly. Apparently some of the officers organizing this resettlement just did not realize that the aborigine had the same needs for shelter and food as had other human beings. Instead, they appear to have regarded them as wild jungle animals who could survive without further help.”

19 According to Derboh, the *mengrik* looked just like the ‘ultraman’ in Japanese science fiction.

20 The *batak* were said to be cannibals. They came from a ‘Batak Land’ which was believed to be located on the other side of the sea, or *englarg laut*. They came to the *dengri adeh* to capture and eat the *Seng-oi* and the *mengrik*.

21 While in Suak Petai, also known as Piul, Long Dahaman joined the Power Works Department. He worked together with Indian coolies to build roads and other infrastructure. He, however, could not get used to working in the heat of the sun, and left the job one year after that. He then joined the rest of his family and the people of Piul to collect and sell rattan. Meanwhile, the Communist guerillas accumulated in the area around the camp. Because the BMA was short of para-military units to guard the camp, it finally came under the control of the Communists. The guerillas forced the people of Piul to supply food for them. As usual, they threatened to kill any non-cooperative *Seng-oi* or anyone who tried to expose the situation to the authorities. Andak Jameah, Alang Tek and Itam Langsat’s families once again lived under the control of the guerillas. They, however, bore this painful situation for only six or seven months. Alang Tek, who was fed-up with the bad treatment given by the Communist guerillas, finally ignored their threats and reported the matter to the Manong Police station. The BMA, however, had another serious problem in its evacuation programme as there was no place to resettle the people, as well as no plan to establish new camps for the *Seng-oi*. In 1954, the government came to an ad-hoc solution when the people of Piul were invited by the
Director of the Department of Aborigines of Perak Branch, R.C. Corfield, or Tuan Kupil, to go to Ulu Kinta, or Kui Genta, a Seng-oi village located on the outskirts of Ipoh City. There, the people of Piul were asked to cut kachar and lungkut wood and supply the wood to the mining companies around Kinta valley. At that time, the mining companies wanted to increase their operations, which meant opening many more tin mines in the valley. The mining companies wanted to recover their big losses during the war and those due to labour strikes in the post war period. They needed a large amount of kachar and lungkut wood to build the palong in the new mines, and to rebuild those which had been destroyed in the war. Almost all the people in Piul agreed to accept Tuan Kupil’s offer, including Andak Jameah’s family. Only Itam Langsat was not interested in the offer and went back to Tumboh Beket. His son, Bah Derboh, came along with his uncle, Itam Pelanduk, and joined the group going to Kui Genta.

Tuan Kupil sent the people of Piul to Kui Genta and allowed them to live with the Temir, another Seng-oi sub-ethnic group. The Piul people at first settled downhill of the Temir village. However, they always became ill since the place was believed to be inhabited by bad supernatural beings, or penyakit, called kuncha (see Note 1). Tuan Kupil then asked them to move from the area and settle together with the Temir in the village uphill. They worked with the Temir supplying wood to the mining companies, but for less than one year. At the end of 1954, the demand for the wood declined. The Seng-oi of Piul reached a mutual understanding and let the remaining demand for kachar and lungkut be met by the local Temir. Tuan Kupil sent them back to Piul at the end of 1954 or early 1955.

In late 1955, Andak Jameah and her family moved to the Sadang Estate, about three miles away from Piul because her husband (Itam Bit), her son (Long Dahaman) and her cousin (Alang Tek), obtained jobs as coolies to tap the rubber in the estate. They lived in quarters and worked together with Indian coolies. Later, Itam Langsat and his family joined them working in the estate. They worked there for two and a half years. While they were there, Malaya gained its independence from the British on 31 August 1957. However, the glory of the independence day was not celebrated by Andak Jameah’s family, nor by the Indian workers because Sadang Estate was still under threat from the Communist guerillas, and was guarded by the Special Constables most of the time. The glory was also not celebrated by the Seng-oi who lived in the ‘black areas’, the areas which had been declared ‘nests’ of the Communist insurgents, or insurgency areas, such as Temboh Bekett, Denak, Bekau, and other villages. While other Malaysians in towns were busy starting new lives and developing their careers to fulfil the aims of the post-independence era, the Seng-oi in the ‘black areas’, were still struggling to save themselves from the threat of Communist guerillas.

Several months after independence, Andak Jameah got pregnant and gave birth to her last son in mid-1958. Her son was named Anjang Sadang, after the estate where her husband was working. After giving birth to Anjang Sadang, Andak Jameah’s family together with the families of Alang Tek and Itam Langsat retired from the estate and moved back to Gedung Batu. In the same year (1958), Long Dahaman married a girl of Gedung Batu. Soon after that (late 1958) the people of Piul were allowed to go back to their home village, Bekau. The families of Andak Jameah and Itam Langsat decided to join their relatives in Bekau. The idea of moving there was to enlarge the size of the Bekau population in order make them feel more secure living in the village. Alang Tek did not accompany them but remained with his wife’s family in Gedung Batu until a few months later when he decided to rejoin the other families in Bekau. Long Dahaman also remained in Gedung Batu with his new wife’s family. He then joined the Seng-oi Praq troop in the late-1958.

Note 1: A kuncha looks like a human being. It sleeps during the day and is active from midnight up to dawn, especially after people go to sleep. During its active time, the kuncha would visit one house every night, and would eat the ruwai of one of its occupants. To avoid this, the people had to abandon or move away from that particular
village. They had to also move in the early part of the night, the time when te *kuncha'* was still inactive (or sleeping). In addition, the people had to move silently and in a small group in order to avoid the *kuncha'* knowing about their movement. This is the main reason they did not move during the day as they wanted to avoid any 'noise'. The people said that any kind of noise, such as a short question about someone's intention of moving, would make the *kuncha'* awake from its sleep. If the *kuncha'* knows about that movement, it will track the people down to their new settlement.

Follow (1990: 101, cf Leary, 1995: 148-152) claimed that PAG were far more useful as guides than as armed auxiliaries.

Ata' Bek Makar returned to Panchor after spending most of his time in Sungai Galah. When his family separated from Alang Tek and Long Apon in Padang Changkat, Ata' Bek Makar went back to Denak. After several months there, a relative in Sungai Galah, Bah Ludaw, asked him to work in the dredger. He went to Sungai Galah in 1952 or 1953. During his early settlement in Sungai Galah, he joined the locals to collect and sell rattan. Then they cut *kachar* and *lungkut* wood and sold it to the mining companies through a Chinese dealer who was married to a local *Seng-oi* girl. Ata' Bek Makar engaged in that work for about two years. He then started working with a dredging company nearby Sungai Galah. He was offered work in the dredger but he refused as he could not stand the night shift. He then asked for outside work. The company acceded to his request and gave him work clearing the areas that were going to be dredged by the dredger. After about six months slashing and cleaning the area to be dredged, he was transferred to the survey unit. He was asked by the head of that unit to carry the compass while the swamp was surveyed. He was then taught how to operate the compass, to identify the angle and to make measurements. By 1957, he had mastered that work, and was asked by the head of his unit to take over the work, as he (the head of the unit) wanted to sleep or to do his own work. He worked in that unit until 1958, and during that time he got married to a local girl of Sungai Galah. He left the job when he knew that the people of Denak, who camped in Sempa' Toug, were allowed to return to their home ground. He then went back to Denak to rejoin his family. Ata' Bek Makar came back to Panchor a few months after the end of the Emergency.

Gemuk explained this to the *Seng-oi* who sold fish to him, as recited by Keling Nawam: "Ayo, itu Yapun sulah mail oo..., kita olang manyak susah, ini Yapun aa... manyak tatak nguna oo..., manyak Cina punya olang sana nigaa aa... lia olang munuh oo..., ini macam aa... kita olang pun mati oo!..." (meaning, "Oh, the Japanese have landed, we are in trouble, the Japanese are cruel, plenty of Chinese in their country have been murdered by them..., this means we will die too...!").

According to a former POASM President, Anthony Williams-Hunt, "In Kampung Sungai Galah of Tanjung Tualang mining companies 'shaved away the forest' leaving a desolate landscape devoid of flora and fauna." (See Williams-Hunt, 1995).

Keling Nawam, his father and a few villagers went to the 'desert' in front of their village to see the clash which was occurring a distance away from their area. "It was just like watching a movie in a theatre," said Keling Nawam. They could see the aeroplanes drop the bombs and then the fires resulting from the explosion. The clash between the two forces moved slowly south and disappeared from their view in the late afternoon of the day of the battle.

At home, some of the people packed their belongings and were thinking of moving away from the village into the jungle. Some of the women and children started crying. They were scared the aeroplanes would mistakenly drop bombs onto their houses. According to Panjang Long, "I wondered which jungle they wanted to hide in since there was no more jungle in the area." Panjang Long just asked his children to stay at home and surrendered his fate to God's will. The villagers were, however, comforted in the evening when the battle passed south, and their area was not affected.

216
Ludart is a kind of ghost, which looked like the Seng-oi: wearing bark-cloth, carrying basket on its back, and holding blowpipe. It will use its blowpipe to catch the menghar.

This area has now has public amenities for the local population. The government has built the Kelubi Primary School, Rural Clinic, Community Hall, football field and badminton courts there.

Panjang Long moved to Tok Kacheed probably in late 1944 or early 1945. He chose the area near the Temboh river because he believed the land was very fertile, as it was an extension of the Lout Chengres area. In addition, the Temboh river was rich with fish. Panjang Long and his group lived there and opened selai in Tok Kacheed area for three paddy seasons (years), two of which were after the Japanese surrender and withdrawal from Malaya.

The pespot was made of a round copper plate with a diameter of about two and a half inches. There was a small hole in the middle of the plate through which a string could be threaded so that it could be worn like a necklace. The plate was printed with the wearer's name, date of birth, race, area code, and a serial number.

In Kelubi, an incident occurred in the 1950s where the Chinese Communists attacked the village at night, killing a woman and injuring a few others. That incident generated anger among the villagers, some of whom were para-military members, and they launched a counter attack the next morning. The counter attack 'team' split into two. One group went into the jungle and agricultural areas and killed all the Chinese who they knew were helping the guerillas, together with a group of four Punjabi men who were spying for the Communists. The other group went to a nearby Chinese town, Bukit Pekan, and opened random fire. Hundreds of Chinese died (see Edo, 1988; Dentan, 1994). They then surrendered to the Kampar Police Station. The Chinese Capitan of Kampar urged the government to execute them all but the BMA backed the action and considered it as part of their rights of surveillance. The British then locked them up in the Kampar Police Station for only a few weeks. After that the BMA asked them to rejoin the para-military squad and continue fighting the Communist guerillas. This incident probably contributed to the peace in Sungai Galah as the guerillas stopped making trouble for the Seng-oi of Kelubi, including their relatives in Sungai Galah.

The school is now located in Kampung Makmur, on the other side of the road from Sungai Galah mining camp.
Chapter Seven

POST-INDEPENDENCE AND POST-EMERGENCY

Introduction

This chapter will discuss village land-development projects of the Post-Emergency era up until 1995, when this research was undertaken. To begin with, I briefly discuss the situation of Seng-oi land rights and describe the initial reoccupation of Perah by its former inhabitants. Then I discuss land and socio-economic developments; first in Perah and then in Sungai Galah and Tangkai Chermin. Political developments in these villages are also considered.

Changes in Land-rights Policy Affecting the Seng-oi

Prior to World War II, the British converted Seng-oi dengri' into various reserves and statuses according to their interests: Forest Reserves, Water Catchment Reserves, Game Reserves, State Land (agricultural areas and mining sites) and Malay Reservations. This conversion brought about a division in the Perah area: one third became part of a Malay Reservation, the rest was in a Forest Reserve. Gumpay Luas was converted to State Land, mainly leased for mining. From then on, the British regarded the Seng-oi in these areas as a trespassers, and prosecuted them as such. The Seng-oi, however, resisted these laws silently by ignoring them, which finally forced the British to recognise their rights and grant them Occupying Permits. This was followed by the amendment of Enactment No. 3 of 1939: An Enactment for the Protection of the Aboriginal Tribes of Perak. In this enactment, provisions six and seven mentioned two categories of Aboriginal land: Aboriginal Areas and Aboriginal Reserves. The provision regarding the Aboriginal Areas was stated as follows:

6(i) The Ruler in State council may by notification in the Gazette declare any area of land to be an Aboriginal Area and may in like manner revoke such declaration wholly or in part and may likewise include in any such Aboriginal Area any land not previously included therein.

(ii) No land within an Aboriginal Area shall be declared to be a Malay Reservation.
(iii) No land within an Aboriginal Area shall be alienated or leased for mining until the alienating authority has consulted the Protector as to the possible effect of the alienation or leasing of such land upon the welfare of any Aborigines within the said Aboriginal Area.

The Aboriginal Reserve provision was as follows:

7(i) The Ruler in State Council may by notification in the Gazette declare any area of land whether within or without any Aboriginal Area to be an Aboriginal Reserve and may in like manner revoke such declaration wholly or in part and may likewise include in any such Aboriginal Reserve any land not previously included therein.

(ii) No land within an Aboriginal Reserve shall be constituted as reserved forest or declared to be a Malay Reservation or alienated or leased for mining nor shall temporary occupation thereof be allowed under any written law for the time being regulating the occupation of land.

This enactment allowed the people of Perah and Sungai Galah to regain rights of access to their *dengri*’, as stated in Provision 8:

8(i) The Resident may grant rights of occupancy of any land not being alienated land or land leased for mining within any Aboriginal Area or Aboriginal Reserve.

(ii) Such rights may be granted to:

(a) any individual Aboriginal or

(b) the members of any family of Aborigines or

(c) the members of any Aboriginal Tribe.

(iii) Such rights may be granted subject to such rent as the Resident may see fit to impose or rent free at the Resident’s discretion.

(iv) Such rights may be granted subject to such conditions as the Resident may see fit to impose.

(v) Such rights shall be deemed not to confer on any person any better title than that of a tenant at will.

The enactment was later adopted as the federal Aboriginal Peoples Ordinance No. 134 of 1954. This was revised by the Malaysian Government in 1974, and gazetted in both English and Malay, becoming The Orang Asli Act, 1954 (Revised 1974), or *Akta Orang Asli 1954 (Disemak 1974)—or simply *Akta 134* (see Appendix D). These changes were ineffectual, however, on account of discretionary provisions which allowed the state to retain absolute control over *Seng-oi* areas.
In 1993, the State Assembly of Perak approved new policy and guidelines regarding the alienation of land: *Dasar dan Garispanduan Pelupusan dan Pembangunan Tanah kepada Orang Asli Negeri Perak Darul Didzuan* (The policy and guidelines of land alienation and its development for the Aborigines of the State of Perak Darul Ridzuan). According to this document, the state would give the *Seng-oi* up to 10 acres of land per family. Another provision, however, requires the *Seng-oi* to surrender all Malay Reservation to the Malays. This policy is still at an early stage of implementation and is subject to discussion between the *Seng-oi* and the state government. For the time being, as far as *Akta 134* is concerned, the Malay Reservation and Forest Reserve within the Perah *dengri*, as well as the mining site of the Sungai Galah area (and now the Forest Reserve of the *dengri* of Tangkai Chermin), belong to the *Seng-oi*.

**Life in the Early Reoccupation in the Village**

After the Emergency, Alang Tek (at that time *penghulu*), Itam Bit, and Itam Langsat together with their families reoccupied Perah, a *dengri* they had the right only to occupy, not own, since the state reserved the right to absolute ownership for itself. When the people arrived, they found that the houses they had left about two decades previously were damaged or had collapsed to the ground. Before they rebuilt the houses, each head of household built a temporary shelter for their own family. They then started cutting wood and palm leaves as basic building material. The men then worked together to build the basic structure of the houses, which they built one-by-one, while the women plaited the palm leaves in order to make the roofs and walls. When the structure of all the houses was finished, each family then worked on their own houses to put in the floors, walls, roofs and steps, and to make the fire place. According to the late Itam Langsat, this work took about one to two weeks, depending on the size of the house. He, together with his wife and two elder sons, took about ten days to build his house since it was big due to the large size of his family. Andak Jameah’s family took about the same time as Itam Langsat to build their wooden-palm house.

After their shelters were occupied, the people continued their work to clear their rubber fields. Although Alang Tek, Itam Bit and Itam Langsat had tapped rubber for one year before they moved back into the village; during that time they did not clear their fields. They worked in the ‘overgrown’ fields to prevent their
activities from being detected by the Communist guerillas. During this period, they just made simple tracks fields to let them move from one rubber tree to another. The fields were full of tiny trees, particularly rubber trees which had grown from fallen seeds. This clearing work also took one to two weeks depending on the size of the field and the amount of man power available in each family.

Soon after that, Ata’ Bek Makar, together with a few families came back to Panchor. They did the same thing as the people of Keramat for the whole first month of their settlement. A semi-plank house which belonged to Mat Melaka was also damaged, and its kitchen, which was built from wood and palm materials, had collapsed to the ground. The front side of the house, which was built of semi-plank and wood, needed to be rebuilt because it was worm-eaten. Generally the people of these two villages spent their early reoccupation period in the village rebuilding their shelters and restoring basic amenities, clearing the river for drinking, bathing and washing, and creating walking tracks, and the like. They then restored their economy by clearing their fields, building their rubber-flatten-machine house, and opening their gardens.

In late 1960, the villagers who had joined the armed forces came back to join their families. Bek Tambun, who had just divorced Ken Abu, went to settle permanently in Panchor. He married his second wife two years later. About the same time, in late 1960, Long Dahaman together with his wife came back to Keramat and stayed in his father’s house for a while. He then spent all his savings of $900 to build a full plank house with a zinc roof. From that amount of money, he spent $500 on building materials from Parit town, another $200 on labour to transport the building materials from the main road into the village, and the balance of $200 on wages for the house-builder. The house-builder took about one and a half months to get the house ready to occupy at the end of that year, and it was the first plank house in the village. Long Dahalam held a house-warming party, and invited all the villagers as an indirect way to restrengthen family ties which had been affected by the long war.

While Long Dahalam was busy with his new house, Long Apon and his father, Ngah Pok, together with their families came back into the village. They built their house on the land which Ngah Pok bought before the war. It was quite far
Plate 7.1: A Dying River
The Perah river receded due to land development up-river. Lack of clean water has led the people to rely on the government’s supply. The ‘dependency syndrome’ is continued.

Plate 7.2: A State Development Project
The route for this high voltage power line has affected tens of acres of the Seng-oi land of Perah. The Seng-oi resettled elsewhere as state interest must come first.
from Alang Tek’s group. According to Long Apon, his father took that decision because he did not want to squat on another’s land. He believed this would become a source of conflict in the future. At first, Long Apon’s family stayed together with his father’s family in one house. Later Long Apon decided to build his own house as he preferred to have privacy for his own family and to give the same privacy to his father’s family. He bought a small piece of land from Bah Biok which was located next to his father’s land. Bah Biok had no problem selling his land because, as a family man, he understood the reason Long Apon wanted to live in a separate house from his father. Long Apon bought that land for $40 as a *perjug kendrat* to Bah Biok for planting 40 rubber trees on that land. Long Apon then cut down about half of the rubber trees in order to build his house. He has lived in that area until today.

**Land and Socio-economic Developments**

**Rubber Planting Projects**

The people of Panchor carried on the work of tapping rubber. The income, however, was not as good as before the war. Of all the villagers, only Ata’ Bek Pakai was not seriously involved in the industry. He carried out other activities such as *selai* in the swamp (wet paddy) area lying on both sides of the Perah river. He also ran a small-scale fish farm. He dug a small pool and farmed the fish which he got from Perah river. He worked on these activities for about four seasons and stopped in 1964.

In the last season Ata’ Bek Pakai planted wet paddy, the people of Panchor heard rumours that their village was going to be affected by the route for high voltage electric cables. The cables would run from the main hydro-electric dam at Batang Padang through their areas to the northern part of Peninsular Malaysia. About two months after they heard the rumours, two officers from the DO office came into their village and told them about the project. The officers then invited the *penghulu*, Tok Mat Melaka, to attend a meeting with the DO to discuss the matter in Parit town. Ata’ Bek Pakai told the officers that his father had died a long time before the Emergency, and at that time he and his brother, Ata’ Bek Makar, were the elders of that village. Due to the death of Tok Mat Melaka, the officers appointed Ata’ Bek Pakai to represent the Panchor villagers at the meeting.
In addition to the Panchor area, many other Gop areas were affected by the project. Most of the Gop areas had been developed by the government with agriculture projects under the Rural Land Development Program. The Gop who owned the land opposed the project as they claimed that those were the only lands they had. If the government took them over, they would become landless, and it was shameful for the Bumiputra, or the ‘sons of the soil’, to live without land. The issue then became political and necessitated a political solution. As most of the Gop did not agree to allow the cable route to be built through their land, the project was delayed for about one year.¹

Ata’ Bek Pakai attended only two meetings, which were both chaired by the DO. In the first meeting, the DO asked Ata’ Bek Pakai his opinion. He told the DO that he and his people had no intention of becoming an obstacle to government projects. Regarding that project in particular, Ata’ Bek Pakai had no objection to it taking place in Panchor on the condition that the government paid compensation to the rubber field owners and allocated some land for them to continue their involvement in the industry. Ata’ Bek Pakai added that they needed to rely on rubber in the future as rattan had become scarce in their area. The DO agreed with these preconditions. He told Ata’ Bek Pakai that he would forward that matter to the JHEOA because the Seng-oi were under that department’s administration.

Ata’ Bek Pakai was invited to attend a second meeting regarding the same matter. At this meeting, the JHEOA Director of the Perak Branch, Mohd Nor Osman, and his officers were invited. The four parties, the DO, the National Electricity Board or Lembaga Lektrik Negara (LLN), the JHEOA and the villagers of Panchor discussed the matter very seriously. At that meeting, the JHEOA Director, who was referred to as Tuan Mat Nor, suggested that the people of Panchor settle in Pos Perah together with the Keramat people. Ata’ Bek Pakai agreed with that suggestion but he still wanted the government to allocate some land for their rubber project. The DO then opened a topographic map to check for any ‘empty’ land around the Perah area which could be allocated to the people of Panchor. On the map, the DO found that there was an empty area of about 300 acres next to the Keramat area. This area was in the forest reserve, and for that reason the DO undertook to resolve the land’s status with the State Forest Officer. Both Ata’ Bek Pakai and the JHEOA officers
agreed with that proposal. Following that agreement, the DO handed over responsibility for the Seng-oi of Panchor to the JHEOA, while he and the other authorities involved in the project continued their negotiations with the Malay land owners.

Tuan Mat Nor then asked Ata’ Bek Pakai to inform all rubber field owners of Panchor of the arrangements and to ask them to count their rubber trees and forward the results to him in order to claim compensation. Ata’ Bek Pakai delivered that news to the villagers. Each of them took days to count their rubber trees. When they were ready one month later, Ata’ Bek Pakai sent the figures to Tuan Mat Nor in Ipoh. Tuan Mat Nor, however, advised them to carry on tapping their rubber and only to stop when the project began and the LLN paid them the compensation. Otherwise, he added, the people would have nothing to eat.

Later, the JHEOA officers came to survey the proposed area for the rubber project. They went together with Ata’ Bek Makar, Bek Tambun, and Pertel. Alang Tek could not come along because he was unwell. When they arrived in the proposed area, the JHEOA found about 100 acres of the area were ex-selai of the Keramat villagers, and that some of them had already been planted with rubber. Alang Tek then explained to the officer that the people did not know the boundary of their permitted area. The Forest Officer had just showed them the area on paper (a map). The people did not know the exact area on the ground. The JHEOA officer accepted the explanation and then reported the matter to Tuan Mat Nor.

Tuan Mat Nor and his officers, one of whom was named Enchik Daud, came again to the village a few months later. This time they had a meeting with the people of Keramat. The main discussion was about the rubber project. Enchik Mad Nor wanted to take that opportunity to develop a bigger project, the benefit of which would include the people of Keramat (Pos Perah). He took that decision for two main reasons. The first was that the people of Panchor would soon become part of the Pos Perah village. It would be unfair to give the project to just half of the people, since the rest had the same right to reap the benefits. According to his proposal, every family should be given six acres of rubber fields. His second reason was that he wanted to use all the money that was
allocated for that project. If he just developed the project for the people of Panchor, each family would still be given six acres of rubber, but he would have to return money to the Treasury because the Panchor people only consisted of 16 families. To return money to the government was regarded as a waste as it would not be easy to get that kind of allocation in the future. Due to this reason, Tuan Mat Nor would rather spend all the money by enlarging the project to include the people of Pos Perah. After all, he believed that some of the people in Pos Perah, especially the young couples, had no land but worked on their parent’s rubber fields.²

This discussion was followed by a discussion of the possibility of resettling the Panchor people into the Perah area. Probably partly stimulated by their gratitude for being included in the rubber project, the people of Perah had no objection to this. There were also the family relationships between the two groups. The people, however, had no empty area within the village to let the people of Panchor build their houses since most of the area was planted with rubber. Alang Tek then agreed to let the Panchor people resettle in their former village area, which was located on the other side of the river, and is now known as Baring.

At the end of 1965, Tuan Mat Nor and his officers came into Panchor. The JHEOA officers told the villagers that the project was about to begin and asked the people to move to Pos Perah area. The JHEOA officers then delivered the compensation to the Panchor villagers on behalf of the DO and LLN.³ After they moved to Baring, they did not bother about what happened in Panchor. From early 1966 they focused their attention on rubber projects. They had a few meetings with the JHEOA about suitable methods to implement the project. The JHEOA just told them that the project would be divided into three phases and would be developed stage-by-stage, with only one phase every year from 1966 to 1968. At first, Tuan Mat Nor proposed that the project should be run by contractors. The people, however, disagreed with this suggestion because they did not trust the contractor’s work. They had observed that although most of the projects developed by contractors were successful, the results were not always optimal. According to Bek Tambun, the contractor would just plant the trees without very much concern about whether the planting method was correct or not, or whether the seeds were taken from a good clone or not, or whether the seeds were damaged or not. He added that the contractor was just concerned
about the profit and not the project, and about getting paid when their work was completed. The situation after that, whether the rubber was grew well or not, was not their business. If this were to happen, the villagers would bear the loss. For this reason, the people decided to run their own project by working together (in Malay, *gotong royong*). In this way, they believed that they could develop their own project properly.

Tuan Mat Nor then appointed Bek Tambun to be the head of the project. He also asked one of his officers to carry out a family survey to ascertain who were to be considered as participants in the project. The finding was that the Perah villagers at that time consisted of 41 families, including a few young couples, and that all of them were automatically eligible. Based on that finding, Tuan Mat Nor, Enchik Daud and Bek Tambun planned the project. According to the earlier proposal, each family would get six acres, which meant two acres in each phase. The first phase involved an area of 82 acres, and appeared to be a trial especially to gauge the implementation costs of the project.

The project started in early 1966, probably in March or April, and was followed by a second and a third phase in 1967 and 1968. In the third phase, Bek Tambun withdrew as a participant because he wanted to give that opportunity to new couples or new comers to Perah to get some land. He, however, still served on the management team. When the felling work started, Long Apon was injured when his lower leg was struck by a chainsaw. He also withdrew from the project. This led Enchik Raja, who took over the supervision of the project from Tuan Mat Nor, and his team to reduce the acreage of the project to 80 acres. As the work progressed, a few more families, one of which was Ngah Pok, withdrew and gave their share in the third phase to their relatives who had just moved into the village or had just got married. Among the newly married were Long Pawong and Akee, and one of the new comers was Mara' Semae. These withdrawals, however, did not affect the progress of the work. The people managed to develop the third phase in well under six months. While the people were busy working in phase three, Alang Tek passed away due to old age. The people stopped working for two weeks to pay their last tributes and to mourn the loss of their elder. When the mourning period was over, they continued working until the third phase was successfully developed. In the same year, Pertel succeeded as the *penghulu* of Perah.
When all the phases were successfully completed in 1968, the JHEOA Director General of Kuala Lumpur, Dr. Iskandar Carey, also known as Tuan Kiri, visited the project. He was very impressed and congratulated the villagers for their tremendous effort in completing the project in such a short period and using less than the budget. According to Bek Tambun, this project then became a model of rural development in the area. The DO of Parit urged the Malays in the Parit District to follow the cooperative model which had been adopted by the people of Perah.

This project provided almost all the people of Perah with income from rubber and indirectly provided a clearer sense of family ownership of land. Each of the families obtained between two and six acres, areas which were then inherited by the younger generation, and have now become the main source of economic independence for these families.

**Rubber Replanting Programme**

When the JHEOA rubber project was completed, the people of Baring had to look for other sources of income while waiting for their rubber to be ready to tap. Some of them took wages to tap rubber belonging to the people of Keramat, while the rest worked outside the village, including in the mining industry. Ata' Bek Makar was not very comfortable living in Baring because the area was small and steep since it was on the slope of a hill. He, together with a few other families, such as Bek Apok, Ken Tumpok and Bek Charak, therefore decided to establish a sub-village known as Ajoinj. A few months after they settled in Ajoinj, at the end 1968, the husband of Andak Jameah, Itam Bet, passed away in Keramat.

Two or three years after the third phase of the JHEOA rubber project was completed, the villagers received more land development news. The JHEOA officer told them that they were entitled to receive replanting aid for the old rubber fields, which had mostly belonged to the Keramat villagers. At that time, the rubber trees in these fields, which were planted before World War II, lacked latex because the trees were more than 25 years old. According to government regulations regarding the development of rubber, trees aged more than 25 years should be replanted and the owners were entitled to receive a government subsidy.
allocated through the RISDA. “Did you ask for the replanting aid?” I asked Pertel. “No, I did not do anything actually. Probably the JHEOA applied for it on behalf of the villagers,” replied Pertel. According to him, Enchik Raja did tell him that their rubber trees were old and should be replanted with new ones. He then told Enchik Raja that the villagers wanted to but they could not. If one person replanted, it would affect the trees in the neighbouring field, especially when he burned his area since the heat from the burning could cause the trees in the next fields to die. So they needed to do it for all the old rubber fields in the area at the same time. The problem was that not all of the owners had enough money to undertake this work. “Enchik Raja promised nothing to us. He might have done it secretly to surprise us,” guessed Pertel. The replanting project, however, was given to a private contractor.

All old rubber field owners, including a few descendants of Mat Melaka such as Ata’ Bek Makar and Bek Tambun, agreed to accept the programme. Soon after that, the contractor came into the village and began to fell the trees. After a few months, the area was ready to be planted. However, the project was then abandoned as the contractor ‘ran away’. Due to this problem, the villagers made an effort to continue the failed project on their own. Some of the villagers began to replant the crop by themselves.

**Housing and Fish Farming Projects**

Time passed very quickly. Ngah Pok passed away a few years after the abandoned replanting project. The rubber in all phases of the JHEOA project could be tapped in the 1980s. In 1982, the Perah people obtained two more projects from the government. The first was housing aid followed by fish farming.

The housing project was principally provided for the poor, but none of the people in Perah village were rich at that time. The JHEOA finally had to select the 16 poorest of the poor families since there was only enough aid for 16 houses. One of the families selected was my adopted family. In this project, the JHEOA did not want to build houses in a crowded area. They wanted to separate the houses to a wider area. According to the original plan, each of the houses must be built on a quarter acre, which would allow the residents to open a garden in the back
yard of the house. Due to this policy, the villagers who obtained the aid cleared their nearest rubber field to build the house. Derboh destroyed his rubber field, which was located in front of Long Apon's house. By that time Long Apon, who had previously separated his house from the rest of the Keramat villagers, had three neighbours: my adopted father's family and the families of my adopted father's sister, who was married to Bek Diah, and his father, Itam Langsat.

In the same year, the people obtained a trial project, fish farming, introduced by the government for rural people. Before the project was implemented, the JHEOA officer told the villagers the work would be heavier than in the rubber project, especially maintenance. The officer advised them to form a bigger group. The people took that advice and formed ten working groups based on extended families, each of which consisted of three of four nuclear families. All the families of Perah were involved in this project. Each group would be given three farm pools except one group which got four because they had five nuclear families in the group. None of these groups, however, were involved in the development work as it was all undertaken by the JHEOA and the Department of Fisheries staff members.

The government built all 31 farms on the swampy area on both sides of the Perah river. They used backhoe machines to do the digging so they could finish the development work faster. They filled the farms with fresh water which they drew from Perah river. Then they released fresh water fish into the farms, mostly carp (Puntius), or ikan lampam. The project was then handed over to the participating groups.

Due to their involvement in many economic activities, the villagers had to divide their working hours. In the morning they went tapping and they did the fish farming in the afternoon. Six months later they sold their first fish, and the income was profitable. The project went on for a few years and was regarded as a successful pioneer project. The JHEOA Director General once again visited the village to inspect the project. According to Long Dahaman, the Director General was very impressed with the achievements of the people of Perah. In his speech, he urged the Seng-oi in other villages to be brave enough to get involved in new economic sectors. He believed that the Seng-oi would achieve a better economic
status if they were able to increase their involvement in profitable economic activities, as had been shown by the people of Perah.

However, in the middle of the 1980s, the fish farming project began to become problematic. The main problem was related to the Perah river which had receded due to other land development projects up river. The water level of the river became lower than the water level in the farms, and the river dried up in the dry season. This meant that there was not enough water to irrigate the farms, which left them without flowing water. The stagnant water in the farms then became too warm, which made the fish die. In 1990 the JHEOA of Central Perak in Sri Iskandar town spent $10,000 to rebuild the irrigation system, but it still failed to improve the project. According to Enchik Abu Othman, the JHEOA officer of Sri Iskandar, the department might be able to spend more money to revive this project but it was not going to work because the main problem was the area’s continuing lack of water resources. There were no big rivers nearby the area which could irrigate the farms. Due to this ecological problem, the project has now been abandoned.11

Rubber Mini-Estate

While the villagers were busy with the fish farms, Pertel fell ill. He went to Gombak Hospital to get further treatment. Since he was unhealthy, Pertel surrendered his position as the penghulu of the village. This position was then taken by his second cousin, Long Dahaman, who obtained his official appointment from the JHEOA on 31 October 1983.

Three years after Long Dahaman became the penghulu, another land development project was brought into the village. This time it was the rubber mini-estate. This project was begun in 1986 and generally operated through privatisation. It was developed by a cooperative company owned by the RISDA. The cooperative took out a bank loan to fund that project and had to repay it through the monthly income from the project. The developer, the RISDA cooperative company, expected to repay the loan within 20 years, and so expected to be finished in the year 2006. In this project, the villagers who participated would get income in the form of a dividend. However, they only got half of the dividend because the other half went towards repayment of the loan.
Plate 7.3: A Trial Project
What a catch! (Reproduced from Nong Pai, 1982: 19). The fish farming project in Perah was seen as the most successful rural development programme ever implemented in the Seng-oi community in Perak.

Plate 7.4: The Failure of a Project
One of the abandoned fish farms in Perah, which failed due to ecological problems. A compromise to accept such an unpromising project appeared to be a form of struggle to maintain land rights.
Plate 7.5: The *Rumah Melati*
One of the government-subsidised houses in Perah. The project has led people to recognise family land ownership.

Plate 7.6: A Rural Development Programme
A rural road built to join Perah and the main road. The people described it as *nunung undi.*
The villagers would get their share based on the size or acreage of their rubber fields which were involved in this project. However, they would only get full profit from the project after the year 2006, 20 years after the project was first implemented. According to the rubber development programme, the rubber should be replanted after 25 years, which means the participants would only have five years to work with full profit in their fields before they were due to be replanted.

Due to the uncertainty of profit, not many people were keen to participate in the project. People like Ata’ Bek Makar were not interested, although his rubber field, which he had opened by himself outside the area affected by an electric cable route, had fallen into disuse due to the failure of the replanting programme. His brother, Ata’ Bek Pakai, and his nephew Bek Tambun took the same decision as they were afraid the project would fail like the previous one. Of all the Perah villagers, only 35 field owners wanted to capitalise on this opportunity and most of these were people of the sub-village Keramat, who had previously been affected by the failure of the replanting programme. One of them was Long Dahaman. According to him, he had enough area to work in the JHEOA project. He planned to hand over another area (not the JHEOA one), which he had inherited from his late father, to his children after they had their own families. However, all his children were still young at that time and not able to manage this land. This area was therefore available for inclusion in the rubber mini-estate, and he agreed to let this old rubber field be included in the project. This would also give him some extra income to supplement his income from the field in the JHEOA project.

Andak Jameah also participated in the project. She had two areas, both of which belonged to her late husband, Itam Bit. Both fields were about six acres in size. Andak Jameah participated in the project because she was old and lacked energy to tap the field by herself. She would rather give the area to be developed by the developer which could bring in some income for her than to abandon the field.

Pertel had a different reason for participating in the project. According to him, he had no choice because he could not find a fairer offer since the replanting project had failed. “If I did not participate in the project, I could have not replanted the fields myself. I never have any money, even to provide a better life
for my family. Then the government would accuse me of abandoning the area which would probably result in the worst I could probably imagine. The government might take back our land, as they have always said on television. That is more threatening to me than getting less income if my land was developed in the mini estate," he explained to me in detail.

As a result of this uncertainty, only 31 smallholders agreed to participate in the mini-estate project, as shown in Table 7.1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names of Small Holders</th>
<th>Number of Areas</th>
<th>Size of Area (Hectares)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Alang Gek</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.8900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.4276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Itam Langsat</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.7082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.8323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Long Dahaman</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.4046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Ngah Hashim</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5807</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Ngah Dolah</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Itam Jerab (F)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.4198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Anjang Medah</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.3152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Panjang Nordin</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Lida (F)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.0117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Ngah (F)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Andak Seranah (F)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Panjang Ari</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Andak Jameah (F)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.9206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Itam Ketoi</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Chu</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.5368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Long (F)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.2140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Norhayati (F)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.6371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Anjang Sadaa</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.7082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Ngah</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Itam</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Indak Hashimah (F)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Alang</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Long Semai</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.8440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Long (F)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Uda Seremah (F)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Busu</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.3205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Chu Timah (F)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Ngah Rasip</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.4046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Alang Petai</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Alan Deman</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Uda (F)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.2747</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>35 plots of land.</strong></td>
<td><strong>38.3712 Hectares.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Research 1995)

Table 7.1: List of Participants in the RISDA Rubber Mini-Estate.
The income from this project was low because the gross income had to be divided with other parties to cover operational costs and repay the loan. The smallholders only obtain the remainder, which is very small, as shown in Table 7.2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names of small holders</th>
<th>Size of land (Hectares)</th>
<th>Gross dividend ($)</th>
<th>Loan repayment ($)</th>
<th>Income ($)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andak Jameah</td>
<td>0.9206</td>
<td>108.55</td>
<td>54.28</td>
<td>54.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Dahaman</td>
<td>0.8093</td>
<td>95.43</td>
<td>47.72</td>
<td>47.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Semai</td>
<td>1.8440</td>
<td>217.43</td>
<td>108.72</td>
<td>108.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Itam Langsat</td>
<td>0.8323</td>
<td>98.14</td>
<td>49.07</td>
<td>49.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.7082</td>
<td>83.51</td>
<td>41.76</td>
<td>41.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alang Gek</td>
<td>1.8900</td>
<td>222.85</td>
<td>111.43</td>
<td>111.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.6086</td>
<td>189.67</td>
<td>94.84</td>
<td>94.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.4276</td>
<td>50.42</td>
<td>25.21</td>
<td>25.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andak Sarenah</td>
<td>1.6187</td>
<td>190.86</td>
<td>95.43</td>
<td>95.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alan Deman</td>
<td>0.5793</td>
<td>68.31</td>
<td>31.16</td>
<td>31.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Itam Rejab</td>
<td>0.4198</td>
<td>49.50</td>
<td>24.75</td>
<td>24.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norhayati</td>
<td>3.6371</td>
<td>428.86</td>
<td>214.43</td>
<td>214.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alang Anam</td>
<td>0.3418</td>
<td>40.30</td>
<td>20.15</td>
<td>20.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Fieldwork 1997.)

Table 7.2: The Dividend Obtained From the RISDA Rubber Mini-Estate of Perah for the Months August and September, 1995.

Table 7.2 shows the income for two months received by ten out of the 31 participants in this project. From this point of view, this project has failed to generate sufficient income for the people. The income they gain from this project has placed them far below the poverty line. According to Malaysian standards, the poverty line has been set at $385 per month, and $170 per month is the line for the hard-core poor. Viewed from these standards, and given that these people are solely reliant on this project, almost all participants belong to the hard-core poor. For example, Alang Gek and Norhayati received the highest income, gaining $231.56 and $214.43 respectively. If this money were divided into monthly incomes, a smaller figure would emerge, i.e. $115.78 and $107.22. This, too, is far below the line of the hard-core poor. Smaller amounts are received by participants who have less land, such as Itam Rejab and Alang Anam, who only earned about $10 per month.

The above illustrates the pattern of income which can be expected by the people within the time framework of this project, i.e. for fifteen years from the time the crop was first harvested in 1990/91 (about five years after the rubber trees were planted) until the year 2006, the expected rate for the loan to be fully repaid.
Plate 7.7: A Rubber Mini-Estate

Another trial project, RISDA Rubber Mini-estate Project, implemented in Perah. The project failed to generate income to smallholders, but doubled productivity for the state. From the Seng-oi point of view, however, it is a compromise, i.e. a struggle over their land rights.

Plate 7.8: The Manau Rattan

Manau rattan were planted in between rubber trees. The JHEOA hopes its harvest will provide some 'consolation' for smallholders to heal their suffering due to lack of income gained from the main project.
Such income forces the people to multiple their economic activities in an attempt to improve their life. The participants might get the full benefit from this project in the year 2007, but only for five years because by the year 2011, these trees will be 25 years old, and will need to be replanted. In addition, the people will not enjoy a full profit because within this period the latex production will decline as the rubber trees near the end of their productive lives, with some even becoming dead trunks. At the end of the day, the people will only gain appreciation from the government for being people who successfully developed the RISDA Rubber Mini Estate.

In terms of its objectives, per se, this rubber mini-estate has been developed as a ‘project’ as part of rural development, despite the fulfilment of other hidden agendas, especially in helping other parties to survive. The banker, who provided the loan for this project, increased his business; the company which won the tender to work on this project, gained some profit, and the most important thing is that the state can gain an increase in rubber production from this mini estate.12

In early 1990, the JHEOA admitted that the mini estate project was not very profitable for the villagers. The government, through its subsidiary, RISDA, then introduced another trial project – a manau rattan cultivation project. The rattan were planted between the rows of rubber trees. The rattan could be harvested 15 to 25 years later, about the time the rubber needed to be replanted. According to Enchik Abu Othman, a JHEOA officer who spoke on behalf of RISDA, the income from the harvest would be divided equally among the mini-estate participants. He hoped that this project would be a relief to the participants, giving them some income to cover their previous loss due to their involvement in the mini estate project.

Other Developments

Apart from land development projects, there were other social programmes implemented in Perah, such as the development of a school and a health centre,13 population registration through the introduction of Identity Cards,14 and infrastructure developments.15 These programmes are significant for Seng-oi land claims. In population registration programmes, for instance, peoples’ names and their addresses were written on the Identity Cards, and the juxtaposition of
these particulars is a recognition of the relationship between the people and their land. The implementation of infrastructure developments indicates similar recognition: the government is aware of the presence of the Seng-oi in a particular area, such as Perah. The problem faced by the Seng-oi in this regard is not that the government does not recognise their existence in a particular area (as always claimed by its officers), but that it does not explicitly acknowledge their rights in its legal and political discourses. These circumstances have forced the Seng-oi to engage in various strategies of struggle. Recently, they joined mainstream politics by establishing branches of UMNO in their villages.

Political Developments

In 1990, the people of Perah moved another step ahead by joining mainstream politics when they established a Perah Branch of UMNO. The establishment of this was seen as another achievement in development, through which the JHEOA encourages the Seng-oi to lobby the state in pursuit of resolutions to their land rights problems. In addition, their involvement was stimulated by the desire to learn about the political world. They took this step after UMNO opened its doors to non-Muslim natives (Bumiputera, Pribumi), including those in Sabah and Serawak, in the late 1980s. Due to this offer, the JHEOA officer encouraged the Seng-oi, including the villagers of Perah, to begin their political careers.

At the first Annual Meeting in 1990, Long Dahaman was appointed as the head of this branch. He was then replaced by Alang Rindang at the second Annual Meeting. Alang Rindang holds the post until today. The present committee members of the UMNO Perah Branch is shown in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positions</th>
<th>Name of Leaders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Branch Leader</td>
<td>Alang Rindang Alang Toi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy</td>
<td>Affendi Itam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Uda Nyanghoi Ngah Sait</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Teh Nela Andak Berahi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Leader</td>
<td>Ngah Duan Uda Meor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women Leader</td>
<td>Rubiah Uda Arus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Research 1995)

Table 7.3: The Committee Members of the UMNO Perah Branch

Alang Rindang was a former member of Commando 69, an elite squad of the Seng-oi Praq troop. He told me that he wanted to live in the village and to
develop his land and, if possible, he would like to help the elders to improve the socio-economic status of the Perah villagers. He left the troop after the Seng-oi Praq was absorbed into the Police Department in 1974. While heading the Perah Branch, he was also a committee member of the Educational Bureau of the Divisional UMNO of Kuala Kangsar. In addition to his aim to learn about the political world, Alang Rindang has a clear political stand. He hopes that through Seng-oi involvement in UMNO, they can resolve most of the development problems of Seng-oi communities, including Perah, from inside the party, which indirectly means the government. He also hopes that the government can give serious attention to the status of Seng-oi land, which is regarded as a source of their pride, as well as a source of their future livelihood. "I hope a political solution will help us to resolve the problem regarding our land so that we can at least gain the same status as a Malay Reservation," said Alang Rindang. He was afraid the young politicians and administrators would just use official regulations in their actions regarding the land status of Perah, and ignore the history of the Seng-oi presence in this area.

**Future Development Projects**

In 1996, the officers of the two government agencies which were involved directly in the Perah development, the JHEOA and the RISDA, promised the villagers that they would implement a rubber replanting programme in the area of the JHEOA projects in 1997. They said that the government had approved the aid for this programme, and the RISDA also had changed their policy regarding rubber development in rural areas. The Seng-oi are now entitled to obtain the aid on the condition that the JHEOA State Director could give assurance that the area belongs to the Seng-oi, either as “an Aboriginal area” or “Aboriginal Reserve”.

For this purpose, the JHEOA and RISDA officers brought the leaders of Perah and leaders of other Seng-oi villages in the Central Perak area, which were also to get replanting aid for 1997, to visit one of the Seng-oi villages, Kampung Erong, where the replanting programme had already been successfully implemented. The JHEOA Officer, Enchik Abu Othman, urged the leaders of Perah and others to follow the model which had been undertaken by the people of Kampung Erong. In this project, the people of Kampung Erong had formed a committee and run all the replanting development by themselves. From this direct involvement in the project, the people of Erong gained a lot of benefits, such as experience in management, planning, implementation and well-planted
fields. They had also saved the government funds which had been allocated for that project.16

One issue of concern was that if the rubber replanting programme were implemented, the government would redistribute the land equally to all the participants. This meant that the people who had a larger area of land had to sacrifice some of this and give it to people who had less land or no land in order to allow equal land distribution. The people once again were unhappy with this proposal, but they seemed to have no choice. If they wanted to obtain government aid for the replanting project, they had to follow the regulation; if they did not want to lose their land, they had to replant the rubber on their own. According to the JHEOA officer, this regulation was approved recently by the State Government of Perak and was going to be implemented in all Seng-oi village in the state. This issue was debated among the people. On one of my visits to Ata’ Bek Pakai’s house, he clearly told me that he disagreed with the new land regulations. “How can I give my land to others. I opened my land by my own energy, and no one helped me. But now the government simply wants to give it to others. How can that be?” argued Ata’ Bek Pakai. Every one in the village seem to share Ata’ Bek Pakai’s view regarding this proposal.

In one of my meetings with Bek Tambun and his two uncles, Ata’ Bek Pakai and Ata’ Bek Makar, they asked my opinion about the matter. I told them that, as I understood from what had been told by the JHEOA officer, the government was not going to take over their land but wanted to redistribute it equally among the villagers. To avoid losing land, I offered them the old fashioned solution. I told them that in order to save their family lands, each extended family had better hand over their large acreage of land to their family members who had no land, including their children, rather than putting all the land under one name. At the time, all the family’s land was ‘registered’ under the head of each extended family. The heads of extended families did give their children land to work, but until one of these heads died, the land was still under their ownership and not their children. The children who were given land to work would say that he or she worked on his or her father’s land. This resulted in an apparent imbalance in land distribution among the villagers. The government perceived only that certain people had a lot of land; some of them up to twenty acres, while the rest of the people had little or no land at all. I advised them to transfer their family’s
land to the head of the nuclear families, either their children or grandchildren. Since such transactions occurred within their own families, they were therefore not going to lose anything. Bek Tambun agreed with me as he realised that he would be performing a positive action in transferring his land. Bek Pakai also managed to smile, displaying his two remaining teeth, as he had a clearer picture about the land transaction and looked a little relieved by the solution. However, I told them to discuss the matter further with the JHEOA as I was not quite sure of the procedures involved in the new land regulations for the Seng-oi. After having a long discussion in that meeting, Bek Tambun and his two uncles finally decided to follow the decision of the majority of the villagers.

Sungai Galah and Tangkai Chermin: Land and Socio-economic Developments

Sungai Galah, whose villagers enjoyed a peaceful life during the emergency, experienced little physical development in comparison to the people of Perah. Most of the development which has taken place relates to improvement, such as becoming involve in the labour market, trading activities and ideas about progressive land development. The discussion of this section will therefore focus on these developments.

Seng-oi Reservation

No major land development projects occurred in Sungai Galah. Almost all the dry area within the village, which came to about 85 acres, was planted with rubber, leaving only the swamp of about 40 acres, and the residential site, which only involved about 10 acres in area. The people had no capital to build a proper irrigation system to dry out the swamp. Due to lack of land, they therefore could not carry out any more permanent agriculture in Sungai Galah. The swampy area remained reliable for traditional fishing activities, although the catch decreased. In addition, the people also fished in the ex-mining pools around the village.

An important development occurred in the 1980s when the government gazetted the whole area of Sungai Galah, including the swamps, as a Seng-oi Reserve or Rezab Orang Asli. This area covered some 130 acres. Sungai Galah is one of the Seng-oi villages which have been gazetted with this land status. In the entire State of Perak, there are 87 areas with Seng-oi villages. Out of this number, only
14, including Sungai Galah, have been gazetted as *Seng-oi* Reserves. Another 17 villages have been approved to be gazetted, while 56 are still on application to be gazetted. This gazettal appears to be a government move to preserve indigenous land rights, allowing the *Seng-oi* to have a securer rights over their land. The reservation laws could help villagers prevent any individuals or groups of outsiders encroaching into the area, unless the state needs it to serve the national interest. In this case, the *Seng-oi* have to surrender the land to the government and are entitled to claim compensation for the loss of their agricultural plants and other possessions, as provided in Section 10 (3 & 4), 11 and 12 of Act No. 134—The Orang Asli Act 1959 (Revised 1974).

**Wage Labourers**

In the mid 1960s, the rubber price fell to around 25 cents per catty. This caused the people to stop tapping and to look for other economic alternatives which could earn a better income. Most of the Sungai Galah villagers, including the women, joined the labour market. One of the economic sectors which offered hundreds of job opportunities was dredge mining. Many dredgers operated around the Sungai Galah area. However, only a few people from Sungai Galah were interested in this sector. People like Keling Nawan and Mni’ Dodi were more interested to work in the *palong* mines, and both of them worked with a Chinese company, Chin Wei Wo, which operated in the foothills of *Gungke’* (now Tangkai Chermin). The rest of the people carried out their traditional fishing and continued their *selai* activities in the Gungke area. The older generations had opened *selai* in this area from the 1950s, when they reoccupied Sungai Galah after the Japanese surrendered. The people continued opening *selai* in this area in the 1960s. However, the people at that time alternated their economic activities between traditional activities and modern activities in the labour market. They worked as wage labourers for the Chinese growers who operated around the Sungai Galah area.

**Tapioca Growers**

After a few years working with the Chinese in tapioca planting, a few people of Sungai Galah started to become involved in the tapioca planting industries themselves. They carried out these activities on their old fields in the Gungke area. According to Anjang Makpin, the villagers’ involvement in this industry
began in the late 1970s. At first, only a few families were involved and planted their crops twice a year. Anjang Makpin was among the pioneers of this activity. In 1980, after about two years in the industry, his father, Ngah Lesu, passed away, and in the same year Anjang Makpin succeeded to the position of penghulu' of the village.

The involvement of the Seng-oi of Sungai Galah in the tapioca industry increased because they were attracted by the profit to be gained. The people turned their former selai into tapioca fields. According to Anjang Makpin, there were a few people who cut down the trees which had overgrown their family's ex-selai. This increased involvement of Seng-oi in the industry caused a mass clearing of the ex-selai in Gungke, which concerned the Department of Forestry. Anjang Makpin had an argument once with the Forest Rangers about the matter. According to Anjang Makpin, that was the first challenge he faced as leader after having been penghulu' for less than a year. Before that argument, the rangers had warned the villagers a few times, and threatened to jail Anjang Makpin for wrong doing. Anjang Makpin agreed to face the consequences, but insisted that the authority must put all the villages who had undertaken the planting, not just him alone, in jail because almost all the villagers of Sungai Galah had been involved in wrong doing. He recalled his suggestion to the rangers:

This would be fair for us because every one reaped the reward for what we had been doing. It was just like what had happened to their neighbours, the families of Mat Arif of Changkat Pinggan, who had all been jailed by the British for the same offence. Do you have enough cells for us, roughly about 600 people?

This reply led to a long argument with the Forest Rangers. In that argument, the Forest Rangers told Anjang Makpin that the Seng-oi had committed an offence by intruding into the Forest Reserve. Anjang Makpin then replied that they had not opened new areas but just worked their old fields which belonged to their great grandparents. This had been allowed by the previous rangers. The rangers countered Anjang Makpin's argument by saying that the previous rangers allowed them to plant food only and not commercial commodities. The rangers added that Anjang Makpin and his people did not plant rice or tapioca for their own domestic consumption but for sale. Anjang Makpin then explained that the Seng-oi, especially the sub-ethnic Semai, did not consume tapioca as routine food like the Temiar. They were rice cultivators and they therefore ate rice as their routine food. However, they could not plant rice on former selai because of the
lack of natural fertiliser. To plant rice, they needed new areas in the Forest Reserve and he was afraid the Department of Forestry would not allow that. For this reason, Anjang Makpin added, they needed to buy rice by selling the tapioca. The rangers were very angry at Anjang Makpin and slandered him to politicise the issue. Anjang Makpin took some time to indicate that his argument had no political motivation but constituted a genuine life problem faced by his people. He explained that the situation in those days required them to use money not only to buy rice but for other things too, such as to buy cloth, machetes, bicycles, and plank and zinc roofs to build their houses. They had no more jungle to collect building materials as it had been affected by the mining industry. The people needed money in order to survive in the present trading world.

Finally the Forest Rangers accepted Anjang Makpin's explanation and allowed the people to continue the activity with a few verbal preconditions. The rangers did not allow the people to lease the area to non-Seng-oi growers, especially the Chinese. The rangers also advised the Seng-oi not to establish business contacts with the Chinese as they (the rangers) were afraid the Chinese would cheat the Seng-oi. Anjang Makpin agreed to the first condition but disagreed with the second. He told the rangers that they had to sell tapioca to the Chinese because there were no Seng-oi or Malay around the area who had the lorry and factory necessary to transport and process the commodity. He added that the Malay also sold their tapioca to the Chinese. The Forest Rangers accepted that explanation and asked the people not to encroach on any other area in the Forest Reserve.

After this argument, Anjang Makpin continued his father's effort to apply for an area in order to establish a new settlement with more land to work. This effort had been begun by his father in the 1960s. However, his father had just presented his application verbally to the Perak Branch of the JHEOA. The JHEOA Director of the Perak Branch at that time, Tuan Kupil and later Tuan Mat Nor, also gave verbal permission to his father to open selai in the area. According to Anjang Makpin, Tuan Mat Nor urged his father not to tell the Forest Rangers that he (Tuan Mat Nor) had given them permission to open the selai in the area. Tuan Mat Nor was afraid that he would quarrel with the Forest Officer regarding this since it would be complicated by policy and working regulations. "Nanti saya kena buang kerja," (meaning, "I would be fired,") Tuan Mat Nor told Ngah Lesu, as related by Anjang Makpin.
Ngah Lesu later obtained another verbal permission from a Forest Ranger who was newly transferred to that district, but the permission was limited to the area that the people had been working. The ranger did not allow Ngah Lesu to expand activity further into the Forest Reserve. After getting this permission, Ngah Lesu discontinued his efforts to expand the *selai*. The villagers only used the area to plant tapioca because it was no longer suitable for rice. In addition, the population of Sungai Galah at that time was small, and most of the villagers were engaged in the labour market. There was therefore no urgent need for land.

In the early 1980s, the price of tapioca fell drastically due to oversupply. Many Chinese growers operated mass planting industries and monopolised the supply. Small scale growers, like the people of Sungai Galah and their Malay neighbours, suffered a great loss. This was then followed by the collapse of the mining industries. Towards the middle of this decade, all dredgers and *palong* mines were closed, leaving thousands of people jobless. The former mining workers, especially the Malay, turned to fishing as a temporary economic activity. The people of Sungai Galah turned to rubber, but they did not have enough fields to work. At that time the population of Sungai Galah numbered more than 600. This time the need for land became urgent as they wanted to work to support their families. People wanted to shift back to permanent agriculture because it was more secure in the long term than short term crops like tapioca or vegetables. At the same time palm oil was seen as a promising crop which could bring a better income for the growers. In the early 1980s, the price of oil palm was high, about $400 per ton. Many palm oil growers at that time gained a good income from selling the crop, and the people of Sungai Galah were impressed by this.

**Move to Tangkai Chermin**

Due to the urgent need for land, the people decided to move to Tangkai Chermin and to plant the area with oil palms. This led Anjang Makpin to see the JHEOA Director of Perak Branch, Tuan Haji Mat Khamis. In his verbal application, he told the Director that they had three major problems. The first was that the people lacked land to work, their rubber fields in Sungai Galah were limited and not enough to create work for all the villagers. They also could not work as labourers since the tin and tapioca industries had collapsed. Secondly, the people lacked land to build their houses; Panjang Long sacrificed his rubber fields to allow newly married couples to build their houses. Thirdly, the Sungai Galah
village area constantly flooded because the area had become lower than the sand fields around the village left by the dredger. When it rained, water flowed into the village and become stagnant there. Sometimes it took days to dry because there was no drainage system. Tuan Mat Khamis understood the problems, and he advised Anjang Makpin to form a committee to come up with a comprehensive written proposal. He then told the penghulu' that the situation regarding the area for which the Seng-oi were applying was complicated but he did not mention what the problem was. Anjang Makpin presumed that the problem had to do with the Forest Reserve.

The people of Sungai Galah formed the JKKK and had regular meetings. The villagers, including those who worked and lived outside the village, worked together in preparing the proposal. Eventually, they managed to come up with a comprehensive paper explaining their plan to start a new settlement in the Tangkai Chermin area. In the paper, the JKKK asked for land equivalent in area to their former selai, which was about 1,200 acres. They also stated that they wanted to establish a permanent, modern settlement in the proposed area, and to develop the area commercially with an oil palm estate, a potential and profitable crop at that time. Anjang Makpin and the committee members of the JKKK submitted the paper to the Perak Branch of the JHEOA. About two years after that, Tuan Haji Mat Khamis allowed them to move to Tangkai Chermin.

I checked the matter with the Perak Branch of JHEOA, and found that the real problem mentioned by Tuan Haji Mat Khamis to Anjang Makpin did not relate to the Forest Reserve but arose from two other issues. The first concerned the movement from one district to another. The people of Sungai Galah wanted to move from the Central Perak District, where Sungai Galah was located, into the Kinta District, where Tangkai Chermin was. This resulted in a change in JHEOA administration, which meant the files of this village had to be transferred from the Central Perak office of the Sri Iskandar new town to the Kinta office of the Batu Gajah town. This took time and had the potential for loss of some of the documents. However, this was considered a minor internal problem. The JHEOA faced a bigger and more serious problem than this, which related to an application from the PKPNP for the same area as the people of Sungai Galah had applied for. After about two years considering the land application from the
Seng-oi of Tangkai Chermin, the Perak State Government finally approved an area of 880 acres for the Seng-oi.22

The government sent the District Settlement Planning Officer to visit the village to make a feasibility study about the structure of the village. The officer, Enchik Abdullah Kassim, came into the village on 13 and 14 June 1989 to study the area and to give a recommendation to the government, particularly the JHEOA and the District Officer, on how to establish a well-planned village. The proposal was to make Tangkai Chermin a model of a structured traditional village.

The JKKK committee members continued their meetings in Tangkai Chermin. One of the agenda items was to try to obtain some financial assistance from the JHEOA to build a community hall. However, this was not fulfilled because the department had no allocation for such a project that year. The people then took up a collection in order to build the community hall because it was important as they needed it to hold meetings. When the community hall was built, the people invited the former Seng-oi Senator, YB Hasan Nam, to inaugurate the building. This building provided them with a bigger space for their meetings. The JKKK held its regular meeting every three months, and urgent meetings when needed. Most of the meetings discussed the proposal to develop the land, and to find ways to improve their new village. At one of the meetings attended by all the villagers, dated 3 January 1987, members of the community agreed to assign committee members to be in charge of the blocks, each of which consisted of four or five lots, in the area allocated for housing and fruits orchard or dusut. One committee member was appointed per block, and acted as leader of the four or five families who owned the lots in these blocks. Leaders were responsible for ensuring that the lot owners under their supervision cleared their dusut area and planted it properly with fruits. The same meeting proposed that the secretary of the committee, Bek Lin, write a letter to the JHEOA, asking this department to measure the area of the village. This areal plan was then used in their application for this land, which was directed to the state government via the JHEOA.23

In the mean time, The JHEOA provided the people with other short term aids such as fertiliser, herbicide and pesticide, and fruit saplings to allow them to start the dusut project. In 1989, the JHEOA approved another allocation of $20,000 to build an internal road in the village. In early 1990, the village was given access
Plate 7.9: The Chenan Gungke
A view of the Chenan Gungke (now Tangkai Chermin), a controversial Forest Reserve. The people had no choice but to move into this area to make a better living.

Plate 7.10: View of the Surrounding Area
A view from the Tangkai Chermin area. Although mining pools surround the village, the people are still waiting for the government’s water supply. Water from these pools is unsafe to use as it is contaminated by all kind of chemicals and other wastes.
to electricity supplied by the Tenaga National Berhad. Another development project, a kindergarten, was carried out as the joint programme between the JHEOA and the Department of Community Development (in Malay, Jabatan Perpaduan Negara dan Kemajuan Masyarakat or KEMAS.) The JHEOA built a brick building as its venue, while its programme is run by KEMAS staff members.

**Rubber Replanting Project**

About one year after the people moved to Tangkai Chermin, the government approved the RISDA rubber replanting aid to replant their rubber in Sungai Galah. All the work was carried out by contract, and started with felling the trees followed by planting and maintenance. At the same time, the JHEOA conducted a rubber planting project in the swamp area in the Sungai Galah Seng-oi Reserve, which was about 40 acres in area. This project was divided among the Tangkai Chermin population who had no land, while the RISDA replanting project applied to the previous owners. However, the JHEOA project faced a problem when most of the newly planted rubber died due to the lack of a proper irrigation system. Two or three years after that, the JHEOA allocated additional funding for an irrigation system, and followed this by replanting with new seeds. Trees in both projects are now ready to tap.

At the time I conducted fieldwork in the village, only a few people were working in the fields as they alternated between other work such as fishing and waged labour. They could not concentrate on rubber because the income from rubber tapping was not sufficient as the price was not stable. In addition, the fields they owned were small. The price was high in the early 1990s but at that time the trees were still young. By 1995 the trees were ready to tap, and the price of rubber was between $1.20 and $1.80 per kilogram, which was considered good. Each working day, they managed to get up to 10 kilograms, but the RISDA staff members advised them not to tap each tree every day but to tap them alternately in order to make the trees last for at least 25 years. The RISDA also advised them to divide their area into two and work in each area for one week alternately. Anjang Makpin told me that he inherited his father’s field, which was only three acres. He then divided his area into two, which meant each day he only had one and a half acres to tap. This area yielded less then ten kilograms per day, and the income was not enough to feed his family. He therefore worked as a guard.
which could provide a better income. In addition, he was not well and unable to
do heavy jobs like tapping. “The government might accuse me of not working in
my rubber fields but the income is just not worth it. I also have a responsibility
to feed my family and the main means now is money. Since working as a guard
can bring a higher income, I now work as a guard and have left our fields for a
while. However, this does not mean I do not want that land,” said Anjang
Makpin. He also told me that sometimes his family members tapped the rubber,
but for a short while only. They will stop tapping when they get a job with better
pay.

Political Development
According to Bek Lin, politics is not a new thing for the people of Tangkai
Chermin. They have been involved in politics since the old days, but most of this
involvement was indirect. The people in the old days used to campaign for the
Parti Perikatan in elections and exercised their responsibility by voting in every
election. This effort is continued by the people today, who are involved in
helping the Barisan Nasional party in elections. Direct involvement was
minimal. Long Tanjung became a member of the IMP in the 1950s, and now his
grandson has become a senator, and has represented the Seng-oi in parliament for
the terms 1990 to 1993 and 1993 to 1996.

When the Seng-oi moved to Tangkai Chermin, they were encouraged to become
more directly involved in politics by opening an UMNO branch. The people
made this effort and opened the UNMO Tangkai Chermin Branch of Kampar
Division in 1991. In its first three year term, the Tangkai Chermin Branch was
run by a Sponsoring Committee headed by a Malay named Zainal Abidin; Bek
Lin was the deputy. During this time, the people who had become members of
the party learned how to run it. Three years after that, the branch held its second
annual meeting. However, none of its members were able to head the
organisation, and they agreed to maintain the standing committee for another
term. According to Bek Lin, since most of the members are still in the learning
process, they have not yet found any one who has sufficient political charisma to
be able to lead the branch. He hopes by next term there will be members with
the political ability to become the leader of the branch.
I asked the reason for people’s involvement in politics. It appears that they think it is timely to participate in the arena together with other Malaysians. They have learnt that other Malaysians, especially the Malay, have gained development projects through political channels. After realising this trend, the people decided to join mainstream politics, especially to join the government party, with the hope that they could gain more physical development in order to achieve their aim of making their new village a model structured traditional village. In politics, they could also deal directly with the head of the government, and they could avoid bureaucratic red tape. According to Bek Lin:

> It doesn’t mean we do not trust other agencies, but we understand that these agencies also have their own constraints, priorities and favouritism in their administration. These obstacles would lead these agencies to pay less attention to our affairs. Sometimes these agencies took months just to sign the endorsement of our letter which we sent to the head of the state via them.

He added that their involvement in UMNO had given many opportunities to voice the matters which occurred in their branch. This means their village can speak directly to the head of the state in the monthly or annual meetings, about such things as social and physical problems including disruptions by illegal immigrants, ecological destruction, and rain and land erosion, applications for development projects, and other aspirations of the community. “This could be a new hope of a development channel for the future of our community life,” said Bek Lin expressing his optimistic view to me.

**Project Proposal**

The JKKK suggested a well-structured proposal for the physical layout of the village. They also proposed systematic and fair land distribution. According to the plan, all families in the village, including those who work and live outside the village, are entitled to their share of land in the village. The committee carried out a population survey in 1990 and identified 118 families. Each family was given two acres of land for housing and *dusut*, and each family was required to build their house on their own land. The idea of fruit tree planting was to allow people to get enough fruit supplies in the future and to become a healthy society. They could also sell any surplus to supplement the income from their main project. This plan was based on a government recommendation, a model called 1:2:4 or 1:2:6. In this model, the people would be given one acre of land for housing and vegetable gardens, two acres for *dusut*, and another four or six acres
for the main agricultural project. However, the people of Tangkai Chermin did not have enough land to follow this model strictly, so it was reduced to two acres for housing, vegetable garden and dusut instead of three acres. According to Senator Itam Wali, the model was good but the people were likely to face a lack of housing area in future because there would be no more land for this purpose. As a matter of fact, this problem has already started to appear and the people have had to reduce their dusut area in order to build houses for their newly married children. These new couples were not included in the early planning, and for the time being they are squatting on their parents' land. If the family is large and most of them decide to live in the village, this kind of family might have no fruit orchard in the future. However, Senator Itam Wali thought many more people would eventually take part in the employment sector outside the village in order to avoid under-employment.

Other than the area for housing and dusut, each family will also be given access to another six acres of land in the main project area, which is going to be developed into an oil palm plantation. However, the people will not be given the land in this main project initially, but will receive the profit from their share. According to the plan, the area will be developed using a privatisation concept. The JKKK of Tangkai Chermin will cooperate with a private company that is able to provide the capital for the project development cost. This project capital will include the cost of converting the land from a Seng-oi area to titled agriculture land. The cost of this conversion would be for measuring, planting the boundary pillars, and the fees for the land premium. This expenditure would be regarded as an overhead cost and its repayment would be included in the monthly loan repayments. In general, the profit from this project would be divided into three parts; one share for the loan repayment, one share for the developer, and one for the people. The share for the people, however, would have the annual land tax payment deducted. After these deductions only the balance would be returned to the land owners. When the loan for this project is repaid, the developer will pull out of the cooperation and hand back the rights over this land to the people.

Senator Itam Wali hopes the people will be patient with the small income they get during the initial period. According to him, the most important thing is the result of this project: after 15 or 20 years, when they have no more loan to repay,
each family in Tangkai Chermin will be able to obtain agricultural land with a title. With this method, the senator and the JKKK hope to provide the people with secure possession of the land, and prevent them suffering a great loss if their land is taken over in national interests.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the pattern of land use and the transition in land ownership in both villages in the Post-Independence (Tangkai Chermin) and Post Emergency (Perah) periods. When the people returned to their villages, in neither case did they consider their village as a communal area as they had in the precolonial period. The people perceived their villages as divided into sub-areas, each owned by individual families. The ownership of individual areas was clearly shown when families went back to clear and work on their own land, and acknowledged other people’s areas. This transition was recognised by the state through its land development projects, either rubber planting or fish farms, which were undertaken in Perah. In these projects, the state distributed the land equally to individual families and not to the community as a whole. This individualistic attitude is also reflected in the pattern of housing, where people chose to build their house on their own or family land. This contrasts with the old practice where houses were built side-by-side on a communal area. In other words, Seng-oi involvement in the cash crop economy, as well as their acceptance of agricultural-oriented projects introduced by the government, has contributed to the transition in their values and attitude towards land. They began to value land as an economic means and become committed to defending their possession.

These changes in ideas about land ownership became clearer in Tangkai Chermin where its people emphasised family ownership in their planning for land distribution among the community, both for housing and dusut and for the main agricultural projects. Senator Itam Wali illustrate this new concept of land holding when he stated that he wanted the Seng-oi to own individual land titles in the future. In other words, the Seng-oi in the 20th century, especially among the mai bareh, have adopted a new concept of land rights which emphasises individual family ownership rather than communal ownership.

---

1 This account was told to me by Ata’ Bek Pakai and his nephew, Bek Tambun.
This information is based on Bek Tambun’s memories, which recalled his conversation with Tuan Mat Nor in 1966 regarding the rubber project in the Perah area.

Bek Tambun received $5,000 for his father’s field. Ata’ Bek Makar also got about that amount for his father’s fields. All the 16 families of Panchor then moved to Baring. Bek Tambun spent about $1,500 of the compensation building his house, and divided the balance between his brothers, Itam and Aham, and his sisters, most of whom lived outside Perah village. Ata’ Bek Pakai divided the compensation among his brothers and sisters, including Ata’ Bek Makar, and each got about $1,200. Ata’ Bek Makar later spent a quarter of his share buying building material for his semi-plank house in Ajonj.

In the cooperative effort, the workers were just given lunch. The only requirement was that all the families who participated were required to provide at least one member of their family to work in the project. The other members of the family could carry on their normal work as they had the responsibility to feed their families. Although there was no pay for the work, the support for this project was tremendous. However, most of the workers were women as their husbands were working elsewhere in order to feed their families. Their husbands would turn up for heavy work like felling the trees, cutting the trunks and burning the area. Other small but time consuming tasks like cutting the branches of the trees, clearing the area of tiny trees was done by women. In the planting work, the men dug the holes and transported the seeds, while the women put the seeds and fertiliser in the holes and recovered them. Among the mostly ‘young’ workers, there was only one old woman known as Amo’ Kening Bek Chreq. Bek Tambun asked her to rest at home and let her ‘young’ family members do the job.

When the first phase was completed, Bek Tambun calculated the costs they had incurred. He was helped by his nephew, Long Pawong, in making the accounts and recording them. They took about one month to prepare the accounts and then handed them to Tuan Mat Nor. One month later, Tuan Mat Nor came into the village and informed Bek Tambun that they had saved a lot of money in the first phase. On that visit he also told Bek Tambun that he would hand over the project’s supervision to his deputy, Raja Shaharuddin, also known as Enchik Raja, who would be assisted by two other officers, Enchik Daud and Enchik Abas.

One week after that, Enchik Raja and his troop came and continued the planning for the second phase. Due to the economies of expenditure in phase one, Bek Tambun suggested that the workers should be paid a small wage. He also suggested that the tough and most risky stages of the work, such as clearing the jungle and felling the trees, burning the felled trees, making the terraces, and planting should be carried out by contractors. While for the minor work, family workers should be given some pay as wages for their labour. Bek Tambun suggested this because he admitted that the people had to carry two responsibilities at once: to develop their rubber project and at the same time to maintain their families. He believed that the people would be attracted to work in the project if they could get some money to feed their family at home. They could indirectly fulfil these two goals at once. He added that this would help complete the project faster because many committed workers would be involved in the programme. Enchik Raja agreed with this suggestion, but he had to get official endorsement from his Director, Tuan Mat Nor.

Soon after that, Enchik Raja came to the village and brought the good news that the Director, Tuan Mat Nor, had agreed with their proposal. He approved a sum $120.00 per acre for slashing and felling, $20.00 per acre for burning, $2.00 per chain for terracing and lining, $0.40 or empat kupang per tree for planting, $28 per acre for maintenance work, and a minimum pay of $3.00 per eight hours work or one kong for other minor works. According to Long Pawong, that amount was considered high at that time as they would get the same amount if they worked outside. He added that one of his relatives who had just joined the JHEOA medical staff also received a salary of $90.00 per month, which amounted to $3.00 per day. The offer was considered sufficient to support their families because at that time rice could be purchased at $1.40 per gantang.
They started the second phase in early 1967. In this phase, a newly married couple was included as participants. The area of this phase was therefore increased by two acres to 84 acres. This time most of the villagers, including male workers, were involved in the work. Each family formed a working group and engaged in one sector of work in the project sites. This meant that altogether there were about 30 working groups. They could complete the tough parts of the first stage of work, especially felling the trees, faster than before as some of them were using a chainsaw. They completed the slashing and felling work in about two months. After that, they abandoned the area for a month to let the fallen trees dry naturally in the sun. When they were dry, the people continued their work by carrying out the main burning, followed by a second burning (or perun). In perun, however, the people faced some difficulty due to rain which resulted in the first burning not covering the whole area. They continued working at the perun for about one month. Each day one group of workers managed to cover an area of only four to six acres. For this work, the people were paid on a contract basis the sum of $20.00 per acre. This was then followed by terracing and lining, which also took more than one month to complete because the people just used diggers or cangkul to do the job. However, due to their hard working spirit, and stimulated by the desire to get more money for the work, the area of 84 acres was cleared and ready for further planting in just four months. The people then took less than two weeks to complete the planting. For this work, they were also paid on a contract basis. They got 20 cents or dua kupang for digging each hole, and another dua kupang for planting a tree. In one day, each group managed to plant up to one acre or 120 rubber seeds, and the income for that day was around $48.00 per group.

In this phase, the management was quite complicated as it involved keeping accounts. Due to this complication, Bek Tambun appointed Long Pawong to help him with the accounting. In addition, the father of Long Pawong, Ngah Dollah, started a sundry shop in the village. This contributed to simplifying Bek Tambun's job. He asked workers to buy their basic goods from this shop on credit, but not exceeding $40.00 per month. Their debts would be then deducted from their monthly pay so the workers would get only the balance of their monthly income. While working in phase two, Enchik Raja asked some of the workers to do maintenance work for phase one.

According to Enchik Raja, the people still saved on the project expenditure for the development of the second phase even though it involved payments to the workers. They then continued the third phase by using the same model as in the second phase.

Mara Semae originated from one of the Bota sub-villages and had been married to a woman of the Gedung Batu'. During the Japanese occupation and the Emergency, he lived in Teaw Menchang of Kampar town with his step-son, Mni’ Bah Rom. In the mid 1960s, Mara Semae and his family went back to Gedung Batu’. While there, he had family problems with his wife which led to a divorce. He came to Perah in 1968 to join his father, Alang Rabit, also well known as Ata’ Bek Semae

Maintenance work in all phases continued until the rubber was ready to be tapped.

On the management side, there was a balance of $200 remaining from the labour wages allocation. Bek Tambun returned that money to Enchik Raja, but the officer gave it back to him in gratitude for his brilliant idea in planning and implementing the project. The money was considered as his pay for the managerial work. Bek Tambun then asked Enchik Raja's permission to work on the area which was cleared but located outside the project of the third phase. He told Enchik Raja that it would be better to fill the area with useful plants rather than leave it abandoned without producing any benefits. He planned to plant rubber with his own capital inside this area, which was about two acres in size. Enchik Raja had no problem granting that desire and awarded the area to him, again in gratitude for his contribution in bringing the planning to reality.
I asked Pertel why the project failed since he was the penghulu at that time. Pertel told me that he did not know the exact reason but he heard there were two reasons for this failure.

The first reason was that the contractor blamed the villagers for not allowing him to plant a short term cash crop in between the rubber while waiting for the rubber to be ready to be tapped. Before the contractor began the planting stage, he wanted to plant tapioca and bananas in between the rubber rows as he said that he would suffer a loss in the planting project because the allocation was small. The contractor thus wanted to recover the loss with short term cash crops. The villagers disallowed that because they were afraid it would effect the growing of the rubber trees. They also disagreed because the main job of the contractor was to develop the area and not to make more profit on their land. On the other hand, if such a project was allowed, the villagers wanted to carry it out themselves because they had no other source of livelihood. The contractor then abandoned the project.

Pertel also told me the second reason, which had been mentioned by the JHEOA officer. The failure of this project was also related to the status of the land. According to the officer, the approval for replanting aid was taken back because the Perah area was not geran, meaning not title land. Later, I went to the JHEOA office in Sri Iskandar to check on these reasons. The JHEOA officer told me that both would have contributed to the failure. According to the officer, the RISDA previously required the old rubber fields which needed to be replanted to be title or geran land. In contrast, the land of Perah was just “an Aboriginal area”. The area was located in two reserves, Forest and Malay. Under the Malaysian Aboriginal Act of 1954 (revised 1974), or Act 134, the Seng-oi were only permitted to occupy these areas. They could not own the land. However, the JHEOA officer then told me that he did not know the real problem because he was new in that office. He said that previously, the RISDA had sometimes waived this requirement and regarded aid for the Seng-oi as a special case. The heads of the two agencies treated such cases by unofficial or informal arrangements. “That’s why sometimes both agencies could not take action if something went wrong during the implementation of projects,” he added. Nevertheless, he continually told me that he did not know the exact reason for the failure, and for that reason advised me to see the former officer who had been directly involved in this abandoned project. However, I could not manage to do this because he had retired a long time before I carried out my fieldwork.

One of them was Long Apon, who replanted one out of two plots of land belonging to his father. He was more optimistic in this matter than the rest of the villagers. According to him, there were good and bad impacts brought out by this failure. The good thing was that it had driven him to make an effort to replant the rubber. Otherwise, he would have continued to tap the old rubber trees which produced very little latex, and the resultant income was not worth the energy he used in that work. The bad aspect was that he could not plant the rubber properly, such as using a good clone and proper fertilisers, due to lack of capital. He told me that if he had had the money at that time, he would have bought good clones from the commercial nurseries, whose production (latex) would have been quite promising. His lack of capital just allowed him to collect saplings from the old fields and replant them into his field in the failed project area. At that time, the rubber trees in the JHEOA project were still not ready to be tapped, leaving the people jobless. Long Apon then worked as a labourer in town in order to support his family.

Long Apon also wanted to replant another plot of his father’s land but his father, Ngah Pok, did not allow him to do so. His father wanted to leave the land empty because it was located in the village area. This would make it easier for his relatives to build their houses in the future as they would have the land that belonged to their own ancestor. Long Apon was amazed at his father’s attitude. He told me that the elders in the old days always thought far ahead about the welfare of their descendants, not like the people today, most of whom are short sighted. Now they are just able to see their immediate future and do not want to see further than that. “We would live in peace for most of our lives if we still
adopted this kind of attitude," said Long Apon, expressing his concern about the younger generation today, who are, according to him, becoming more aggressive and disorganised, and who tend to devalue Seng-oi values.

Long Apon was also regarded as the poorest of the poor and obtained this housing aid. He demolished his wooden house and rebuilt a subsidised house on the same site. Ata' Bek Pakai was one of the Baring people selected to get a subsidised house. However, he had no flat area on which to build it so he asked for help from his relatives to flatten the slope of the hill. The work was very heavy as they just used digging tools (changkul) as their main tools. They managed to flatten an area of less than a quarter acre, just enough to build the house. According to Ata’ Bek Pakai, he could still open a garden on the sloping area next to his house but he is getting old and does not have enough energy to do such heavy work.

Although there were people like Bek Tambun who tried to revive the project it was still not successful. In his attempt, Bek Tambun caught small Talapia fish from the nearby mining pools and farmed them in his pool, but most of the fish then died. He once asked me about possible organisations that could help him to redevelop the project. I then brought the matter to Enchik Abu Othman on one of my visits to the JHEOA office of Sri Iskandar. According to Enchik Abu Othman, the only way the project could be redeveloped was through privatisation. I told this to Bek Tambun but he did not agree with that concept as he wanted to redevelop the project by himself with some assistance from the government. I then forwarded that matter to Senator Itam Wali, who headed the Seng-oi foundation of Perak, YEOP Berhad. The senator was very keen about the idea as it was consistent with the aim of YEOP Berhad to help the Seng-oi in business. He promised to send a staff member to make a feasibility study. I lost track of further actions taken by YEOP Berhad as I moved my fieldwork to Tangkai Chermin.

In addition to the lack of water, the fish farmers faced another problem which was developing in the village. This was very much connected to the attitudes of some of the villagers, who took the opportunity of the failure of the project to fish in the farms. According to Pak Yan, who inherited his late father’s farm, he could not stop these irresponsible activities because most of the perpetrators were his own relatives. “I finally ignored the hard feeling as I failed to stop them from fishing in my farm. I just asked them to give me some of their catch, which they did,” Pak Yan told me.

In mid-1961, a few months after a daughter of Andak Jameah, Uda Sarimah, married Derboh, a son of Itam Langsat, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs or Jabatan Hal Ehwal Orang Asli (JHEOA) transported the building materials to build a medical clinic and a school. This was a continuation of the Briggs Plan, that was an aspect of the psychological war. The aim was to counteract the remaining Communist influence in the area, and to win the hearts of the Seng-oi towards the government (Carey, 1976: 305-320). The work to develop this infrastructure was carried out by the JHEOA staff members, who took two or three months to finish the two buildings. The school and clinic, which were
built close to Long Dahaman’s house, began to operate in early 1962. Due to their development, Keramat village was renamed Perah Fort or Pos Perah.

The JHEOA assigned a medical staff member from the Aboriginal Hospital of Gombak, Kuala Lumpur, to be in charge of the clinic, which provided basic treatment. The patients with serious cases, such as tuberculosis, malaria, births and accidents which needed further, intensive treatment were treated at Gombak Hospital. The Aboriginal hospital authority, headed by Dr. J.M. Bolton, would transport serious cases or emergencies to hospital by a helicopter which the JHEOA hired from the Royal Malayan Air Force (now Royal Malaysian Air Force). While patients with non-serious diseases but requiring further treatment were transported by JHEOA ambulances. They had to walk to the main road at Nordin Bridge since the ambulance collected them there. Starting from the mid-1970s, however, the logging operations in the Perah area resulted in Perah village becoming accessible by a logging track. Due to this development, all patients were transported by ambulance. The JHEOA only used the helicopter service for the Seng-oi in the deep interior of Peninsular Malaysia and stopped the service to Seng-oi areas at the peripheries in order to reduce transportation costs.

In principle a medical staff member was posted for between six months and one year, and then replaced by another staff member. However, some of the staff were posted to Perah for more than one year for unknown reasons. The inconsistency in the staffing programmes went on until the early 1990s when the service stopped. The JHEOA encouraged people to seek access to better facilities at the District Hospital or other government medical centres or clinics.

In regard to education, the JHEOA also assigned a staff member to be a teacher and to run the school. The teacher was not a teaching professional, but just an ordinary staff member with little training in teaching. These teachers were required to undertake some basic training during the school holidays. If there was no training available, the teachers were required to serve in a nearby JHEOA office as a general staff member (see Note 1). Perah had good, dedicated teachers, even though they were not well trained for the job. Two years after it had been begun by the JHEOA, the administration of the school was taken over by the Department of Education, Perak. This was considered a great achievement for a rural school in a Seng-oi village.

The closure of the medical clinic in Perah and the handover of the administration of the Aboriginal Hospital in Gombak to the Ministry of Health, as well as the hand over of the JHEOA schools to the Ministry of Education, were due to changes in policy whereby the government decided to reduce the scope of the JHEOA. In the new policy, Seng-oi affairs and developments were to be handled by all government departments and agencies, and not just by the JHEOA.

**Note 1**: There was a case in Southern Perak where the JHEOA assigned a gardener to take over the teacher’s work in a village named Pos Erong due to a problem in the teacher transfer programme. The gardener took over that job for about one year while waiting for the new teacher to come and take over teaching work in the village. This kind of problem, however, never occurred in Perah.

In early-1962, the government launched an operation to introduce identity cards in Perah village (Uda Sarimah remembers this event because during that time she miscarried her first baby.) The operation was jointly undertaken by the JHEOA and the Department of Registrations. The people of Perah had not been involved in the pespot operation in the 1948 as they were evacuated from their village. In 1962, however, the government needed them to have pespot as they were now settled in a permanent village. It also appeared to be part of an operation to register all Malayan citizens in the post-independence era.

The Registration and JHEOA officers came into the village in the morning. At that time, most of the people were not at home as they were tapping in the rubber fields. As the
people came back in the afternoon, the officers called them to Alang Tek's house to make their identity card or pespot. According to Andak Jameah, the Registration officer was angry at them and blamed the villagers for not giving attention to that programme. Alang Tek tried to explain that they had not been told about that visit. If they had known about it, they might have stayed at home. The officer, however, ignored Alang Tek's explanation and asked the people to give their particulars very quickly as he and his team wanted to go home that afternoon. The officers were angry at some of the people as they did not know their exact date of birth and their parents' names. This is due to a Seng-oi custom where the Seng-oi never address community members by name but use a nickname. For a married couple, for instance, people will address the husband and wife by their first child's name. If the name of their first child is Yan, for instance, the husband will be addressed Pak Yan and the wife, Ken Yan. The Seng-oi in the old days never addressed their mother or father or other elders by their real names as it was prohibited by a taboo called tulah, a calamity consequent on sacrilege presumption. The people were afraid of tulah. Speaking an elders' name was considered misconduct. The youngsters would address their parents as apak (father) and amek (mother), and other elders as bah or kerch (uncle), awa' or amo' (aunt), and their grandparents as ata' (grandfather) and ajaak (grandmother).

The Registration Officer was annoyed at the Perah villagers because they did not want to state their fathers' names which, according to him, was illogical and stupid. For that reason, Andak Jameah's name was written in her pespot as Andak Jameah daughter of Ngah Sungai, instead of Andak Jameah daughter of Long Jeroneh. Ngah Sungai was Andak Jameah's elder sister but was put as her father in her pespot since she refused to give the real name of her father, Long Jeroneh. The Officer also made random guesses about the villagers' dates of birth. Andak Jameah's date of birth was recorded as 1929, though she must have already been a young woman in that year (1929) because she was a teenager when her family first settled in Uda Belap in 1916. Long Dahaman's birth year was recorded as 1940, which would mean that his mother, Andak Jameah, was only eleven years old when she gave birth to him.

The Registration and JHEOA officers went back to Ipoh that afternoon after they had fulfilled their responsibility, albeit inaccurately and inadequately. The people of Perah, on the other hand, were annoyed at the egoistic attitude of the officer in charge of the operation, who just wanted to blame the people without really admiting his own mistakes. According to Pertel, the officer came into the village without informing the people, and yet he expected the people to wait for him in the village. He seemed to accuse the villagers of going to work on that day and blamed them for not paying attention to the operation. “The officer just assumed we, the Seng-oi, did not have a sense of responsibility and did not know how to appreciate a government officer. That was not true, and I presume that the officer had a prejudice against us,” said Pertel. Long Dahaman agreed with Pertel and then expressed his sadness about some of the young officers today who are intent on looking down on the Seng-oi.

Perah village also gained a few developments in infrastructure, which were outstanding since they were considered to be equal with the Malay villages around Perah village. Beginning in 1962, the village was provided with medical and education facilities as part of the Briggs Plan. However the education progressed after it was taken over by the Department of Education of Perak in 1964. This development gave the children of Perah the same standard education system and syllabus as was provided to the children in towns. Such a standard education facility is not available in other Seng-oi villages, most of which are run by the JHEOA.

Perah village underwent other physical developments in the decades of the 1970s and 1980s, which accelerated in the 1990s. As early as 1990, the village had access to the electricity supplied by the Tenaga National Berhad. Starting from this year electric lights replaced the kerosene lights in the houses at night. This was followed by the acquisition of
electrical goods especially televisions, hi-fi stereos, fans, rice cookers, etc. In 1993, the village received water supplies from the Perak Water Board (Lembaga Air Perak). This was a great relief for the villagers since they had faced water supply problems for more than ten years due to ecological problems. In the same year, the villagers obtained a community hall, which was built in the sub-village Ajoinj. In 1995 they got a tar road, constructed under the rural project vote of the District Office of Parit. This tar road, however, was only in the village area. In 1996, the tar surface was extended another kilometre to the old road.

With all of these developments, Perah village seems to have acquired a complete infrastructure. However, according to the UMNO head of the Perah Branch, Alang Rindang, they are still waiting for one more public facility, that is the telephone. “You can use a mobile phone if you like,” I teased him. “Oh no, that is not possible because if I use that thing, I might have my family die of starvation since all my money will be used to pay the bill and batteries,” Alang Rindang replied in amusement.

Of all the Perah villagers, Alang Rindang was the only one whose house was without electricity and water supply. His house had no electricity because when the supply reached the village, he and his family were not at home since he was working in mining and lived in the worker quarters or kongsi. At that time the government gave a subsidy to the villagers to put in the necessary meter, which cost around $300 per house. Until today, Alang Rindang still has not enough money to put in a meter in order to get the energy supply. As for water, he refused to get connected as he has his own opinion about the quality of the water. He used to work at the water refinery plant, which sucked water from the Perak river to treat it. He found the water which was sucked into the refinery plant was very dirty. All kinds of rubbish and dead animals stuck at the water gate of the refinery plant, where the water entered. He and other workers had to clear that waste every morning and afternoon before they went home, and he vomited every time he did this because it was so smelly. He agreed that the water is treated well, especially to get rid of the mud and bacteria. However he did not believe the refinery could get rid of the chemicals which are dissolved in the water, such as pesticides, herbicides, fungicides and fertilisers which are used in the agriculture sectors and the chemical waste from the factories and workshops. All of these chemicals were either dumped or ran off with the irrigated water into the river in the upper part of the Perak river. He did not believe these chemicals could be easily treated by pouring chlorine into the water plant. “Drinking water from the public suppliers was just like taking poison every day,” said Alang Rindang. At the time, Alang Rindang relied on water from a well to drink and used the Perah river for bathing and washing. “My family and I drink mineral water every day, isn’t it healthy?” He said joking to me.

After that visit, I had an opportunity to discuss the future project with certain villagers. At first, I talked with the leaders of Perah, i.e. Long Dahaman, Alang Rindang, Bah Duan (the Youth leader), followed by another discussion with Bek Tambun and his family, most of whom were the descendants of Mat Melaka. I told them that the method which had been used by the people of Erong was not new for them as they had used it in the JHEOA projects in the 1960s, and all of them agreed with me. Despite the optimistic attitude shown by Long Dahaman, Alang Rindang and Bah Duan, Bek Tambun still had no confidence in the availability of funds. He was afraid that their 1970s experience would be repeated once again. According to Bek Tambun, if this happened he would have no field to work and he would suffer for the rest of his life because that is the only field which he relies on now. He had handed over two of his fields, which he had planted outside the JHEOA project, to his children. His two uncles, Ata’ Bek Pakai and Ata’ Bek Makar shared the same view as Bek Tambun. It thus seemed to me that the community of Perah was divided into two groups, the descendants of Long Jeroneh and the descendants of Mat Melaka. These two groups worked together most of the time, which overshadowed their hidden conflicts. On each occasion or discussion, they would begin with conflicting ideas but end with cooperation and family spirit.
These dredgers were owned by companies such as Southern Kinta Consolidated Ltd., Lower Perak Tin Dredging Ltd., Southern Malayan Tin Dredging Ltd., Keramat Pulai Ltd., Keramat Tin Dredging Ltd., Southern Teronoh Tin Dredging Ltd., Malayan Tin Dredging Ltd., and Tronoh Mines.

The Chinese first grew vegetables on the former mining land. These activities started in the mid-1960s. They paid the workers an average temporary labourer wage for one *kotig*, a Chinese term for eight hours of work. The rate during that period was $5 for male workers and $3 for female workers per *kong*. This rate then increased to $6 and $4, $7 and $5 and $9 and $7 respectively in the late 1970s, and $11 and $9 in the early 1980s. When tapioca became the main raw resource for the plastic and animal food industries in the early 1970s, the Chinese growers turned their activities to growing this crop. The extract of tapioca was used as a basic resource to make plastic, and its scum was turned into dry animal foods. The Chinese were actively involved in the tapioca planting industry on a very large scale as it could yield very high profits. Due to the expanding effort in the industry, the Chinese growers needed a large amount of wage labour and paid an increasingly high rate. Many *Seng-oi* of Sungai Galah, as well as their neighbours in Padag Kerikal and Changkat Pinggan, became involved. Anjang Makpin used to work as such a labourer before he himself became involved in the planting industry. Long Tanjung also became a labourer in the same industry but he stopped in the late 1970s as he was getting older and lacked of energy to do the hard tasks.

In its application proposal, the PKPNP wanted to develop the area into a giant oil palm estate. The state government agreed and approved the area for the PKPNP. I could not manage to find out the details of the bargaining which subsequently took place between the JHEOA and the Perak State Government regarding this matter because it was confidential and some of the files were classified under the Official Security Act (OSA). It was unclear whether the area had been approved for the PKPNP before or after 1985, the year when the JHEOA allowed the people of Sungai Galah to move into the area. It was also not clear what kind of clearance the JHEOA obtained from the state government which allowed this department to give permission to the people of Sungai Galah to move to Tangkai Chermin. The JHEOA officer showed me one of the ‘unprotected’ files which included a letter from the Chairman of the PKPNP, dated 15 January 1987, two years after the people moved into Tangkai Chermin. In his letter, the Chairman asked the JHEOA to move the *Seng-oi* who occupied the Tangkai Chermin area back to their own reserve land. However, it was unclear whether the reserve land mentioned in this letter referred to Sungai Galah or the area of 880 acres which was later approved for the people. There followed a series of high level meetings and correspondence between the state government, the PKPNP and the JHEOA. It is not clear whether the Department of Forestry was involved or not. On 28 July 1988 the JHEOA forwarded an official application asking the state government to allocate this area for the *Seng-oi* (Source: JHEOA file of the Perak Branch of the JHEOA, Ipoh.) The JHEOA also wrote to the PKPNP, dated 22 August 1989, appealing for this organisation to exclude the area of 880 acres, allocated for the *Seng-oi* from its future planning, and to postpone its land development works in the area concerned. This was followed by a meeting between high ranking officers which finally managed to persuade the state government to reconsider the *Seng-oi* application and to revoke its early approval to the PKPNP. However, the state government only agreed in principle to allocate 880 acres of the area, which was 320 acres less than the original request by the *Seng-oi*. Following this development, the new Director of JHEOA of Perak Branch, Haji Ismail Abdul Aziz, wrote another letter to the Director of the Department of Soil and Mineral of Perak dated 13 June 1990, applying for the area of 880 acres to be gazetted as a *Seng-oi* reserve, and to be excluded from other reserves.
The JHEOA received this approval in a letter from the Land Administrator of the Kinta District Office dated 22 June 1990. The letter stated that the State Executive Member (EXCO) in its letter, Bil (59) dlm.KT.33/4-7.95, had approved the area of 880 acres of Tangkai Chermin for the Seng-oi of Sungai Galah (Source: JHEOA file of the Perak Branch of the JHEOA, Ipoh.) According to the JHEOA Development Officer, the state government had revoked their previous approval to the PKPNP after considering the future of the Seng-oi of that state. However, the officer did not know the real reason the state government only agreed to give the people 880 acres instead of the 1,200 acres sought in the proposal. He guessed that the decision might be related to the new land regulations for the Seng-oi of Perak which had recently been introduced by the state government. He also hoped that the people would manage to develop the area into a commercial oil palm estate which would produce a good income to help the villagers improve their socio-economic status.

Then followed a team of consultants to study the potential of providing water supply to the villagers. The consultant proposed building a main tank on the edge of the hill. The water from the main pipe on lower ground, which was ‘owned’ by the Perak Water Council (Lembaga Air Perak), would then be pumped up into this main tank. From there the water would be then supplied to the villagers. This was not implemented, as the studies showed that the project was very costly. The villagers then relied on the river and wells which they built themselves.

If the state were to take over their land, the Seng-oi of Tangkai Chermin would, the senator believes, become millionaires like some of the Malays whose land was taken away for projects such as the Proton Car Plant in Tanjung Malim of Perak, the Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Sepang of Selangor, and the Industrial Estate in Nilai of Negeri Sembilan. “Many Malays in these areas became ‘instant millionaires’ for less than five acres of their land which had been taken over by the state in the national interest,” said the senator. In contrast, the Seng-oi of Erong recently received only $166,000 in compensation for 35 acres of their land which was affected by the route of a high voltage electric cable. They got this small amount because the land status was “Seng-oi area” which only provides the right to claim compensation for their fruit trees and other sources of livelihood, and not for the land itself. “This case was a great loss faced by our people. It is a disaster for them because in the first place, they lost a large area of land, and secondly, the compensation paid for this loss was not large enough,” said Senator Itam Wali, who hopes to see the Seng-oi get a fair return for the loss of their land in the future.
Orang asli duet bags top prize in Ipoh contest

IPOH: An orang asli pair created history of sorts when they bagged the P. Ramlee-Saloma duet song contest title at Taman Budaya here on Tuesday night.

The couple — 3rd Battalion PPH personnel Uda Abdul Rahman, 36, and housewife Arbaiah Mat Jalak, 43 — beat nine other pairs to bag the inaugural contest organised by Badan Budaya Perak in conjunction with the ongoing Pekan Seni Ipoh festival.

Uda and Arbaiah, both from Bidor, received RM300, a trophy and a souvenir each for their song Taman Firdausi from Mentri Besar Tan Sri Ramli Ngah Talib.

Factory employee Shahrani Ton and housewife Shahanim Abu Hassan were second while businessman Meor Hussin Meor Othman and Hansiah Ismail were third. The two pairs received RM200 and RM100 each respectively.

Uda, whose voice was akin to the late Tan Sri P. Ramlee’s, said he took up music and singing since his school days while Arbaiah, a mother of six, said P. Ramlee and Saloma would always be her idols.

Uda, who represented Perak in the RTM-organised Asian karaoke contest in 1993 had no problem in practising as he is the lead singer-cum-lead guitarist and leader of Nusantara, the official band for the PPH in Bidor.

Arbaiah said the only time she practised her singing was while trying to put her two grandchildren to sleep or when she was cooking.

Plate 7.11:
A Historic Moment
Uda (Pak Sofee) and partner won the prestigious singing contest. This is the first time the Seng-oi have won such a contest at the state level, which shows that they have also achieved a substantial development in the musical industry (reproduced from The Star, 12 September 1996).
Chapter Eight

LAND TRANSACTIONS

Introduction

This section will discuss land transactions which occurred among both the Perah and Tangkai Chermin villagers. The discussion will focus on a few heads of families to illustrate typical examples of both transactions and conflicts which have occurred in the villages. I also consider land conflicts in order to examine Seng-oi attitudes to lack of land.

Land Transactions in Perah

The Late Andak Jameah’s Family

Chart 8.1 illustrates land transactions in the case of Andak Jameah’s family, whose members are one of the main subjects of this thesis.

Long Jeroneh had little land as he surrendered most of his selai to be converted into the sub-village Keramat residential area. Before he died, Long Jeroneh bequeathed all three plots of his land to his children who were married, i.e. Akonj Kawo’, Ngah Sungai and Panjang. Andak Jameah did not inherit any land as she was still unmarried, and due to the fact that her father had no more land to give. Later, Ngah Sungai’s daughter, Andak Merieb, married an outsider. Since there was no more land available in Perah to be worked by newly married couples, Akonj Kawo’ and Panjang passed the land they inherited from their father to their niece, Andak Merieb. When Ngah Sungai died in the 1970s, the land she inherited from her father was taken over by Andak Merieb. This meant that Andak Merieb inherited all her grandfather’s lands. Years later, a son of Mara’ Asing, named Itam Papai, married but had no land to work for his family. Due to this situation, Andak Merieb sold one plot of her father’s land to Itam Papai. Her decision to sell that land was opposed by the children of Akonj Kawo’ and Andak Jameah because they did not want to see their heritage changing hands outside the network of Long Jeroneh’s descendants. However, these family members finally calmed down because Itam Papai was their distant relative, and
Chart 8.1: Land Inheritance among Andak Jameah’s Family members
the son of Mara' Asing, a *mai pasak* of Perah. Later, in the mid-1980s, a daughter of Long Dahaman, Ken Poq, married Daud, a man from Tangkai Chermin. Andak Merieb sold another piece of her grandfather’s land to Daud, and this time the sale went smoothly because Ken Poq was a great granddaughter of Long Jeroneh. About the same time, however, Andak Merieb made a secret arrangement with Awa, a Chinese man who married a *Seng-oi* and lived outside the village. Andak Merieb sold the last piece of her grandfather’s land to this man. This transaction was rejected by almost all Long Jeroneh’s descendants. They became very angry at her, some even wanted to break their family relationship, while the rest regarded her as crazy. They, however, could do nothing about it because the transaction had been done. As the eldest of Long Jeroneh’s descendants, as well as *penghulu* of the village, Long Dahaman reminded his family members (and others) not to adopt Andak Merieb’s attitudes. If they wanted to sell their land, Long Dahaman urged them to keep the transaction among themselves. According to him, many of Long Jeroneh’s descendants have stable jobs and enough money to buy that land, instead of allowing their heritage to pass out of the family possession. I asked the reason Andak Merieb sold that land to Awa. Long Dahaman had no idea of the real reason, but guessed his cousin was in debt to that Chinese, and could not afford to repay her debts. Long Dahaman then observed that if his cousin was in difficulty, she could always borrow some money from them.

Andak Jameah was rather lucky to have a hard working husband, Itam Bet, who has many plots of land. Prior to World War II, Itam Bet had five plots of rubber fields, each of which was between two and four acres in size. One piece of land of about two acres, which he inherited from his father, Ngah Gudang, later became a village area and he surrendered it for community interest. During the post-emergency, however, Itam Bet did not take part in the JHEOA project because he was unwell at that time and unable to help the people to develop the area. When he died in 1968, all his lands were inherited by his wife, the late Andak Jameah. She then passed two plots of this land to her two married daughters, Uda and Ken Esah. Later, she gave another plot to Anjang, when her son became *lintau* (which means a young man), and kept only one plot for herself. All of these areas then were involved in the rubber mini-estate project. Andak Jameah depended on the income from her land in this project until she died.
Before Andak Jameah died on 23 April 1996, she told her children, especially Long Dahaman (as the *penghulu*) and Uda (as her eldest daughter), that she wanted to pass her land to her granddaughter, Enchorn, because she had no land. In addition, Enchorn was the only one among her grandchildren who looked after her: bathed her, cooked her food, washed her clothes, cleaned her house, and stayed with her during the night. Uda and Long Dahaman communicated their mother’s request after she passed away, and all their brothers and sisters agreed to her request. They avoided quarreling because they believed it would interrupt the peacefulness of their mother’s soul in the afterworld. However, Enchorn is still unmarried and probably would like to work in town like other teenagers. In the meantime, the family agreed to hand the land temporarily to her mother, Ken Esah. The way the income gained from the field is shared depends on private arrangements between Enchorn and her mother. Ken Esah will have to hand the land back to Enchorn when her daughter needs it in the future. In addition to this land, Ken Esah has another piece of land of three acres in the JHEOA project which she inherited from her late husband, and another piece in the RISDA Rubber Mini-Estate which she inherited from her late father. In addition to a small dividend she gains from the mini estate, Ken Esah and her new husband are now working on the field in the JHEOA project to support their family.

Andak Jameah’s first son, Long Dahaman, did not inherit any land from his father. He is considered a hard working man as he has four plots of rubber fields in Perah, and another plot, of about four acres, in his wife’s village, Gedong Batu. He worked on the rubber fields in Gedong Batu in 1958 before he joined the *Sengoi Praq* troop. After resigning from the troop, Long Dahaman returned to Perah and managed to open four plots of rubber fields between 1960 and 1965. At that time, Perah had plenty of land because the government allowed the *Sengoi* to work on the Forest Reserve as a way of winning their hearts against the Communists. This only lasted until 1965 because a year after that the people of Pancor were removed to Perah, followed by the implementation of the three phases of the JHEOA’s sponsored rubber projects, which affected almost the entire area around the village. Long Dahaman was not involved in this project because he had plenty of land to work on.

In the mid-1980s, the RISDA introduced a rubber mini-estate into the village. Three plots of Long Dahaman’s rubber fields were involved in this project. In
order to meet the precondition of this project, which required permanent participation in the sense that the land could not be easily transferred to others in the future, Long Dahaman passed one of the plots to his son, Panjang Ari. So now Long Dahaman retains possession of three plots in Perah, two of which are included in the mini estate, while the other one is regarded as an old field. He taps in this old field to supplement his other income. He also receives dividends from the mini-estate projects, and a small amount of annual allowance paid by the government for his role as the penghulu', which amounts to MYR600 per year. Up until today, he still regards income from these lands as the main source of income for his family and still has no plan to hand on his land to his children. He says he will do that in the future, but he still does not know to whom.

With the exception of Panjang Ari, almost all Long Dahaman’s children have no land. Ken Poq’s husband bought a plot from Andak Merieb, but she inherited none from her father. To my question about the reason he did not give Ken Poq any land, Long Dahaman replied that he will give it to his children, regardless of gender, who need the land for living, rather than to those who just want to have it as property. He added that, at the moment, Poq’s family are not living in the village, but in the Seng-oi Praq camp of Bidor, as her husband still works in the Seng-oi Praq troop. In addition, Poq’s husband is also entitled to get land from a palm oil project which was planned by Senator Itam Wali in Tangkai Chermin. In the future, Poq might follow her husband to live permanently in Tangkai Chermin. Long Dahaman would not be in favour of giving that land to his daughter, Poq unless her family decided to live in Perah. He explained that:

It would be difficult in the future because, according to the guidelines proposed by the state, land will only be given to the people who reside permanently in the village. If Poq is uncertain about her future settlement, and if she decides to live in Tangkai Chermin, for instance, the land she inherited from me might be given away to other permanent residents because she is not resident here.

Long Dahaman is also not in favour of giving the land to another daughter, Ken Nisam, who married a Chinese man. “I love my daughter, but giving land to a daughter who married a Chinese would lead to a lot of problems with the state,” said Long Dahaman. He had a great problem when his cousin, Andak Merieb, sold the land to a Chinese man. The JHEOA officer accused him of being careless in looking after internal matters. Later, the District Officer (DO) of Parit came and chastised the Seng-oi for selling their traditional land. However, when
the villagers asked the DO to show statistics supporting his claim, the DO changed the topic by saying that the Chinese married Seng-oi because they wanted to buy land. Both of these claims are, according to Long Dahaman, not true. He agreed that there are Seng-oi who sell land to outsiders, but these are isolated cases. "In today's situation, the Seng-oi want to buy land instead of selling it," Long Dahaman stressed. He said it seems that, when talking about relationships between the Seng-oi and the Chinese or the Indians, the only thing in the minds of the state officers is that the Chinese will manipulate or cheat the Seng-oi. They do not consider that the marriages derive from mutual love and the desire to establish harmonious and happy families. "I don't think my Chinese son-in-law married Ken Nisam because he wanted to take over my land. They loved each other. So did my other nieces: Mimah married a Chinese man, and Luna married an Indian. Their marriages are based on love's desire, and have nothing to do with manipulation or cheating. Now, they are working in towns and visit us when they are free." Long Dahaman told me he viewed mixed-marriages as a means of social integration. In order to avoid problems with the state, however, he maintained his decision to alienate Ken Nisam's rights over his land, and will only consider giving it to Ken Nisam's children.

Long Dahaman was keener to give land to his fifth son, Dedeck, who lived with him in the village and helped him to maintain their family. However, Long Dahaman faces a problem with Dedeck because he, as Long Dahaman described it, has found it very difficult to find his life partner. Dedeck is more comfortable with a single way of life. In the mean time, Long Dahaman has used the income from the mini-estate for his family, and Dedeck has gained his income from his hunting activities.

As regards his land in Gedong Batu', Long Dahaman still has no plan of how and to whom to pass on this field. Originally, he wanted to give it to his son, Hamzah, who married a Bekau girl, but the problem was that Hamzah was more comfortable living in his wife's village than in Gedong Batu'. If Hamzah changed his mind and agreed to live in Gedong Batu', the land would definitely be inherited by him. If not, Long Dahaman will pass it to whoever among his children, nephews or nieces, happens to marry someone from Gedong Batu'. For the time being, he allows a relative of his wife to work in the field.
Plate 8.1: Inheritors of the Family Land
Andak Jameah (left), who inherited lands from her late husband, and passed one of these down to her daughter, Uda (second from left). Bibah (third from left) has inherited an area from her paternal grandfather, and Andak (extreme right, in striped shirt), has obtained her share from her father, Derboh.

Plate 8.2: The Living Generation
Sitting from left: Anjang Sadang, Pak Sofee and Ajemi; and standing from left: Bek Dayu and Derboh, pictured beside Andak Jameah’s graveyard. They inherited the responsibility to maintain the dengri’ of Perah.
Plate 8.3: A Great Loss

Enchorn (centre) crying after the death of her grandmother, Andak Jameah. Enchorn is the inheritor of Andak Jameah’s land in the RISDA Mini Rubber Mini-Estate project.

Plate 8.4: A Sharing of Emotion

All Perah villagers mourned the death of Itam Langsat. From left: Ken Diah, Bek Dayu (wearing cap), Ken Esah (in check shirt), and Bek Tambun (extreme right). Ken Diah and Bek Dayu are inheritors of Itam Langsat’s lands.
The Late Itam Langsat's Family

Itam Langsat had five plots of rubber fields, each of which ranged from between two to five acres. All his rubber fields were established prior to the Japanese occupation. One of his fields, about three acres in size, was converted to village area where his house and the house of his children, Derboh and Ken Diah, were built; and later, a small part of this area was occupied by Mara' Semae. A few years after they returned to Perah, Itam Langsat gave a plot of his land to his son, Alang Anam. This left Itam Langsat with three plots, two of which were rubber fields and the other was the dusut. Itam Langsat maintained that number as he did not take part in JHEOA projects because he wanted to allow others, especially newly married couples, to obtain land. When the rubber mini-estate was introduced, two plots of his land, and the one he gave to Anam, were involved in the project. Later, Itam Langsat passed one of his shares in the mini-estate to his daughter, Ken Diah. This land is, however, still under his name since it involved a complicated legal procedure to change the holder's name from one person to another. In 1993, he passed on his dusut to his granddaughter, Bibah, because he was quite old at that time and, before he died, he wanted to bequeath one plot of land to his granddaughter. After most of his land had been passed to his descendants, Itam Langsat relied for income on the dividend from his remaining rubber fields until he died in June 1996.

During my second period of field work in April-June 1997, Itam Langsat's descendants had still not decided to whom their father's only land in the mini estate should be given, although it was a year after his death. As the eldest of these descendants, Derboh has not yet come to any decision. It is quite complicated because there are a brother and sister, Anjang and Chu Nun, who are entitled to be the inheritors, while the land available is only one plot and very small in size, only 0.8323 hectare, or two acres. If the land was large, Derboh would probably break it into two and give his brother and sister one section each. Derboh told me that he will soon call his brothers and sisters to discuss the matter.

Derboh did not inherit any land from his father apart from the area for his housing site. Derboh is also considered to be a hard working person as he managed to open plenty of land. His efforts to open land began in 1961, after he married a daughter of Itam Bet, Uda Seremah. Between that year and 1965, he
and his wife managed to open four rubber fields. In addition, his wife, Uda, obtained a plot from her mother, Andak Jameah, and this meant the Derboh family had five rubber fields altogether. Out of these, three of his plots and the area belonging to his wife, were involved in the mini-estate project. In order to meet the ownership preconditions imposed in this project, Derboh passed all his land, about ten acres, to his daughter, Andak (Norhayati), while the plot belonging to his wife remained under her name, Uda Seremah. He gave the land to Andak because she is the one who lives in the village and needs land for living. His other children, i.e. his two daughters, Bibah and Hasnah, live in towns since they married government servants, and his only son, Pak Sofee, also lives in town since he has joined the Seng-oi Praq troop, and is interested in eventually working in the town.

In the early 1990s, Derboh bought another plot of land from Bah Ie, who decided to go back to his original homeland, Bekau. Bah Ie also sold his land to others. Derboh paid Bah Ie MYR500 because Bah Ie had planted 500 rubber trees on that land; such a transaction is referred to as perjug kendrat (return for labour/energy). Today, Derboh maintains possession of these two areas, while his wife maintains her own. Derboh and his wife still have no plans to pass this land to their children because they still rely on it for a living. In principle, Derboh and his wife would have no difficulty in redistributing the land among their children because they have in their possession three plots of land and their three children, Hasnah, Pak Sofee and Hasrayati, have no land. Hasnah is listed because her husband, Nan, has no land at all. Although Nan is the mai pasak, who is supposed to have land in the village, he came from a big family and all his family land has been handed over to his three elder siblings. Derboh’s eldest daughter, Bibah, on the other hand, is not listed because her husband, Bek Dayu, already has many plots of land, although he is mai tloh.

In the mid-1980s, Bibah married Bek Dayu, a man from Gedong Batu’ who worked as a JHEOA staff member. During his early stay in Perah, Bek Dayu contributed some money as capital for his father-in-law to establish a small scale business, that is to run a sundry shop. Since all the rubber fields had been cleared for the RISDA Rubber Mini-Estate project, and Malaysia was, at that time, in an economic recession, many villagers were jobless and bought goods from Derboh’s shop on credit. A year later, Derboh lacked enough capital to continue
his business, which led to its closure. One of the debtors, Bek Ajai, offered a plot of his land as a means of paying his debt, while the rest repaid theirs slowly, and took years to finish. Derboh accepted Bek Ajai’s offer, and then gave the land to Bek Dayu. That land is the first Bek Dayu had in the village. Later, in the early 1990s, Itam Langsat gave his dusut, which adjoined Bek Dayu’s first land, to Bibah. In return, Bek Dayu paid him MYR600 in appreciation for his generosity. The main reason for that transaction was because the land is located in the Malay Reservation. At that time, the DO of Parit was trying to persuade the Seng-oi of Perah to surrender their land to the Gop. Since Itam Langsat found himself too old to continue the struggle, he passed the land to Bek Dayu (via his granddaughter, Bibah), who is young, educated, and capable of continuing the struggle to preserve his family heritage. About the same time, Bek Dayu bought another piece of land from Long Apon’s daughter, Wak Diah. This transaction, however, appeared to be controversial, as Long Apon was unhappy with his daughter’s decision.

Wak Diah sold her land to Bek Dayu for MYR300. Long Apon was shocked over this transaction. He told me that his shock began when one day he saw Bek Dayu clearing the area. He approached Bek Dayu and asked why he was doing that, and Bek Dayu told him the facts. Long Apon told me that if the person who bought the land had been other than Bek Dayu, he might have returned his money and taken back the land. However, Long Apon could not take this drastic action because Bek Dayu was the son of his cousin who lived in Gedung Batu’. Bek Dayu’s wife, Bibah, was also his niece. Long Apon then wondered why Wak Diah had sold her land to Bek Dayu. “If she was short of money, why didn’t she ask me, her father, for it,” questioned Long Apon.

Later I asked Bek Dayu the reason Wak Diah had sold her land to him. Apak Dayu told me that his second cousin, Wak Diah, had approached him more than ten times and offered that land just for him. Wak Diah told Bek Dayu that he could not hope for his father-in-law’s land, and so had better accept that offer in order to own his own land. I also wondered why Wak Diah had done that for no apparent reason. Finally I found out that Wak Diah was not interested in this land because she felt hurt as she had broken up with her husband while they were settled on it. She regarded this land as the source of her bad luck, and therefore wanted to remove the land from her family line. However, she still wanted to
pass on the land to a close relative. In her opinion, the most suitable person to inherit this land was her second cousin, Apak Dayu.

Bek Dayu then told me that he did not know that Long Apon had disagreed with Wak Diah’s sale of the land to him. If Long Apon was serious and wanted to take his land back, Bek Dayu would return it to his uncle without any repayment. However, Bek Dayu did not want to relate his willingness to return the area because of superstition. He regarded the site as ‘hot’ since he had also had bad luck during his stay on the land. About three years after he began living in the area, his house had caught on fire and he had lost all the contents, valued at thousands of Ringgit. After this tragedy, Bek Dayu, who was a JHEOA staff member, bought a house on a housing estate in the suburb of Batu Gajah town because it was closer to his office. The land he bought from Wak Diah remains his, and he has planted the area with fruit trees.

Long Apon’s Family

Of all the Perah villagers, Long Apon and his father, Ngah Pok, have had the widest experience in land transactions. Long Apon was the first villager involved in buying and selling land within the community. When Long Apon and his family moved into Perah in the mid-1930s, his father, Ngah Pok, managed to buy two rubber fields from the mai pasak. After the war, Ngah Pok obtained another piece of land, donated by Mara’ Asing, on which Ngah Pok planted rubber. After the emergency, Long Apon bought another rubber field from the mai pasak, which he converted into his housing site, while his father, Ngah Pok, managed to open two more rubber fields next to the land they got from Mara’ Asing. All together, Ngah Pok and his son, Long Apon, had six plots of land, and all of these were in the sub-village Keramat area, specifically between the village area and the JHEOA project area.

After the arrival of the JHEOA rubber project, Long Apon took his share in two phases, but surrendered it in the third phase as he was injured and could not participate in the development of the area. However, his father Ngah Pok did not take part in this project because he wanted to give the opportunity to young couples who had little land or no land at all.
In the late 1960s, Long Apon and his father sold one of their pieces of land to Bah Tang, who had married a local girl. They sold the field for $400 as return for the labour of planting (*perjug kendrat*) because of the 400 rubber trees on it. Long Apon then agreed to give half of his land to his cousin, Akee, but the area was then taken over by Mara’ Semae. In the mid-1970s, Long Apon’s father, Ngah Pok, sacrificed another piece of his land when the replanting project failed. He decided to convert that land into a residential area since it was in the village area. When Ngah Pok passed away, all the four plots of lands in the Keramat area were inherited by his son Long Apon. Long Apon then redistributed this land to his daughters. He gave one of his rubber fields to his adopted daughter, Chu Timah, which was then developed in the rubber mini-estate. He gave Chu Timah another plot for her housing site. Long Apon’s land located next to Chu Timah’s housing site, which had formerly been donated by Mara’ Asing, was given to his daughter, Wak Diah. However, Wak Diah sold her share to Bek Dayu.

The land which Long Apon gave to Chu Timah is now abandoned as Chu Timah divorced her husband. Chu Timah now lives in Ipoh City with her daughter, Mimah, who married a Chinese man. During her early stay in the area, Chu Timah asked an elder, Alan Deman, to live with her family there. Alan Deman still occupies the land, and Long Apon has allowed him to live in the area for the rest of his life. However, he did not allow the man to carry out any permanent agriculture. Long Apon plans to hand over this land to his granddaughter, Mimah, when she and her husband are ready to settle in the village.

At the time of my fieldwork, Long Apon had two fields remaining in his possession. Both of these were acquired in the JHEOA projects, on which he relies for his living now. He taps rubber trees in these fields alternately in order to maintain a sufficient production of latex to be worth the effort because all the trees are about 30 years old. “I haven’t made up my mind about these areas yet because I still need them for my livelihood,” said Long Apon.

**Bek Tambun’s Family**

Bek Tambun is a hard working man and is considered to be one of the villagers with the largest area of land in Perah. When he moved to Perah in 1960, he
inherited all his father’s land, which was about nine acres altogether. He then opened his own paddy fields, or *selai*, followed by rubber planting on the ex-*selai*. By the year 1965, Bek Tambun managed to open five *selai* and converted all of them to rubber fields. The total area involved was about 14 acres. When the LLN cables project was erected through the area, only five acres of his father’s land were affected, leaving him with four acres. He then obtained another six acres of rubber field from JHEOA projects, which brought the total area of his land to twenty four acres. Beside his land in Perah, he also has five rubber fields in his old village, Tembuh Bekett, totalling about ten acres. If these areas are put together, Bek Tambun has about 34 acres of rubber fields. He is thus considered a wealthy *Seng-oi* compared to others in the area, including the *mai pasak* who pioneered the opening of the Perah village.

However, Bek Tambun made a smart move in distributing his land. He bequeathed all the balance of his father’s land to two of his brothers, Itam and Aham, each of whom got two acres. He did this because he had more than enough rubber fields to work. He also handed over all his rubber fields in Temboh Bekett to his ex-wife, Ken Abu, and left it up to her to redivide them among their children. Bek Tambun also gave away twelve acres from the balance of his land in Perah, which he had opened on his own, to the children of his second marriage, Yuna, Andak, Alang Dadu and Abu, each of whom got three acres of rubber fields. These fields, however, consisted of old rubber trees and were mostly dying. “In reality, I just gave land without rubber trees to my children, and it is up to them to replant the area with whatever crops they like, either rubber or oil palm,” said Bek Tambun.

After giving away most of his land to his children and brothers, Bek Tambun still had eight acres in hand, six acres in the JHEOA projects and another two acres of fields which he had opened by his own effort. In addition, he also had to maintain his two brothers’ land. He always asked Itam and Aham to come and maintain their land, but they never bothered to follow his advice. Aham was very comfortable working with Chinese and other companies. Itam converted to Islam, which was regarded by the *Seng-oi* as equivalent to becoming Malay or *Gop*. He did not seem very interested in inheriting the land and was not even very close to his family any more. Bek Tambun told me that he had tried to persuade Itam a few times not to isolate himself from the rest of their family.
Although he had converted to Islam, it did not mean he was no longer a *Seng-oi*. He was still a *Seng-oi* and had rights to inherit his father’s land. However, Itam told him that he was not very interested and let him (Bek Tambun) look after their family property. “Although I already feel tired maintaining their land, I have to because this is the only land belonging to our family. If we lose this land, it will not be easy to get a replacement,” explained Bek Tambun.

**Pak Yan’s Family**

Pak Yan is the son of the late Akee, and he is married to Derboh’s daughter, Norhayati, or Ken Yan. Pak Yan’s father, Akee, inherited his father’s land and then obtained another four acres of rubber field from the JHEOA rubber projects. When Akee died in the mid-1980s, all this land passed to his wife, Ken Keem. Ken Keem also continued her husband’s sundry shop. Since the shop was only a small scale business, she had to tap rubber in order to top up her family income. She worked in the rubber fields together with her sons, Bah Keem and Pak Yan, because her other children were still young. When Bah Keem and Pak Yan got married, Ken Keem gave the rubber fields to them to allow them to support their families. In the absence of Bah Keem and Pak Yan, Ken Keem just concentrated on her sundry shop, as its income was sufficient to support her family.

Pak Yan and Bah Keem worked these lands alternately due to the low latex production because the trees were old. At first, Bah Keem worked on these fields while Pak Yan worked in town. After some time, Pak Yan left the labour market and worked on the rubber fields of his father-in-law, Derboh. Later after that, Bah Keem moved to his wife’s village, Bekau, and spent most of his time there. In Bekau, Bah Keem’s father-in-law also gave him and his wife a rubber field to work. This situation gave Pak Yan more chance to work on their family lands. Pak Yan, however, did not use all the income from the fields for his own family, but contributed some to his mother.

In addition to the rubber fields, Ken Keem also asked Pak Yan to maintain their family’s fish farm. Although the project was no longer profitable, and most of the farms had been abandoned, Ken Keem considered it belonged to her and intended to revive it when she had enough capital. Due to this concern, Pak Yan
built his house nearby this farm and lived there for a few years. However, Pak Yan was not very comfortable living there because he regarded the area as 'hot'. He and his family continually got ill with flu, fever and serious headaches. The halai revealed that the area was not a suitable residential area, especially for a family with small children whose ruwai were weak. This was because it was located in the middle of the swamp, which was believed to be the patrol area of the penyakit, especially the groups of Siti, Mambang and Dewa.

After a few years living there, Pak Yan finally decided to move from this house, partly because of the supernatural aspect of the land, and partly for other reasons. He told me that he was frustrated with some of the villagers who were irresponsible and fished in the farm. He was also afraid that his active young daughter might fall into the water and drown. In the meantime, his father-in-law worked as a night guard in Pusing town and his mother-in-law had followed her husband to stay in the quarters. This left their house without residents and it had been vandalised by school-leaver boys. Pak Yan went to stay in his parent-in-law’s house but still worked his own mother’s rubber field.

Although Pak Yan and Bah Keem worked on these rubber fields and the fish farm, the land was still under their mother’s name. This family land holding is accepted by Ken Keem’s family members, as Pak Yan always mentioned in conversations that he had no land and worked on his mother’s rubber fields. Meanwhile, Bah Keem came back and intended to stay permanently in Perah. However, he was not interested in tapping rubber but was keener to develop his own sundry shop. He then worked full time in that activity, which allowed Pak Yan to continue tapping rubber in the family’s fields. Pak Yan told me that he will eventually surrender the fields to his younger sisters, one of whom has just finished high school and still stays in the village. “If my sister or my other members of my family wanted to tap in the field, I would find another job, probably in a town,” said Pak Yan.

Overview
As indicated by (F) in Table 7.1 in Chapter Seven, 12 out of 31 project participants are females. All of them became involved as participants in the RISDA Rubber Mini Estate project because they inherited old rubber fields from
their fathers or grandfathers. This illustrates a general pattern of the Seng-oi inheritance system, which give females equal rights to inherit family property. The system seems to emphasise the need of family members rather than their gender differentiation. In this context, land was only given to family members who needed it for living rather than to members who only wanted to keep it unused, and then viewed it as his/her personal property. A similar pattern of inheritance is illustrated in Table 8.1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Previous Owner</th>
<th>Inheritors</th>
<th>Relation to Previous Owner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Long Jeroneh</td>
<td>Akonj Kawo’</td>
<td>Son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ngah Sungai</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Panjang</td>
<td>Son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akonj Kawo’</td>
<td>Andak Merieb</td>
<td>niece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panjang</td>
<td>Andak Merieb</td>
<td>niece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngah Sungai</td>
<td>Andak Merieb</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andak Merieb</td>
<td>Itam Papai</td>
<td>Relative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Daud</td>
<td>niece’s husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Awa (Chinese)</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngah Gudang</td>
<td>Alang Tek</td>
<td>Son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Itam Bet</td>
<td>Son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andak Jameah</td>
<td>Uda</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ken Esah</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anjang</td>
<td>Son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enchorn</td>
<td>Granddaughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Dahaman</td>
<td>Panjang Ari</td>
<td>Son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngah Gudang</td>
<td>Itam Langsat</td>
<td>Son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Itam Langsat</td>
<td>Derboh</td>
<td>Son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alang</td>
<td>Son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bek Dayu</td>
<td>Granddaughter’s husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derboh</td>
<td>Norhayati</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alang Tek</td>
<td>Pertel</td>
<td>Son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anjang</td>
<td>Son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngah Pok</td>
<td>Long Apon</td>
<td>Son</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8.1: Pattern of Land Inheritance in Perah

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Previous Owner</th>
<th>Inheritors</th>
<th>Relation to Previous Owner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Long Apon</td>
<td>Wak Diah</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chu Timah</td>
<td>Adopted daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Bek Dayu)</td>
<td>(Niece’s husband)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Mimah)</td>
<td>(Granddaughter)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(M. Sema via Akee)</td>
<td>(Cousin/Relative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mat Melaka</td>
<td>Long Jasin</td>
<td>Son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ata' Bek Makar</td>
<td>Son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ata' Bek Pakai</td>
<td>Son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Jasin</td>
<td>Bek Tambun</td>
<td>Son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Aham and Itam)</td>
<td>(Son)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bek Tambun</td>
<td>Yuna</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Andak</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alang Dadu</td>
<td>Son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Abu</td>
<td>Son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bek Runggin</td>
<td>Ken Achom</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bek Pawong</td>
<td>Son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bek Pawong</td>
<td>Akee</td>
<td>Son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akee</td>
<td>Ken Keem</td>
<td>Wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kulop Chiban</td>
<td>Ken Entiing</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Runggin</td>
<td>Bek Asan</td>
<td>Son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ata' Andak</td>
<td>Bek Gimbol</td>
<td>Son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ata' Bek Semaie</td>
<td>Mara' Semaie</td>
<td>Son</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Fieldwork 1995.)

This table shows that most of the inheritance occurred along family lines or within family networks. Transactions with distant relatives and outsiders only occurred as isolated cases, and are not a general pattern of land inheritance among the Seng-oi.

Land Transactions in Sungai Galah (Tangkai Chermin)

The people of Sungai Galah had a smaller village area than Perah. The people therefore did not emphasise land development as much in their economic
activities. Since each of the families had a small area of land, land transactions were not as complicated as in Perah.

**General Transactions**

Keling inherited his father's rubber field in Sungai Galah. However, the area was just about four acres. In Tangkai Chermin, he obtained his first share of two acres which was allocated for housing and dusut. Keling felt he was getting old and started redistributing his land. He told me that he is quite keen to pass the rubber field in Sungai Galah to his first son, Dain, but his decision is still not finalised because he has other children too. Dain works as a Game Ranger but lives in the village, and goes to and from his work in Batu Gajah, a distance of about 20 miles, each day. Since he is available in the village, Dain always helps his father to maintain their family land, especially on the weekends. In addition to helping his father, Dain also looks after the new house of his uncle, Senator Itam Wali. However, Keling Nawan told me that Dain still wanted to work with the government and let the land be worked by his brother who also lives in the village.

As in Perah, the inheritance system among the people of Tangkai Chermin was fluid. The only principle they maintain is that the inheritance must occur along family lines, or within the family network. The trend was that the parents were more likely to pass their land to those children who needed it for their livelihood, and to the children who showed their concern in preserving their family possessions and were interested helping their parents maintain the land. Panjang Long would rather give his land to his daughter who needed the land for her family livelihood than to his son who worked and lived in town and showed less concern to maintain the land. In general therefore, the trend of land inheritance is based on need. However, sometimes the trend is also influenced by favouritism. Due to family interests, most heads of extended families still hold the land and distribute it little-by-little to trustworthy family members. According to Panjang Long, the thing that he most fears is that their family land will fall into the hands of other families. Due to this anxiety, Panjang Long has become cautious about distributing his land to his children. Hoping his land will remain his family's forever, Panjang Long said:
This does not mean I do not trust my children but I am afraid that they will face certain circumstances which will lead them to make secret transactions. I just hope my children can maintain our land so it can remain our family’s, at least for the time of my life. After I die, it depends on my children to colour the future of our family heritage.

Table 8.2 shows the pattern of land inheritance of the first rubber fields planted in Sungai Galah.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Previous Owner</th>
<th>Inheritor</th>
<th>Relation to Previous Owner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ngah Lesu</td>
<td>Anjang Makpin</td>
<td>Son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uda Layang</td>
<td>Ajaak Din</td>
<td>Wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Itam Julo*</td>
<td>Ajaak Amoi</td>
<td>Wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ajaak Amoi*</td>
<td>Itam</td>
<td>Son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alang Buyut*</td>
<td>Bek Runggin</td>
<td>Son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yeop</td>
<td>Putih</td>
<td>Granddaughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alang Lajin</td>
<td>Uda Licoi</td>
<td>Son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pandak Bako</td>
<td>Ngah</td>
<td>Son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uda Nawan</td>
<td>Keling</td>
<td>Son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keling</td>
<td>Uda Din</td>
<td>Son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kulop Hamid</td>
<td>Pandak</td>
<td>Son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johor</td>
<td>Anjang</td>
<td>Son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kulop Bekun</td>
<td>Andak</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Itam Tak</td>
<td>Uda Hasan</td>
<td>Son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahmad Pandak</td>
<td>Pandak Sa’ari</td>
<td>Son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pandak Sulo</td>
<td>Itam Mustapa</td>
<td>Grandson</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *These plots were effected by the route of high power electric cables. All the rubber trees were cleared and owners of these plots lost possession of them.
(Source: Fieldwork 1996.)

Table 8.2: Pattern of Land Inheritance in Sungai Galah

Among the inheritors shown in Table 8.2, some, such as Uda Hasan and Putih, lived outside the village. A number of reasons allowed such a pattern of land inheritance to happen. One of these relates to the question of pride and indigeneity. Among the Seng-oi, including those in Tangkai Chermin and Perah, land is viewed as a symbol of pride of indigeneity in particular areas. This can be gauged by the age of ancestral graves and the age of planted fruit trees, such as the durian trees which can live for hundreds of years. Land also represents
proof of occupation of the area. Losing land therefore means losing this proof. For this reason, elders will only pass their land down to family members who can be trusted to maintain the family heritage. In addition, this kind of transaction can occur because these rubber fields were developed and are worked by a company appointed by RISDA. Smallholders, or owners, are given their share in terms of a dividend. Therefore, the owners need make no commitment to work on the land, but they were encouraged by RISDA to become involved in side activities in order to supplement their income from the project. This allows trusted people, who do not need to work on the land, to inherit this symbol of pride, their family land.

Conflicts as Options of Loyalty

In this section, land conflicts are considered to illustrate Seng-oi reactions over problems related to lack of land. The discussion will examine the premise that lack of land has caused the Seng-oi’s attitude to change from one of non-violence to one of aggression over land. This will be examined by employing the concepts ‘exit’ and ‘voice’ introduced by Hirschman (1970). Hirschman introduced these concepts to examine the options people have in maintaining their loyalty toward firms, organisations, and states. According to him (Hirschman, 1970: 4):

(1) Some customers stop buying the firm’s products or some members leave the organisation: this is the exit option. As a result, revenues drop, membership declines, and management is impelled to search for ways and means to correct whatever faults have led to exit.

(2) The firm’s customers or the organisation’s members express their dissatisfaction directly to management or to some other authority to which management is sub-ordinate or through general protest addressed to anyone who cares to listen: this is the voice option. As a result, management once again engages in a search for the causes and possible cures of customer’s and member’s dissatisfaction.

According to the first option, customers stop buying one particular product if its quality declines. This shows the loyalty of those customers to this product; they hope the producer will improve its quality, so they can buy it again. Such loyalty involves the desire of the customers to maintain their consumer behaviour, i.e. continue to use that product, which has probably been trusted for a long time. Exit options appear to be an indirect strategy when compared to the second option, voice, which involves the customers launching a direct complaint, or
critique, about the decline of quality of the favourite product to its producer. The aim of this second option is similar to the first: both aim to improve the quality of a particular product, so the customer can continue buying or using it. Both of these options, although the way they operate is different, demonstrate the customers’ loyalty to that particular product. If this is applied to community life, it is possible to see that members of a community will employ either one of these options, exit or voice, to sustain themselves as members of that community, or to maintain their relationship with other members of the community. By doing this the people show they regard themselves as loyal to their own community.

In the context of Seng-oi life, exit will be used to refer to avoidance attitudes, which were widely adopted by Seng-oi in the old days. The Seng-oi would exit from an area and move to another in order to escape from certain problems or unpleasant outcomes, such as intimidation from dominant groups, ideologies, or diseases. Similarly, an individual or a group of Seng-oi people would exit from their group in order to avoid any strained relationships or crises from becoming worse. By exiting from an area, they could prevent their group being destroyed or disrupted by unfavourable outcomes. The alternative was to maintain good relationships with the party involved in the misunderstandings or crises. Voice, on the other hand, can be used to refer to conflicts, struggles, or even quarrels which occurred either within the Seng-oi community or with external forces, in order for the Seng-oi to sustain their membership within the community, or to maintain their rights over the land of their dengri against external threats.

In the chermor of the Seng-oi, many exits are recorded. Referring to the chermor of Seng-oi in the State of Perak, in particular, the Seng-oi exited from Lambor when they were involved in land crises with the Gop. The chermor demonstrate that the Seng-oi had good relationships with Gop who were friendly to them, but the unfriendly Gop treated them as slaves and took over their land. By leaving Lambor, they were able to avoid clashes with the unfriendly Gop, which could endanger their community if many of them were killed in the confrontation. In addition, they also maintained relationships with good Gop, which allowed these two communities to continue interaction. This exit thus appears to serve two purposes: first, the Seng-oi maintained their loyalty to their own group, and second, they maintained their loyalty, in terms of relationships, to the friendly Gop.
The Seng-oi also took the ‘exit option’ in response to internal problems. This was demonstrated when Mara’ Nile’ (Mat Melaka) left Denak to avoid exacerbating the crisis between himself and his biras. By exiting Denak, Mat Melaka managed to maintain the family relationship with his biras. As proposed by Hirschman, producers will find ways to maintain their customers’ confidence in, or loyalty to the affected products. In this case, Mat Melaka’s biras admitted his mistake in distributing the water buffalo, and tried to persuade Mat Melaka to return to Denak. However, Mat Melaka refused the offer, as his feelings were seriously hurt, despite successfully making his living through involvement in the rubber cultivation industry. This family relationship was then ‘revived’ when Mat Melaka’s first son, Long Jasin, returned to Denak. This was regarded as a means of family reunion. This good relationship has been maintained until today, as Mat Melaka’s children have two options, either to return to Denak or to remain in Perah, because Mat Melaka has his land in both of these places.

All these exits, for either external or internal reasons, took place because there was still plenty of land around, which allowed the Seng-oi to move from one area to another without being restricted by any tribal boundaries. Mat Melaka’s case, which occurred at the time the Seng-oi began to face land problems, was probably one of the last exits to have occurred among the mai direh people. The period after Mat Melaka’s exodus from Denak marks the decline of Seng-oi movements since all tribal areas were taken over by the state, the British Colonial government. Lack of land, which contributed to the restriction on Seng-oi movements, has changed Seng-oi attitudes from exit to voice. This was demonstrated when the Seng-oi, including the people of Perah, ignored land laws imposed by the British as an indirect way of voicing their loyalty to their dengri’. When there was plenty of land around, such external threats or forces, especially if they involved detention, fines, or imprisonments, would have caused the Seng-oi to exit from the area, and move further interior. This option is, however, not feasible when land is scarce. In dealing with the state, the voice option has helped the Seng-oi to maintain their rights over their land and dengri’, although protest has often indirectly, such as by ignoring the laws and threats imposed by the state. The success of such strategies was demonstrated when the British recognised Seng-oi existence in the Forest Reserves, and awarded them Occupying Permits. The Seng-oi continued to employ the voice option, as in the activities of Mat Arip of Sungai Kurung, which finally led the British to introduce the Aboriginal Ordinance of Perak in 1939. This ordinance offers
some legal protection over Seng-oi rights to get access to their dengri', and also means that the Seng-oi have succeeded in maintaining their loyalty to their group and their home land.

Lack of land has also led the Seng-oi to employ the voice option in dealing with social relationships between members of their own community. The Seng-oi have become vocal and aggressive in order to keep plots of land within their dengri' from being taken over by others. This option has involved the people in quarrels among themselves. By employing this option, the Seng-oi maintain possession of the dengri' as well as membership of the group. The ability to remain in one dengri' and to dare to face circumstances within the community indicates a degree of loyalty, instead of leaving the community, which is not considered loyal. However, such a concept of loyalty appears to be more like a 'screen' than the genuine option as suggested by Hirschman. It is used to hide the main agenda of Seng-oi life: these days the Seng-oi cannot exit since no more land is available for them to settle or work. Voice therefore appears the only option. Loyalty, in this case, involves maintaining their possession over their remaining land as family heritage, and remaining as members of the dengri' or community. In order to achieve this, the Seng-oi are increasingly adopting this option. This trend is shown when they become involved in conflicts, especially when dealing with the state or outsiders. In dealing with conflicts within their own community, however, both options are adopted, as one of the conflicting parties may use the voice option while the other has to 'exit'. These various strategies are demonstrated in the cases below.

**Perah: Derboh vs. Mara' Semae**

Derboh's family had a few misunderstandings with their neighbours, one of which was with Mara' Semae. When Mara' Semae moved to Perah in 1968, he built his house on Long Apon's land. After living on that site for a while, Mara' Semae started to clear the nearby area and planted it with fruit. The area he worked belonged to Itam Langsat, but Itam Langsat had given the land away to his son, Derboh. When Derboh moved into the area in 1982, he found that Mara' Semae had taken a few depa' of his area, which amounted to about a quarter acre. Derboh tried to claim the area back but Mara' Semae, who was well known for his aggressiveness, turned down the claim and defended his fruit trees. Finally, Itam Langsat advised his son to stay calm and let Mara' Semae take the
area. “After all, Mara’ Semae is also our relative,” said the late Itam Langsat, as recounted by his son, Derboh. In this case, Derboh had to exit, while Mara’ Semae had successfully used ‘voice’ to maintain his possession over the land.

Derboh had another misunderstanding with the other villagers who occupied their old housing site. When they married, Derboh and Uda built a house close to the swampy area of Perah river. They planted coconuts around their house. When they obtained housing aid from the JHEOA, they moved to their present site. The old site was occupied by another family. The coconuts which belonged to Derboh were located in the other’s house area. The new site owner faced problems because the plants were not theirs but they had to clean up the leaves and fruit which dropped from the trees most of the time. When Uda learnt of the problem, she asked her husband to fell all the trees. They then shared the coconut palm-cabbage and its fruits equally with the house owner. In this case, both Derboh and the site owner adopted the exit approach to a degree in resolving their problem.

**Perah: Long Apon and Ken Keem vs. Mara’ Semae**

In the late-1960s, Long Apon agreed to donate to his cousin, Akee, the area in front of his house. At that time Akee worked in the *Seng-oi Praq* troop. He went to Long Apon’s house and spent his days there every time he came back into the village on leave. He told Long Apon that he planned to resign from the *Seng-oi Praq* and continue his life with his family in the village. However, he had no land on which to build his house. Then Long Apon gave his cousin half of the area in front of his house. However, Akee did not leave the *Seng-oi Praq* until years after that. In the mean time, Mara’ Semae had moved into the village. He also asked for a piece of Long Apon’s land to build his house because they were close relatives. At first, Long Apon did not agree because he knew Mara’ Semae was aggressive and not a tolerant person. However, his father advised him to be more charitable and to give Mara’ Semae half of the area which he had given to Akee. Since his father was involved, Long Apon had to agree to allow Mara’ Semae to build on his land. However, Long Apon forgot to tell Mara’ Semae that half of the area had been given to Akee.
The problem then arose when Mara' Semae thought the whole area was given to him and began to clear the whole area. Long Apon went to see Mara' Semae and tried to clarify the matter. However, Mara' Semae became angry and accused Long Apon of trying to play the fool with him by at first giving him the land and then trying to take it back. Ngah Pok advised his son to calm down and accept the fact that they had made a mistake in not clarifying the matter earlier in order to cope with Mara' Semae aggressiveness. "Did you fight with him?" I asked Long Apon. "No, not up to that stage, but we argued with each other. That led to a distance in our relationship for a while," replied Long Apon. "How about the relationship now?" I asked, trying to get more information. "Well, we are talking to each other but not as intimately as with others, like your adopted parents for instance," Long Apon explained. Related to this conflict, Ngah Pok then promised to give a piece of his land to Akee if his nephew needed it. When Akee left the Seng-oi Praq, Long Apon communicated his father's offer, but Akee refused to accept it as he did not want to sacrifice any more land of his relatives. He then built his house on his father's land and started a sundry shop.

In this case, Akee's wife, Ken Keem, was the one who became directly involved in a land conflict with Mara' Semae. One year after Mara' Semae built his house on Long Apon's land, he started clearing the area which Long Apon had previously given to her husband. During that time her husband was still working in the Special Branch of the Seng-oi Praq. Since her husband was posted in the jungle most of the time, Ken Keem decided to live in the village rather than in the Seng-oi Praq camp in Perlop of North Sungai Siput town. Ken Keem and her husband had planned to build their house on the land which had been donated to them by Long Apon. After seeing Mara' Semae clearing the area, Ken Keem met him and told him about the status of the land. However, Mara' Semae defended the area as his. Ken Keem then met Long Apon to ask for clarification about this area: whether he still wanted to give it to them or had changed his mind and given it to Mara' Semae. Long Apon told her what had happened. After that, Ken Keem met Mara' Semae once again and told him about the transaction regarding that land, which then led to an argument between Long Apon and Mara' Semae. Finally, Long Apon's father intervened and asked his son to avoid quarrels within the family. Ngah Pok also offered Ken Keem another piece of land as a replacement. Ken Keem told her husband about Ngah Pok's offer but, as noted previously, Akee refused. In this case, Ngah Pok still
maintained the individual exit option as a way of retaining social solidarity within the community.

**Perah: Conflict With the State**

In the middle 1980s, Long Dahaman faced his first challenge as *penghulu*. He was approached by the DO of Parit, known as Tuan Haji, who tried to persuade him to surrender the Malay Reservation, which was occupied by Mat Melaka's descendants, to the Malays. In his first meeting with Long Dahaman, the DO might have shown some prejudice towards him, treating him as a non-educated person or someone who had not been exposed to the outside world like most of the *Seng-oi* leaders in the old days. At first, the DO threatened to chase the Perah people out of the Malay Reservation. Long Dahaman said he welcomed this action, but told the DO that their rights to occupy the area were protected by the law, especially Act 134. The DO then softened his language and tried to persuade Long Dahaman to ask his people to move elsewhere. He continued his persuasion until he was transferred from Parit District, but Long Dahaman stuck to his decision. In one of the meetings, Long Dahaman told him the history of that village, mentioning that the people had not simply occupied the area but were there with the permission of the sultan, the previous *Penghulu Mukim* and the DO. Long Dahaman also asked the DO to open the map at his office and show him an empty area which the *Seng-oi* of Perah could occupy. The DO then did a secret deal by approving the transfer of four acres of land located at the boundary between the *Seng-oi* and the Malay areas, which had been approved to be gazetted for the *Seng-oi* Reserve, to a Malay who came from outside. The Perah people and the JHEOA tried to reclaim the area but were not successful because the transaction to the new owner had been approved by the EXCO and the decision was not reversible.

The new Parit DO, who replaced Tuan Haji and handled the case to regain the lost land, advised the people to make a clearer boundary between the two areas. He also suggested that the people work their area commercially, which could help them to get a better income. Long Dahaman told the DO that the decision to give land to others was not made on the ground but on paper, which is how they referred to maps, and therefore the move to make a better boundary was not secure enough to save their area from being taken over by others. He added that the more secure way was to gazette the area as a *Seng-oi* reserve. Long Dahaman
Plate 8.5: The Boundary
"Boundary Between Orang Asli and Malay Areas." This is a measure undertaken by the people of Perah to preserve their land from outsiders' encroachment.

Plate 8.6: A Vision of a Leader
Alang Rindang, Perah's Branch Leader of UMNO. He hopes political solutions will help the Seng-oi to obtain state recognition over their land rights.
also told the DO that the people could not simply develop the area because the JHEOA had their own development plans. The DO agreed with that view, but reassured them that the action which he proposed, i.e. making a clearer boundary, was regarded as an early move towards giving the people permanent entitlement. He promised that the government would be working towards giving the Seng-oi secure land ownership. The people took the new DO’s advice and cleared the boundary. They also put a little signboard along the boundary stating that the cleared area was the boundary between the Seng-oi and the Malay areas. They worked to clear this boundary, which was about one depa’ wide, twice a year and this work continues until now.

**Tangkai Chermin: Conflict With the State**

The people of Tangkai Chermin have been in conflict with the state since they were in Pengkalan Jering when their village was taken over for mining. The same threat occurred after the Japanese left when they heard rumours that their new village, Sungai Galah, was going to be taken over for mining. However, security concerns, especially government efforts to eradicate Communist influences, saved their village. Since the people did not have enough land to work in Sungai Galah, they continued their traditional *selai* activities in Gungke area. This led to another conflict with the Department of Forestry. Ngah Lesu and later his son, Anjang Makpin, argued with the Forest Rangers to defend their right to continue their traditional economic activities, especially opening *selai*. Both leaders managed to resolve these cases on the ground, which resulted in the Forest Rangers giving them permission to continue their *selai* activities in the area.

In the 1980s the people had another conflict with the PKPNP, a state subsidiary which planned to develop the whole Gungke area as an oil palm estate. Anjang Makpin told me that he had once asked Tuan Mat Khamis the reason the Forest Department did not allow them to work in the Gungke area, but at the same time the department approved the area for the PKPNP. In his question to Tuan Mat Khamis, he added that the PKPNP would destroy the area and not preserve it, as was always urged by the Forest Rangers. Tuan Mat Khamis told him that the state was going to develop the area as an estate which could create more job opportunities and bring more profit to the state. Anjang Makpin did not respond
to Tuan Mat Khamis' explanation and bottled up his feeling in relation to this matter for years until he had a chance tell me. According to him:

It seems that the state was more interested to see the people working as coolies most of the time than to allow them to work independently on their own land. Eventually, both sectors of economic activity, either working as a coolie for a the company or working on our own land, would bring the same result to the poor like us. We work because we want to eat and to fill our stomachs. The difference is that if we work on our own land we are more independent, but if we work for a company we have to obey the employer.

Nevertheless, he was thankful that the state had reconsidered the villager's application to make their new life in the Tangkai Chermin area. "I only regret that the state has not given us the clearance to develop this area. I do not know why," added Anjang Makpin. It seems to me that this question is another conflict with the state which has not yet been, but needs to be, resolved.

Although the JKKK and Senator Itam Wali presented the state with a concrete proposal for a way to develop the area, the state (and the JHEOA) still has not given the necessary clearance to allow the people to start work on the project. One of the major problems is that the JKKK and the senator wanted to use a privatisation approach, in cooperation with a private company. On behalf of the state of Perak, the JHEOA gave three explanations regarding their delay. The first was that they were afraid the Seng-oi of Sungai Galah would be cheated by their partner, the private company. Therefore the JHEOA wanted the two parties, the Seng-oi of Tangkai Chermin and the private company concerned, to come up with a concrete draft agreement. The second explanation concerns the land title of Tangkai Chermin. In principle, the state does not agree that Seng-oi land be developed by a private company because the state holds absolute rights. The third relates to the proposal to give all families of Tangkai Chermin title lands. This is regarded as a new development. In its proposal, the JKKK and the senator wanted to divide the project area into plots, one for each family. The cost of measuring the area and paying the land premiums would be included in the overhead costs of the project. When the loan is fully repaid, the JKKK will give these plots to each family to maintain, which means each family will own their land with individual title. Regarding this matter, the JHEOA is currently negotiating with the Perak State Government in order to get its approval for the project and other proposals. In addition, the state is also in the process of updating new land regulations for the Seng-oi. The unclear policy over Seng-oi
land has led to the oil palm project proposed by Tangkai Chermin to be abandoned for more than ten years. In contrast, the PKPNP project, which was developed at the same time as the people of Tangkai Chermin put forward their proposal to the state, has been producing a crop for several years.

In addition to ‘official constraints’, another factor which has contributed to the delay is that this project proposal did not go through the JHEOA. I gained this information while attending the POASM Annual General Meeting in 1997. In her opening address, the Minister of Welfare and National Unity, Datin Paduka Zaleha Ismail, urged the Seng-oi to propose their projects and other matters through the JHEOA. Observing this statement, the Secretary of the Perak Branch of POASM, who was sitting next to me, suddenly looked at me and whispered: “That is just like the case of Tangkai Chermin!” This remark reminded me of my previous conversation with Senator Itam Wali, who intended to minimise the role of the JHEOA in the planning and implementation of the project. To do this, he and the JKKK had directly consulted the Agricultural EXCO and the State Agricultural Authority, who, according to him, were more familiar with the agricultural sector than the JHEOA. Itam Wali also wanted to minimise the number of government agencies involved in the project to avoid bureaucratic red tape. I later checked the matter with the Perak Branch of the JHEOA. According to its Development Officer, the JHEOA does not intend to abuse its power in relation to this project. However, the procedure determined by the state requires the Seng-oi to forward their matters to the state via the JHEOA. The Seng-oi can deal directly with the state but the matter will come back to the JHEOA. The state will consult the JHEOA for its opinion, recommendation and endorsement regarding Seng-oi matters before taking a decision. “If Seng-oi matters did not, at first, go through the JHEOA, we would not know the background of those matters and it is difficult for us to make any recommendation or endorsement,” the officer added. This ironically means that, although the state encourages the Seng-oi to obtain development aid directly from other government agencies, they still cannot do it without the JHEOA. It seems that the JHEOA is like the hala' or pawang, who mediates between the inferior beings, the Seng-oi, and the superior powers, the government.
Conclusion

Lack of land has erased the *Seng-oi* traditional idea of land as communal property. Today, land is regarded as family heritage, or *saka’*. The acceptance of this idea is demonstrated by the fact that the majority of land transactions have occurred along family lines, from parent or grandparent to children or grandchildren. Transactions have also occurred within family networks, for example, between a person and his/her niece, nephew, or adopted child. The main concern underlining these transactions is the need for land for one’s livelihood rather than gender considerations. Females thus have equal rights to males in inheriting family property. In addition, the *Seng-oi* also emphasise the role of trusted individuals in the maintenance of their symbol of pride. Transactions with distant relatives and outsiders, however, have occurred as isolated cases, but are not a general practice among these communities.

The accounts in this chapter show how buying and selling began to appear in land transactions within the community, and that in conflicts, a ‘voice’ option (borrowed from Hirschman), occasionally took place within the process of these simple transactions, but were resolved in a family spirit or *ayat leui*. The exit option has now gradually been abandoned especially in negotiations with the state or outsiders. Its abandonment and the acceptance of voice have led the *Seng-oi* to adopt a more aggressive attitude. This attitude was demonstrated when Mara’ Semae was involved in conflicts with others, as he took lands without the permission or acknowledgment of the previous owner and then claimed the land as his own. He used the voice option aggressively in defending his occupation of others’ land. (His victims, on the other hand, use the exit option when they surrendered their land as they did not wish to quarrel among family members.) A similar trend was shown during the Malayan Emergency when the *Seng-oi* were deprived of freedom of choice. Through their involvement in the *Seng-oi Praq*, they became aggressive in fighting the Communists. This sudden change has raised questions among researchers, who used to regard them as a peaceful and non-violent people. As Leary (1995: 156) said, “It is difficult to understand how the myth of Orang Asli pacifity could still be sustained”.

286
Enchorn got married in May 1997.

I went to see Ata’ Bek Makar, who is a hala’, in order to get further explanation. He told me that the idea that the penyakit had caused health problems for Pak Yan’s family was true according to the Seng-oi belief system. He added that since all trees in the area had been cut down due to the fish farms project, the penyakit had now landed on the houses which were built in the area because they thought those houses were trees. “That was the reason the residents got ill, because they were always approached by the penyakit,” said Ata’ Bek Makar. “It is more dangerous if the penyakit can detect the weak ruwai of the residents. The penyakit will eat it, and the resident who owns that ruwai will die,” he added. He therefore agreed with the decision of his grandson, Pak Yan, to move away from the area in order to save his family from the supernatural threat.

In the later period, many more such cases occurred, causing the Seng-oi to abandon their permanent dengri’, and establish others. For instance, they exited from Berkei (or Sakai Jadi) when they wanted to escape from the Islamisation proposed by a Gop aristocrats. They exited Sanglop and Paloh in order to escape from supernatural anger due to ecological destruction brought about by the increase of mining activities carried out by the Dutch (Belanda) and the Chinese.

This information was given by the Development Officer of the JHEOA Perak Branch on 2 September 1996.
Chapter Nine

SENG-OI LAND RIGHTS IN GENERAL PERSPECTIVE

Introduction

In this chapter I will draw together the strands of my argument from previous chapters to focus on my main concern in this thesis. I will first discuss the significance of land as a source of Seng-oi culture. This discussion will then be followed by an analysis of the factors which caused changes in concept for land rights of the Seng-oi, which is the main interest of this study. I will then consider the conflict of interest regarding land between the indigenous people and the state.

Land in the Seng-oi Cultural Context

Land has become the fundamental basis of life for most indigenous people. In the Seng-oi language, land is referred to as tiik, a general term which includes soil and space. Tiik is the main source of Seng-oi culture. It has become the root of the belief system, norms and values, the economy, leadership and self consciousness, particularly regarding identity and indigeneity.

The meaning of tiik relating to soil goes back to the chermor about the creation of the earth, which is considered to be the root of the Seng-oi way of life. The Seng-oi believe earth and human beings and other creations of Nyenang, such as animals, originated from the same ingredients. Nyenang also gave tiik the same ruwai as human beings and other living things, including plants. According to this perspective, the Seng-oi believe that a human body (broog) is equal to an ‘earth body’, the soil. They also believe that the ruwai of tiik is equal to their own ruwai, which once again has led the people to regard tiik as equal in status to themselves and to respect the land in the same way that they respect human beings. This has also led the Seng-oi to regard tiik as a part of their family. Such a perspective makes the Seng-oi regard death, not as the end of human life but as going back to one’s origin (see Edo, 1993c; 1994b). In addition, the earth is
believed to have been given the same characteristics as human beings. It grew from a small area called Mengkah, a small island at the middle of Samudera Raye, into its old age as it is today. The Seng-oi say that the earth is now old and lacks energy to cope with human behaviour.

According to Seng-oi general perspectives, soil is a source of life: plants grow in the earth; plants are eaten by animals (and human beings); game animals are eaten by human beings; human beings (and animals) die and go back to the soil as a source of plant life. This process goes on in one complete circle, showing that these creatures depend on each other, with soil being the central point of this perspective. Since then, all creatures, especially human beings as 'intelligent creatures', have the responsibility to care for the soil because if there is no soil, they (the creatures) will have no life as well. This idea again proposes a harmonious relationship between human beings and the tiik, as soil.

The perception that tiik also refers to space, has become a major concern to the Seng-oi and has brought about a great impact on their lives. One facet of the impact is in regard to their belief system. When tiik becomes spatial, the Seng-oi belief system also becomes more complex. Despite the fact they believe the soil itself possesses a ruwai, they also believe many other ruwai exist in one space. These belong to other creatures, such as trees, human beings, animals, rocks, river, etc (see Roseman, 1991). The Seng-oi also believe that other supernatural beings exist in one space. These are either guardians of that space, which particularly look after the ruwai of the soil and other creatures, or they are free supernatural beings which are living or squatting in, or passing through that area. The responsibility of the people therefore also becomes complex because they have to deal with two types of supernatural beings. The first is the ruwai of tiik and other creatures on earth, and the second is the supernatural beings which exist on the tiik. The former are not of major concern for the Seng-oi because the status of all ruwai are the same as human ruwai. The main concern is the supernatural beings, referred to as penyakit, which have become the guardians of the space, or have occupied that space temporarily.

The Seng-oi believe all creatures have their own supernatural guardians, which are believed to occupy the same area as natural creatures. Malaysian mainstream
society have frequently ridiculed the Seng-oi, as experienced by the pupils of Perah in school, as being so foolish as to be afraid to laugh at butterflies. This view contrasts with the Seng-oi world view. The Seng-oi believe a butterfly has the same ruwai as a human although its image is different. More dangerously, the butterfly is believed to be looked after by its guardian named Ngkuu', which used to be referred to by anthropologists as the Thunder God, and regarded as “the personification of a natural force” (see Endicott, 1979c). This guardian, which looks like a baboon, lives on a cloud, and its main role is to watch over human behaviour on earth. It is regarded as the most disastrous predator.1 If men make fun of butterflies, the Ngkuu' will become angry, and its anger can lead to a storm disaster, or terlaij. Terlaij has, therefore, become another supernatural sanction which rules Seng-oi life. As a result of this belief, the Seng-oi tried to create a harmonious relationship with their surrounding environment, both the natural and supernatural world. The Seng-oi use a peaceful approach and harmonious relationship in exploiting their environment, especially to gain a good life on earth. This attitude is also brought about by the idea that the natural world is always inferior to the supernatural world. The people therefore always watch their behaviour in order to avoid angering supernatural beings. This then serves as a basis for establishing 'non-aggressive' behaviour (see Dentan, 1968; Edo, 1985).

The penyakit are a major concern because not all of them are regarded as guardians. Moreover, the penyakit which are categorised as guardians are also believed to endanger ruwai, including those belonging to human beings. A guardian also eats ruwai, especially weak ones which look like menghar (meat), such as birds, chicken and fish. Endangering the ruwai also means endangering life itself: if a ruwai dies, the person who owns that ruwai also dies. Generally, the Seng-oi believe that every area is fully occupied by supernatural beings. The area of Perah, for instance, is occupied by four dominant penyakit, named Mambang, Siti, Megat, and Dewa. Most of the rituals held in Perah deal with these penyakit. Only a small number deal with the ruwai of creatures, such as the rituals undertaken in the selai by the pawang to strengthen the ruwai of the paddy. The same ritual, called premmuh bidat or in Malay, mandi bidan, is undertaken to strengthen the ruwai of children and aims to make their image resemble stronger animals like tigers or elephants to protect them from penyakit (see Edo, 1995).
The main reason the people are afraid to deal with supernatural beings is because they are unseen. Another reason is the belief that they and other supernatural beings have contradictory interpretations about everything in the world (see Edo, 1993). For example, the people always feel themselves inferior. They lack knowledge of healing, are blind in the sense that they cannot see supernatural beings, and are weak, in that their souls are ‘hot’, and the like. In addition they refer to the penyakit as superior. They are powerful in the sense they can attack whoever they like; they are knowledgable, not blind as they can see both supernatural and natural beings, and their souls are cool, and the like. These two ideas have led people to depend on the member of the community who has power to deal with this unseen world, the pawang. Since pawang have the ability to deal with the supernatural world, the people presume they have supernatural power too.

To some extent, the people regarded the pawang as a part of supernatural beings, and obeyed him as a powerful leader. The people presumed that the pawang had extraordinary power and the ability to watch their behaviour. This led the people to control their behaviour. The people have traditionally avoided gossipping about each other, because they believe that the pawang heard all their words, or that their words were delivered to him by his spirit guides, gunig, believed to live among the people. The pawang seems to be another source of sanction who is responsible for monitoring the behaviour of his/her community.

The need of the pawang for supernatural protection, as well as to conduct tiik rituals, indirectly gave him some political power to organise the community. This is also true among other indigenous people, such as the Temiar who are a sub-ethnic group of Seng-oi, or the indigenous people in other parts of Southeast Asia, like the Wana people of the Sulawesi. According to Jennings (1995):

The Temiar shaman is very aware of his surroundings to the extent that as the spirit-guide-child he is able to impose a form of social control both on individuals and the group.

Jennings’ view reflects the main character of Temiar traditional leadership where the leader, who is most likely the shaman himself, uses shamanship to obtain politico-religious power in order to control the society. The same point is made by Atkinson (1989), who suggested that the recognition of a shaman represents
an instance of a small-scale noncentralized society in which the special knowledge, which he owns, serves as a basis for political power inequality. Knowledge in this respect serves as a source of power.

Jennings and Atkinson's views seem to be similar to the Seng-oi social practices of the people of Perah and Tangkai Chermin. In the precolonial and early British era in particular, pawang like Long Jeroneh of Perah and Long Tanjung of Gumpey Luas were powerful figures in leading the community. In fact, Long Tanjung's group became the central point of Gumpey Luas territory, since other groups who dared not move around in the area without a pawang finally joined his group because of the ability of Long Tanjung to deal with the supernatural aspect of tiik as space. His ability to obtain politico-religious power enabled him to control his people and led them to establish a dengri in Teluk Buyong and later Pengkalan Jering. However, when Malay influence penetrated the society, the leadership system divided into two, the pawang as an opinion leader and the penghulu as a group leader. The pawang was responsible for handling domestic matters, while the penghulu concentrated on external matters, especially in regard to the relationship with Malay leaders. Long Tanjung, who strongly believed in sharing, shared the role of the leadership with another elder, who became the penghulu, while he retained his position as a pawang. The same practice is shown in Perah when Long Jeroneh passed to Alang Tek the position of penghulu, while he retained the shamanship or pawang.

Rituals which deal with tiik and its penyakit need total participation from the community. Such participation is brought about by the fact that the people share the same perceptions and ideas about nature, which then became the root of their norms, values and way of life. When dealing with natural beings, the Seng-oi can always act individually. Activities like cutting down trees to clear an area for selai, building a house, fetching water, and hunting, for instance, could be undertaken by individuals or an individual family. However, when dealing with supernatural aspects of tiik, such as undertaking the ngenggulang ritual, healing, and the like, the people need to exercise collective responsibility. In the old days, for example, opening a selai involved a number of rituals. The first was just a kebut, a singing ritual. In this ritual, the pawang asked permission from the guardian to clear the area. If he gained permission, another ritual was performed before the slashing and burning activities began. Another ritual was performed
before the planting activity, followed by a few more rituals, such as when the paddy is called *langkah galang* (when it is about six inches in height), then when the paddy is 'pregnant', and then before harvest work begins and when it is ended by the *ngenggulang* ritual which is held after the harvest. The first three rituals deal with the guardian of the area or *pangkal tiik*, while the rituals after that deal with the *ruwai* of the paddy, and in the last ritual the *pawang* once again deals with the *pangkal tiik*. In the *ngenggulang* ritual, the *pawang* expresses his gratitude to the spiritual guardian for giving them a good harvest and good health during the *selai* season (see Edo, 1985). All these rituals need the participation of all the people who were involved in the *selai* activities in order to make the spiritual guardian familiar with them and to protect them and their paddy *ruwai* from the threat of the bad *penyakit*.

Sharing responsibilities in dealing with the supernatural aspects of *tiik* has been adopted by the *Seng-oi* as a way of life and is regarded as the ultimate value which is applied in all aspects of daily life. These values were supervised closely by the *pawang* and were controlled by other supernatural sanctions, such as prohibitions, and taboos. One of these sanctions is called *puhnan*, a misfortune faced by someone who is unable to fulfil his/her desire, such as eating rare food or getting married. The people are therefore concerned about sharing rare foods in order to avoid misfortune because, in a small community like that of the *Seng-oi*, a misfortune faced by a member of their community is always regarded as a misfortune for the community as a whole. Close relationships between members of the group make them share loss, emotion and responsibility.

Sharing of emotion was demonstrated by the people of Perah during the funerals of Andak Jameah and Itam Langsat. During Andak Jameah’s funeral, for instance, the villagers gathered at her house from the moment they received the news about her death from the hospital in Batu Gajah town. Then her family members, relatives and friends, who lived outside the villages, came and shared the sorrow, as everyone, especially the females, were crying and embracing Andak Jameah’s children. Andak Jameah was buried the next day. The same situation occurred on the death of Itam Langsat. Everyone worked together to accomplish their social and cultural responsibility towards both of these funerals. After each funeral, friends and distant relatives went back to their villages, leaving the villagers and close relatives at the house of the deceased. These
people stayed there for seven days or more, until a separation ritual, called *kremmas tiik* or *nambak*, was held on the seventh day after the death.\(^3\)

During their seven days stay in Andak Jameah and Itam Langsat’s houses, the people contributed food and money as they had their daily meals together at these houses. In addition to their belief,\(^4\) their stay was due to social reasons. They wanted to accompany, and to entertain the family, as well as to comfort them from feeling the loss of their beloved. By their presence, the villagers hoped to bring happiness to the family and to help them forget their sorrow. For the seven days, the people gathered at these houses day and night.\(^5\) When the *kremmas tiik* was over, the people gathered for the last night at Andak Jameah and Itam Langsat’s house. The next day, they returned to normal life. Andak Jameah’s and Itam Langsat’s family members, who lived outside the village, went back to their homes or work sites.

Collective responsibility in dealing with emotion and with the supernatural world became the main factor leading people to adopt the spirit of working together, and sharing of space and responsibilities. In regard to the sharing of space in particular, the *Seng-oi* will try to avoid any kind of misunderstanding with regard to land. If the people engage in quarrels or struggles to own piece of land, they believe the *pangkal tiik* of that space will become angry and that anger will cause illness or death. Due to this idea, Ngah Pok of Perah advised his son, Long Apon, to cool down and surrender his land to Mara’ Semae. Ngah Pok’s advice might also have been because of the fact that during that time Mara’ Semae’s father was the *pawang* of the village, and he therefore did not want to develop any misunderstanding with the main figure who possessed the power to deal with the spiritual aspects of land. Ngah Pok’s main concern was to keep a harmonious relationship between his family and the *pawang*, whose role appeared to be more social than religious; once again showing the significance of the politico-religious power held by the *pawang* and its influence in the society. This seems to show that, respecting the *pawang*, as well as co-operative efforts and sharing materials, responsibilities and ideas in dealing with the land and its related elements has become an important source of *Seng-oi* unity.
The perception of *tiik* as both soil and space relates to the *Seng-oi*’s awareness of indigeneity. Based on the *chermor*, the *Seng-oi* claim to be the earliest people to occupy the *dengri’ adeh*. Their presence dates back to the earliest descendant of the Prophet Adam. Through these *chermor*, narrated both in Perah and Tangkai Chermin, the communities of each village believe that they moved to *dengri’ adeh* after being persuaded by Baginda Ali, who wanted to overcome the overpopulation problem in Mengkah. This was then strengthened by the concept of *sech-behiib*, a symbolic relationship between the *Seng-oi* and land (*tiik*), which has also become the root of *Seng-oi* ideas of the *pasak* identity of the *dengri’ adeh*.

Their claim appears similar to those of indigenous people in the rest of the world, who basically claim the right of access to land, as stated by the United Nations under its Operative Paragraphs of the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (8 June 1993). (See Appendix 1). Part VI of the declaration guarantees the people the right to land. In its Operative Paragraph 23, for instance, the declaration stated that:

> Indigenous peoples have the right to recognition of their distinctive and profound relationship with their lands and territories. The use of the term ‘land and territories’ in this declaration means the total environment of the land, air, water, sea, sea-ice, flora and fauna and other resources which indigenous people have traditionally owned or otherwise occupied or used.

In its Operative Paragraph 27, the declaration stated that:

> Indigenous people have the right to special measures to protect, as intellectual property, their sciences, technologies and cultural manifestation, including genetic resources, seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora, oral traditions, literatures, designs and visual and performing arts.

In regard to the people of Perah and Tangkai Chermin, the above declaration seems to be very significant in support of their claim. Land still has great significance in *Seng-oi* culture, although not much area is left for them as their traditional land, which symbolised their way of life, has been taken away by the state. The state took over their area as state land, redistributed it to new non-*Seng-oi* owners, developed the area with agricultural projects, or affected the land by other development projects or industries, including hydro-electric dams.
An area like Tasik Bangsi of Tangkai Chermin, which was considered a historical area, was totally destroyed by the mining industry. The mining industry also destroyed all the sacred sites which were located in the Sungai Galah area. The same experience was faced by the people of Perah. Most of their sacred sites in this dengri’ were affected by logging activity which operated in the 1970s. This area has now been awarded to an agricultural agency, which is a state subsidiary, to develop the area with oil palm. On the other hand, the Jenalek (or Starr Raja’) area, which was regarded as a historical site where people and the Sultan of the ancient Malay state of Perak gathered to hunt and fish together, was taken over by the state and awarded to new owners, none of whom are Seng-oi of Perah. This area was then turned over to agricultural projects. All these changes resulted in the reduction of either Perah or Tangkai Chermin areas. The people of these two villages now only have their residential and agricultural areas. Loss of traditional areas, which used to be the source of intellectual property, has badly affected the people’s cultural ideas and belief system.

However, the areas which have remained in their possession still serve as a source of cultural belief. The people still believe in the supernatural aspects of land in these areas, especially supernatural guardians, supernatural beings, or penyakit, although their ‘loyalty’ to this belief system has begun to decrease. Sharing of responsibilities and activities are still being practiced, and these collective ideas and activities are still an important expression of Seng-oi identity. The people have begun to ‘reconstruct’ their belief system, values and norms to suit present needs. In the old days, rituals were carried out purely for religious purposes, especially in dealing with the guardians of the land. Due to the loss of sacred sites and traditional areas, people today perform the ritual with minimal religious significance. This ritual has now become an annual feast, giving the people the opportunity to get together, to strengthen their family ties, to pass down their cultural heritage, and to associate in a solid social group of hiik Semai or Seng-oi. Gomes (1986: 111) stresses that:

The development of Semai consciousness, or ethnogenesis, was further fostered by the growing awareness and response of the Semai to the threat of losing control over resources such as land and fruit trees. This brought about common interest among the Semai and triggered formation of an association using ethnicity as a basis for grouping and membership.
The emphasis on social solidarity is a new approach in preserving their culture and identity, and laying claim upon their land rights, as noted by Nicholas (1990: 84):

The first step is to re-establish the Semai's [Seng-oi's] own history and traditions. Without a deep knowledge of these, the Semai will lose their identity and their pride. Subsequently, they must be conscious of their historical and basic rights, and be urged to participate fully in determining and achieving their own genuine development.

The same approach, that is, to reconstruct or realign their culture in order to cope with the present situation, has been taken by many displaced indigenous people in Southeast Asia dealing with land rights issues. The cultural aspects of this reconstruction might be different from one group to another. The Agta and Buid of the Philippines, for instance, also emphasised social solidarity to serve as a barricade against encroachment by migrant peasants. The Buid took further defensive action by changing their land ownership system. They converted their land holding from non-possession, which served the traditional rights, to co-operative property (see Peterson, 1978; Gibson, 1986).

However, when British colonialism began, the Seng-oi, who lived in peripheral areas like the Perah and Sungai Galah, experienced loss of land and territories due to the mining industry and the expansion of rubber estates. The destruction of their traditional areas and environment resulting from these activities affected Seng-oi culture, especially in regard to their belief system. Such destruction indirectly undermined the cultural ideas of land of the Seng-oi people, and this is clearly shown by the people of the two villages in this study. The community of each village seems to be divided into two groups. The older generation still strongly hold traditional beliefs and ideas about land, and are bound by the concept sech-behiib. In contrast, the younger generation seem to have lost some of their belief in the supernatural aspects of land. Some of them are confused about the traditional ideas, which they have gained from the older generation through the process of socialisation, as these ideas are threatened by the modern and scientific influences they gained from school, which totally denies the existence of supernatural beings. This contradiction has caused them to be caught between 'to believe' and 'not to believe'. They believe when they seek traditional healing after suffering a disease which can not be cured by modern medicine. They believe this kind of disease is caused by penyakit. They
disbelieve when they see the outsiders who destroy their sacred sites escape from any disease or disaster which is usually caused by the anger of the penyakit. Therefore, the younger generation are now more interested in developing a new culture, particularly in regard to the interpretation of land as space.

The younger generation of Perah and Tangkai Chermin regard land as a source of consciousness about their indigeneity. To some extent, this stand might not accord with mainstream interests. As Wazir-Jahan (1995:19) states:

one can expect that Malaysia’s future lies in the recognition of the development of a culturally plural democratic system in which citizens, irrespective of their origin, status and rank feel free to identify and share the same symbols of national identity in a climate of self-criticism.

This view might be suitable for mainstream society which stands to gain an equal achievement in development. However, the Seng-oi, who are still a disadvantaged group, are not able to compete in a laissez faire system, and have to depend on special privileges in order to retain their rights. One of the privileges is to be recognised as an indigenous people or Pribumi in order to obtain special rights, including access to land. Owning land, especially in a traditional area, is viewed as a source of pride, essential for the maintenance of their identity and to distinguish their socio-politico status as indigenous people of the dengri' adeh. In other words, the younger generation of Seng-oi perceive land as a symbol of pride and indigeneity. This is then supported by the concepts of Bumiputera and Pribumi, which were constructed by the state in order to give socio-politico status to the native Malay and other indigenous people, and also emphasise the close association and affinity between the people and their land.

The concept of Pribumi has, somehow or other, recognised the indigeneity of the Seng-oi as ‘sons of the soil’ in areas which still belong to them. Such areas are referred to as dengri’ (homeland) or kampong (village) such as Perah and Tangkai Chermin. A former JHEOA Director-General, Iskandar Carey, predicted that:

The Orang Asli of the future will enjoy their full place in the Malaysian sun, while retaining their special position as the truly indigenous inhabitants of this country. (Carey, 1976: 336).
In regard to land rights, however, this prediction is still some distance away from reality as the people are still struggling and seeking state recognition over the issue of land. In today's situation, although the state has provided the Seng-oi with access to land, this right is not reflected in the absolute recognition of land holding. This right might help the people to protect their land from outsiders' encroachment, but the threat from the state remains as it can overrule this provision. Since most of the land occupied by the Seng-oi is either Aboriginal Reserve or Aboriginal Area, both of which the state could take over to serve its interests, the people can only claim compensation for plants and houses but not for land. The Seng-oi are not much concerned about compensation, but the discretionary provision of laws, especially the Orang Asli Act 1954 (revised 1974), regarding Seng-oi land rights adopted by the state has brought about a situation of turmoil. The Seng-oi are beginning to fear losing land, which will affect their identity and indigeneity. The Seng-oi still hope that state recognition of them as Pribumi can form the foundation for absolute and secure title to land, and allow them to obtain other development opportunities.

**Transition in Ideas About Land Rights**

This section will discuss changes in ideas about land rights. The traditional idea is traced back to the chermor and other narratives the elders tell about Seng-oi life in the past. This is then compared with the ideas held by the people these days.

The practice of sharing land appears in most of the Seng-oi chermor. According to the chermor, the idea of sharing land began from the first human generation in Mengkah. Nyenang Raq urged his descendants to share land equally because it was given by Nyenang for all. Before the ancestor of Seng-oi, who was the last descendant of Nyenang Raq, left Mengkah, Baginda Ali urged the people to practice the same values. This practice then became a fine way for the Seng-oi to sustain their unity and maintain their dengri' as well. Sharing of land has basically been practiced without clear boundaries or inheritance systems, in the sense that all Seng-oi could work and occupy any dengri they wish on the condition that they share those lands with others. According to Williams-Hunt (1995: 37):
Rights to land is basically usufructuary. This meant that village members had rights over land which they cleared and cultivated. They could exploit the land in any manner they wished, through hunting and gathering. In using the land, they were forbidden from holding more land than they could use. They also had to take necessary measures to ensure that the land existed in perpetuity for the use of future generations. As soon as a village member stopped working on the land, he or she forfeited all ‘ownership’ over it, and it went to the community.

This tradition is shown in the chennor of Lambor where sharing land became an essential value of the community. People would open selai or vegetable gardens in any site they liked, including the former selai of other members of the community. They also shared responsibility in clearing the area for selai. Basically, each family chose to work in one plot, and the size of the plot depended on the labour-force that family had. The pawang allocated a working period for each stage of work. In clearing, for instance, the work would take about one or one and a half months to complete. If there were families who could not finish their work within this time due to certain obstacles, such as poor health or accidents, the other members of the community had the responsibility to help them to accomplish the work. The same responsibility was taken in other work stages of the selai.

However, this sharing practice had its limitations, in the sense that not all aspects of life were shared by the community. In general, the Seng-oi adopted concepts about three overlapping rights. The first was a total sharing practice which applied to land, scarce foods, including game and fish, emotions, responsibility and power. Regarding scarce food, all members of the community were usually involved in a hunting or fishing trip. The catch would be shared equally, which showed an ancient type of communism. If only one family, or one of its members, was involved, they only had to share the catch if the fish was scarce, such as Kelah fish (Tortambroides; duronesis) or fresh water turtle, or if the game was rare, such as deer or mouse deer. If the game or fish was categorised as ‘ordinary’, such as carp or cat fish, or game like monkey or squirrel, they did not have to share with other members unless they had more than they needed. However, they would share all foods which were desired by pregnant women, regardless of whether the food was scarce or ordinary, because people feared the threat of puhnan.
The second concept was concerned with a certain degree of private ownership, such as the harvest of paddy and maize. These items were considered to belong to the grower because every family in the community grew the same thing every season. They only had the responsibility to share these harvests with 'unlucky' community members.

The third concept fell between usufruct and personal or private possession. This applied to vegetables, tapioca, and the like. All members of the community had the right to harvest these farm products on two conditions. Firstly, they had to inform or ask permission from the grower, and secondly, the harvester had the responsibility to take care of the garden and its plants and other immature crops. In the case of tapioca, the harvester should replant it at the same site in order to make the plant last longer and to benefit its owner or other members of the community. The need to ask for permission appeared to indicate a minimal degree of personal rights of the owner of the vegetables or tapioca garden. These three concepts constituted the system adopted by the Seng-oi while they were in Lambor, which basically shows that they shared the land jointly, but had adopted a certain degree of ownership over farm products.

The sharing of land was brought about by the fact that each gu is composed of a small number of community members. In a small community, work must be done in a co-operative way. Owning land individually was regarded as being against this spirit, and thus against the community. In addition, ideas of land holding derived from the fact that the Seng-oi were not settled permanently but shifted from one place to another. The Seng-oi would work in one place for two seasons at the most. After that, they had to move far away in order to allow the area to recover in its natural way. This is ultimately based on the Seng-oi belief which regarded land to be similar to human skin. According to this analogy, the earth is like a human body, while human beings and other creatures are like mites which live on it. If mites are aggressive in their activities, such as eating the skin, the body will suffer skin disease and itchiness. If these activities are not controlled, the whole body will suffer with disease and will die, especially if the body is in its old age. Due to this analogy, the people in the old days shifted from one place to another because they believed their activities related to opening selai caused a skin disease for the earth. By shifting to another place, these old diseases would recover. Although they created diseases every time, the people
gave the *tiik* the opportunity to recover.\(^7\) This analogy appears ecologically friendly.

There were other reasons why the *Seng-oi* moved from one *selai* to another. One of these was due to a decline of yields and scarcity of natural resources, especially fish and game animals. From a scientific point of view, the decline has been mainly caused by the changing of soil composition, especially its humus. According to Marten and Saltman (1986: 233-234):

There are several reasons for declining yields (Nye and Greenland, 1960): increases in pests, diseases, and weeds; topsoil erosion; deterioration in the physical condition or nutrient status of the soil; and changes in the number and composition of soil fauna and flora... The decline in humus content during the cropping period is rapid during the first year and becomes progressively slower... Decreases in the amounts of humus in the soil often lead to the following (Ahn, 1974):

- Loss of crumb structure in the topsoil;
- Lower total porosity and lower macroporosity;
- Poorer aeration;
- Poorer rainfall infiltration;
- Increased runoff and surface erosion;
- Lower cation exchange capacity;
- Changes in exchangeable bases, degree of saturation, and soil pH; and
- Lower nutrient levels due to lower amounts of humus mineralized.

All these factors can play some part in reducing soil productivity under shifting cultivation.

The *Seng-oi* in the old days, however, had no scientific knowledge to explain this decline. Due to a lack of such knowledge, the people related the situation to their belief system, according to which, their long presence in an area would cause its guardian to ‘feel hot’ and become angry at this ‘heat’. Its anger would cause the *ruwai* of the paddy to run away and would result in the decline of its yields. The same anger would also cause the *ruwai* of the people to become scared and weak, which resulted in illness, injury or death due to accidents. To avoid these, the *Seng-oi* would withdraw from that area. In addition, the *Seng-oi* adopted avoidance as a way of escaping unfavourable circumstances, including those which were related to social and political events. This attitude is demonstrated in the *chermor* when the *Seng-oi* fled to Berkei the moment the *Gop* flooded the
Lambor area. The main reason was because they wanted to get away from the Gop, who practiced a different system of land rights. When the Gop first arrived in the Lambor area, the Seng-oi used to live together with them. However, the Seng-oi finally had no land to work because the whole area, which used to be shared by members of their community, was possessed permanently by the Gop. The lack of land led the Seng-oi to flee far into the interior to Berkei. Later, they moved out from Berkei as they wanted to avoid Islamisation.

Generally, the chermor indicate that the usufruct concept of land rights was widely practiced by the Seng-oi in the old days. This concept allowed them to work and move within their tribal area, even after they, especially among the mai direh, had established permanent settlements, or dengri’. Later, they began to establish contact with the rulers of the ancient Malay states of Perak, as shown by the gu of Paloh, Temboh Bekett, Busut, Denak, Bekau, Perah and Sungai Galah. These contacts led the Malay rulers, either the Sultan or rajas, to bestow titles on Seng-oi leaders (as shown in Table 9.1), and give them regelia—such as kris (keris), swords, gong, and songkok (a Malay hat)—and letters of authority, or surat kuasa, to rule their dengri'.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>Seng-oi Territories</th>
<th>Titles</th>
<th>Title Bestower</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Batang Padang</td>
<td>Gorl</td>
<td>Tok Balang Ali</td>
<td>Sultan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Warr</td>
<td>Tok Lela Dewa Angsa</td>
<td>Sultan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chengriq</td>
<td>Tok Sang Lela Mutu Nuangga</td>
<td>Sultan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gumpey Luas</td>
<td>Tok Maharaja</td>
<td>Raja Muda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Padag Kerikal</td>
<td>Tok Singa Merjan</td>
<td>Raja Muda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tok Singa Merban</td>
<td>Raja Muda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tok Mas Mulia</td>
<td>Raja Muda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinta</td>
<td>Paloh</td>
<td>Tok Pawang Setia Di Raja</td>
<td>Sultan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bipog</td>
<td>Tok Sang Lela Pujangga</td>
<td>Sultan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doug (Gopeng)</td>
<td>Tok Lela Perkasa</td>
<td>Sultan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perak Tengah</td>
<td>Perah</td>
<td>Tok Takor</td>
<td>Sultan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tok Mat Melaka</td>
<td>Sultan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Busut (Lengkuas)</td>
<td>Tok Gerak Macang</td>
<td>R. Belanja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tok Pawang Uda</td>
<td>R. Belanja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Temboh Bekett</td>
<td>Tok Antan Bedui</td>
<td>Sultan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suak Padi</td>
<td>Tok Alang Ishak</td>
<td>Sultan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Lambor)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tok Pawang Di Raja</td>
<td>Sultan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hilir Perak</td>
<td>Erong (Bernem)</td>
<td>Tok Batin Lela Perkasa</td>
<td>Sultan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Fieldwork 1996.)

**Table 9.1: The Seng-oi Leader's Titles During the Ancient Malay State of Perak Prior To and Within the Transition Period**

From the state’s point of view, these appointments were considered to be an expansion of influence and control into the interior. In the ancient Malay monarchy, the Sultan or rajas would appoint leaders, either their relatives, palace aristocrats, or the locals, to become rulers in existing or new areas. With these appointments, those areas came under control of these monarchs, and their inhabitants became their subjects. A similar form of domination was applied to the Seng-oi. The appointed penghulu' became a part of the state machinery of the ruling state, and were given new roles to rule their areas on behalf of the monarch. This means that the Sultan and rajas gained control over their Seng-oi subjects in the interior through this mechanism, the bestowed penghulu'. Through these appointments, tribal areas, or the dengri’ of the sengoi, came under the control of the monarch, or ancient Malay state. In the context of the Malay subjects, this domination meant that the people had to pay taxes to their
local ruler. These, however, did not apply to the *Seng-oi*. The *Seng-oi* were given freedom to continue their way of life, as well as to enjoy absolute rights over land, and were freed from paying any taxes. This situation might be because the *penghulu* of the *Seng-oi* did not regard themselves as rulers but just a community leaders as they were before. This contrasted with the Malays, whose local leaders regarded themselves as rulers of those areas or districts, and used their position to gain benefits from the people under their administration. The *Seng-oi* were only 'required' to pay an annual tribute, all of which went directly to the Sultan or rajas. In addition, the *Seng-oi* also offered gifts to the Sultan or rajas on every visit to the palace, most of which were held during the fruit seasons.

The *Seng-oi*, however, viewed this expansion of state control differently. They regarded both title and *surat kuasa* as a delegation of political power which gave responsibility to the *penghulu* to administer the people and their territory. In regard to the land, the *surat kuasa* was interpreted as a grant to the people of the territory they occupied, giving them secure residential rights. This recognition strengthened the idea of territorial rights among the *Seng-oi*, which led the people to recognise the territory of others, together with the informal rules which existed at the level of mutual understanding among all members of each territory or *dengri*. To some extent, however, the *Seng-oi* admitted that they were under the influence of the Malay state. The *penghulu*, who were regarded as the right-hand-men of the Sultan or rajas, had to carry broader responsibilities than just community leaders. In addition to their traditional role, the *penghulu* had to fulfil other responsibilities as suggested by the state, such as to play the role of leaders of their *dengri*. They also played an intermediary role between the *Seng-oi* and the rulers, especially in transmitting the advice of the Sultan or rajas in relation to encouraging the people to stay in permanent settlements and carry out non-swidden agriculture.

Despite minimal political power reflected in the title they obtained, most of the *penghulu* successfully persuaded their people to take this advice. At the beginning of their involvement in non-swidden agriculture, the people planted fruit orchards or *dusut*. This had a great impact on the *Seng-oi*, initiating the development of ideas about family land ownership. In contrast to *selai* or vegetable gardens, permanent agriculture resulted in the use of land, on which
fruit trees would remain in the *dusut* area forever. This gave no opportunity to other members of the community to use the land. This was then followed by a commitment from the owner of the *dusut*, who had to clear the orchard area regularly, at least once a year during the fruit season. The claim over fruit trees came to include *dusut* land, even though the owner of the *dusut* still allowed other members of the community to collect fruit. In regard to *dusut* ownership, the people were bound by a similar principle to that practiced in the vegetable gardens, which required one to inform the owners of the *dusut* of one's intention to harvest or collect fruit, and to seek permission for this, thus demonstrating rights which implied a minimal degree of private ownership. With the exception of the *dusut*, other 'empty' areas within the territory were still regarded as usufructuary.

In Perah and Sungai Galah, the usufruct concept was practiced until the early British era, while the people in the interior like Batang Padang, such as in Warr and Gorl, practiced it until the early Post-Independence era (see Gomes, 1990: 12-36). This difference was brought about by the different type of crops cultivated by the people of these two areas, and the land laws introduced by the British colonial administration. The people of Warr and Gorl focussed their non-swidden activities on *dusut*, while the people of Perah were not attracted to *dusut*, but engaged in cash crops. When rubber was introduced by the British, the sultan advised the people of Perah to cultivate this crop because rattan had become scarce. In Perah, the engagement in rubber cultivation was begun by a descendant of Mat Melaka of Pancur, and then followed by the people of Keramat. This engagement brought about a clearer delineation of family land ownership. Compared to fruit, rubber has no significance for domestic use, and obviously it was not a food. Since rubber had no internal value, and other members of the community had nothing to do with it, this crop therefore became the exclusive property of the owner. In addition, almost all members of the community had their own rubber fields. Concentration on one's own fields provided strong commitment, and this close relationship with land became the basis of the land holding idea. The concept of owning rubber in Perah became similar to owning paddy in Lambor or Temboh Bekett, where the people had the absolute right to own this commodity, and it was accepted as such by members of the community. However, these two crops produced different results in relation to land rights. Since paddy was a temporary and short term crop, the area was, in
principle, available for others after each season ended. In contrast, rubber is a permanent plant which requires the use of land for a long time, and most likely forever. By referring back to the adat, which indicate that it is a natural order for trees to grow on land, a claim over rubber trees became a claim over the rubber field. Each rubber field therefore belonged to the family who owned the rubber trees which were planted there. Nevertheless, in the late pre-colonial era and in the beginning of the early British era, there was still plenty of land available for the people to plant paddy and vegetables, and therefore the owning of dusut, and later rubber fields, did not very much bother the people.

When British colonialism began in the State of Perak in 1874, it imposed its own concept of land ownership, in which all land was codified in the Torrens system of registration. This meant all land belonged to the state. The Malay peasantry resisted this system, and this forced an amendment recognising their customary rights by creating Malay reservation land in 1913 (see Means, 1985: 639). However, the Seng-oi in the interior were not alerted to these political changes and the resulting land problems. From their point of view, the land on which their villages and territories (awarded by the Malay sultan) were situated, belonged to them. However, according to the British point of view, the Seng-oi were landless, as most of their area was converted to state-owned Forest Reserve, and other reservations (see Gomes, 1994: 185).

The people of Perah and Sungai Galah, who engaged in rubber cultivation, were effected by the British law. Perah area was converted to Forest Reserve and Malay Reservation. Despite land problems related to these laws, the gu of Mat Melaka was regarded as lucky when the Sultan of Perak gave them an area of the Malay Reserve to establish a dengri’ because such reservations came under the jurisdiction of the Sultan as part of the recognition of Malay customary rights by the British colonial administration. This award allowed Mat Melaka and his people to make their living from rubber. This situation contrasts to that of the Kenmat people, whose area was converted to Forest Reserve. Their involvement in rubber cultivation in the area resulted in a conflict with the state, which led to the detention of their penghulu’, Alang Tek, in the early 1930s, followed by Maa’ Asing’s case in the late 1930s or early 1940s. This case forced the state, in particular the Department of Forestry, to recognise the presence of the Seng-oi in
the area, and to give the people the right to live in the area by awarding them an Occupying Permit.

The British allowed the people to carry out rubber cultivation, but did not allow them to expand their activities beyond the permitted area, which was rather smaller than their previous traditional area. Although there was no restriction on the people going beyond this area, especially to collect jungle products such as *damar* and rattan, the Department of Forestry did not permit them to establish rubber fields in the Forest Reserve outside the permitted area because rubber trees were not regarded as forest trees. The limited area provided through this Occupying Permit forced the people to concentrate on their rubber fields because it was their only reliable source of livelihood. This commitment once again led the families to develop a stronger idea of land ownership over their rubber fields. The acceptance of the changing idea of land rights was clearly shown after the Emergency ended, when the people of Perah, who came back from Bekau, Temboh Bekett and Denak, went straight to work on their own rubber fields, and then built houses on their own land. This idea was then strengthened by the state through its rubber project which was developed in three phases, implemented in 1966, 1967, and 1968. In this project, the state gave plots of rubber fields to families, and not to the community as a whole. This was then followed by other projects such as fish farms and housing subsidies, which once again emphasized family ownership. These projects needed to be built on one's own or one's family’s lands. This family ownership idea was widely held by the people, as shown by Pak Yan, who told me he worked on his mother’s land because his mother represented his late father as the head of his family. All their rubber fields and fish farms were under his mother’s name. These lands would then be inherited by his family members, but this could only be done after his mother had died.

The people of Sungai Galah went through the same experience as the people of Perah. Gumpey Luas area was converted to State Land, which was subjected to mining. Mining activities destroyed the whole of their traditional area, including their *dusut* in Teluk Buyung. The people then cultivated rubber in the remaining area of Sungai Galah. Since the area was state land, the state required them to apply for a Temporary Occupational Licence (TOL), approval for which was held by the DO. Under the TOL, the land was granted temporarily to the people,
and the state could take it back when it was required, especially for mining. Since the rest of the land within Gumpey Luas area was affected by mining, the people had to rely on their own rubber fields, which were then inherited by these owners’ children. Lacking land to work in Sungai Galah, and burdened by the fact that the rubber price was falling, the people were forced to open selai in Gungke, another traditional area which had been converted to a Forest Reserve. These activities led to conflict with the Department of Forestry. The Forestry Department then agreed to allow them to continue their selai activity but only in the areas in which they had previously worked. The people could not expand their activities to other parts of the Forest Reserve. This prohibition was not suitable for selai activities because paddy planting required new areas with natural fertilizer in order to get a good harvest. Once again the people faced a shortage of land, which forced them to turn to their former selai to plant tapioca, and sell it in order to buy rice. Due to their close commitment to the tapioca gardens, each family regarded them as their own land. When they moved to Tangkai Chermin in 1985, their tapioca gardens had become part of the new village area. However, the people could not claim these gardens because they became involved in a restructuring programme to develop the area as a well-planned village. According to the proposal, each family would be entitled to a plot of land for housing, dusut and a vegetable garden, and another plot of oil palm as the main source of family income. This proposal justified the change in idea of land rights, and its acceptance shows that the younger generation of Seng-oi have recognised the family ownership system.

The situation in Perah and Sungai Galah was, however, different from Warr and Gorl, although these areas had also been converted to Batang Padang Forest Reserve. The people of Gorl and Warr, who planted dusut, were not greatly affected by this because fruit trees were regard as a kind of forest tree. In addition, World War II had forced the British to abandon the enforcement of this law for a while. The subsequent psychological war against the Communist insurgency, which extended from the post-war period to the Post-Independence era, ‘persuaded’ the state to allow the Seng-oi in this area to continue their traditional way of life, which indirectly meant the people could retain their rights over the dusut within this period without much intervention from the state. Since dusut, which were cultivated widely by the people of Gorl and Warr, produced fruit which was needed by the people for domestic consumption, and given the
fact that the community members were related to one another, the people in this area continued enjoying usufructuary over these products, as well as on other empty land within their territory. In regard to the *dusut* in particular, the owners still allowed other members of the community to collect the fruit, but the *dusut* area began to be regarded as belonging to the family who owned the *dusut* trees. In addition, fruit still had no market value in the early part of the Post-Independence period, which led the owners to pay less attention to their *dusut*. However, when fruit, especially Durian and Petai (*Parkia biglandulosa*) became marketable in the mid 1970s, the idea of land holding over the *dusut* began to change from usufructuary to family ownership. Today, usufructuary rights only occur among family members of the owner of the *dusut* (see Gomes, 1990; Edo, Forthcoming).

Previous scholars who have studied the *Seng-oi* have indicated that this people have shown a degree of change in the idea of land rights. For example, the Batek, a sub-ethnic Semang-Negrito group, who are well-known as extremely egalitarian people, began to recognise a minimum notion of land ownership through the concept of *pesaka'* (see Endicott, 1988: 113). The Temiar still adopt usufructuary rights over land, but have begun to recognise ownership over the produce of land (see Roseman, 1982; 1991). The family ownership idea of land holding has also been adopted by other *Seng-oi* sub-ethnic groups, such as Jah Hut (see Couillard, 1980), Mah Meri (see Wazir-Jahan, 1995), Temuan (see Raffe’i, 1973), and Semelai (see Mohd Salleh, 1980). In the case of the Batang Padang area, the Semai have a clearer idea of this. As noted by Gomes, this people nowadays try to control land on which they grow fruit trees, referred to as *kampuk* (see Gomes, 1990). A similar scenario has occurred in Perah and Tangkai Chermin, where the people now have a clear idea of land as family property. In addition, the younger generation of these villages has shown further development of their ideas over these rights, as they try to disengage their cultural ideas and belief systems from its context in land. It seems that this generation wants to regard land as a purely economic commodity, and as a means of social solidarity. The young tend to ignore their cultural ideas, and ‘replace’ them with conventional and economic-based ones, which are strongly proposed by the state, in order to cohere with mainstream society. This attitude was clearly shown by the people of Perah, who ignored the supernatural threats predicted by a *hala’* of their neighbour. The people of Tangkai Chermin have tried to implement this
new idea of land rights, which emphasizes economic-base and family ownership, as shown in the proposal for developing their village.

To sum up, the Seng-oi continued to hold values of sharing land based on usufructuary rights even after they moved into new dengri’, such as Perah and Sungai Galah, and established contact with the ancient Malay state. In later developments, however, the Seng-oi’s world became smaller as their areas were taken over permanently by other settlers, as well as being taken by the government to develop particular projects, including mining activities. This phenomenon, the Seng-oi loss of their independent areas, began in the late 19th century, and increased in the early 20th century. In general, there were two big influences which infiltrated Seng-oi consciousness, and considerably affected the value they put on sharing. The first influence was the expansion of the market economy, especially through rubber and tin ore industries. These two industries occupied a wide range of areas, including Seng-oi areas. Market economy influences were then indirectly introduced to the Seng-oi through their involvement in the rubber industry. The second influence was the introduction of land law by the British colonial government. The decrease in Seng-oi areas affected their valuation on sharing, particularly in regard to their land. As their world became restricted, limiting their movement, the Seng-oi had little choice but to regard their remaining area as community owned, only to be shared among members of the community by redistributing it on a family basis.

State Interests and the Indigenous Rights

The chermor indicate the early land problems faced by the Seng-oi. As narrated in the chermor, the Seng-oi were pushed by the Gop from coastal areas to the interior of Peninsula Malaysia. However, when the Seng-oi established close contact with the Sultan of Perak, the (Malay) rajas and other local chiefs, the Seng-oi obtained some degree of political endorsement and recognition of their territories. This endorsement allowed the leaders of the Seng-oi to enjoy their position as ‘right-hand-men’ of the sultan or raja, and to utilize their titles, while their people enjoyed land rights and the freedom to practice their way of life. However, all these benefits declined when British colonialism began.
British Colonialism caused the *Seng-oi* and Malay peasants to lose their land. Subsequent resistance launched by Malay peasants forced the British to amend the Malay Reservation Act 1913 (see Nonini, 1992), which related mostly to agricultural areas which previously came under the control of the Sultan or rajas. Other land, however, remained under the control of the British, and was later converted according to state interest, which included gazetting Forest Reserves, an enactment approved in 1918. Most of the *Seng-oi* areas were, therefore, converted to this type of reserve. According to the rules imposed by the Department of Forestry, people were prohibited from encroaching on a Forest Reserve, and offenders would be sentenced. The *Seng-oi*, who were not alerted to these changes, did not know that their area had been taken over by the state for Forest Reserve, and still regarded their traditional areas, which had been given by the sultan or raja, as theirs. In contrast, the British, through its Department of Forestry, regarded the *Seng-oi* as intruders. This labelling appeared in an Official Memorandum, No.34 in Ft.Pk. S. 89-36, dated 28 August 1937. In this minute, which related to the people of Sungai Kurung (or *Kurug* of the Changkat Pinggan territory), one of the neighbours of the Sungai Galah, the State Forest officer stated that:

In his diary of 27.2.36 and subsequent memo dated 19.3.36, the D.F.O. Tapah, Mr. Addison, reported that Sakai had entered Kroh F.R. at the junction of compts. 55, 56 and 57, all rich in *chengal* and *meranti* forest. The intruders had come from Sg. Kurong whence they had been ousted by Chinese squatters...

In his later memorandum, No. 60 in Ft.Pk.S. 89-36, dated 4 May 1938, the State Forestry Officer suggested the kind of sentence that should be imposed on the people who committed this offence. The officer suggested that:

The forest staff in Kroh Res. have been warned to keep a careful watch and arrest Sakais who commit any further offences. A short term of imprisonment would be a most salutary lesson...

As a result of this conflict between the state interests to preserve the forest and the *Seng-oi* rights to gain access to their traditional land in order to look for food, all the villagers of Sungai Kurung, led by Bah Mat Arip, were imprisoned for a week as they could not afford to pay the $5.00 fine. In relation to this detention, the State Forest Officer stated that:

312
They have given a considerable amount of trouble not only to the D.F.O. but also to
the B.R. and D.O. and their headman Bah Mat Arip has adopted a most insolent
attitude throughout. In March they started felling again in Kroh Res. for which they
were prosecuted. They were fined $5 or a week’s imprisonment. As they could not
pay the fine they all went to prison accompanied by their wives and families.
Unfortunately, Bah Mat Arip was not amongst those who were prosecuted but I am
convinced that he is the cause of all the trouble.  

The same experience was faced by the people of Perah. The Department of
Forestry, acting in accordance with the Forest Enactment of 1918, regarded the
Seng-oi of Perah as trespassers in the Keledang Sayong Forest Reserve. The
department acted without consideration for the fact that the Seng-oi had been
present and settled in the area before the enactment was approved. In its first
operation to enforce the enactment, the Department of Forestry destroyed rubber
trees belonging to Keramat villagers because they were planted in the Forest
Reserve. This operation resulted in the detention of the Penghulu’ of Perah,
Alang Tek, whose case was heard in the Taiping court, and later dismissed on
the grounds of indigenous rights.

The concession to the Seng-oi by the Department can be seen as ‘winning the
battle but losing the war’. Although Alang Tek and Bah Mat Arip won their
argument with the state, since the state dismissed their cases and ordered that the
Department of Forestry should allocate some land for them, the Seng-oi still
suffered loss as the state denied them access to other land in their traditional areas
or dengri’. This indirectly meant that the people also lost their overall rights in
relation to their economy, culture, and sacred sites, which were represented by
these areas. In addition, the threat from the state over their right to gain further
access to traditional land remained. This was demonstrated when the Department
of Forestry undertook a second enforcement action in the early 1940s, which
causd the burning down of Mara Asing’s house. He was detained and
sentenced for the same offence i.e. trespass. However, Mara Asing’s case also
related to another interest of the state, that was to control the price of rubber.

The dismissal of Alang Tek’s case, followed by other cases involving the Seng-
oi’s ignorance of forestry laws and regulations, led the Department of Forestry to
recognise the Seng-oi’s problems regarding their traditional land, most of which
were located within the Forest Reserves. As an ad-hoc effort to solve these
problems, the Department of Forestry awarded the Seng-oi Occupying Permits.
The people of Perah, for instance, were awarded an area of 200 acres within the Kledang Sayong Forest Reserve, which was actually their existing residential area and rubber fields. The Department also encouraged them to gain income from rubber planting as a way to discourage them from encroaching further into the Forest Reserve area. This encouragement eventually conflicted with the interests of the rubber industry.

Another example of the same kind of conflict occurred between the tin ore industry and the Department of Forestry. In developing the tin ore industry, the state allowed the Seng-oi to carry out ore washing activities, and this permission was stated in its Official Memorandum, G.N. 6158, dated 29 August 1930. However, the Mine Department, as a tin ore authority, was probably unaware of the conversion of almost all Seng-oi areas into Forest Reserves. This approval to carry out mining in their own area then contradicted the interest of the Department of Forestry. The protest made by the latter once again indicated the conflict of interest between state agencies. The tin ore authority considered that the involvement of the Seng-oi would help to develop the industry, while the Department of Forestry, an agency with duty to preserve the forest, considered that the Seng-oi involvement in the industry would cause the destruction of the forest. This conflict affected the Seng-oi in areas such as Teaw Batu’, Denak, Genta’, Gorl, and Warr, as their rights to gain access to their traditional land and to become involved in a profitable economic enterprise were denied in the interest of preserving the forest.

Due to the increasing number of conflicts over Seng-oi rights and state interests, the British appointed H. D. Noone to be the Protector of Aborigines, and assigned him to draft an enactment for the Seng-oi. This was approved by the state in 1939 and is known as the State of Perak, Enactment No. 3 of 1939, Aboriginal Tribes Enactment, 1939. This enactment gave the Seng-oi rights to self-determination in relation to issues such as preserving their culture and gaining access to land. Since he was an ethnographer, H. D. Noone became one of the colonial figures concerned about Seng-oi rights. He called for the establishment of large Seng-oi land reservations where the Seng-oi would be free to live according to their own tradition and laws (see Nicholas and Williams-Hunt, Forthcoming). He also took the initiative to mark the Seng-oi areas on the map and name each of these as “Sakai Ladang”, or “Sakai Reserve”, printed
together with the name of the *penghulu* of each of these areas. Due to his role in protecting *Seng-oi* rights, most of which contradicted state interests, he became the focus of criticism from other state agencies, and was labelled as 'biased', especially by the Department of Forestry.

Despite the efforts of Noone to protect the *Seng-oi* land rights, the state still maintained its interest in the matter. This is demonstrated in an enactment, which was later to become a federal ordinance and act, where its provisions regarding land were amended in a discretionary manner, giving the state an absolute right to control *Seng-oi* areas. Subsequently, all marks indicating *Seng-oi* areas were erased from the new map reproduced by the independent Malaysian government, leaving no *Seng-oi* land on the map. This then became a major problem when the state based land transactions solely on the map without considering its reality on the ground. As a result most of the *Seng-oi* areas were approved to other parties, the majority of which were state subsidiaries responsible for projects such as oil palm estates, logging, hydro-electric dams, and recently, tourism industries.

Conflict between the *Seng-oi* and the state in the early British era ceased at the time of World War II and the subsequent Malayan Emergency. The people of Perah were resettled in various camps and villages until the end of the Emergency. Those who escaped from the threat of the Emergency, such as the people of Sungai Galah, however, faced a different kind of experience. State activities denied their rights to gain access to traditional areas. Since their land was converted into State Land and subjected to mining, they witnessed their traditional areas, including their *dusut* in Teluk Buyung and Pengkalan Jering, one-by-one destroyed by the dredgers. The destruction of the whole of Gumpey Luas area forced the people of this village to move to the Gungke area for their *selai* activity. Here, they faced another conflict with the Department of Forestry because the area had been converted to a Forest Reserve. Arguments occurred between the *penghulu*, Ngah Lesu, and the Forest Rangers. Finally the Department of Forestry reluctantly allowed the *Seng-oi* to continue their *selai* activity in the area. However, they were not allowed to expand their activities to other areas. This limited access to land forced many people to become involved in the labour market. Others continued their activity on their former *selai* area in
the Gungke area. They only planted tapioca and vegetables because the former selai were not suitable for paddy.

Conflict with the Department of Forestry over the land restrictions continued into the Post-Independence era because the independent Malaysian government still adopted most of the British laws. In the 1960s, Ngah Lesu put in a verbal application to the JHEOA to establish a new settlement as they could no longer stand living in Sungai Galah, surrounded by mining pools and dredgers. The application was turned down as the state wanted to preserve the forest. This conflict was then inherited by Anjang Makpin, who took over the penghulu’ position from his father, Ngah Lesu. He had his first challenge when he was involved in an argument with the Forest Rangers due to the mass activities of tapioca planting carried out by the people of Sungai Galah. In that argument, Anjang Makpin managed to retain the people’s rights to work in the area. In the 1980s, the people put forward a formal, written application to establish a permanent village in the area. About the same time, however, the state approved the area for a government subsidiary to develop an oil palm estate. This would have caused total forest destruction. However, the state finally reconsidered the application to establish a settlement and also to develop this area with oil palm. The reason for the approval was unknown, since it was classified under the OSA.

A similar experience was faced by the people of Perah. When they moved back into their village at the beginning of the Post-Emergency period, some of the villagers, especially the newly married couples who had no land, wanted to clear the area nearby their village but outside the permitted area. The Department of Forestry disallowed that and threatened to prosecute the offenders. However, in the 1970s the area was approved for logging, which once again caused total destruction of the forest. In his conversation with me, the former penghulu’ of Perah, Bah Gek, wondered about the double standard of the decisions taken by the state on that matter. He was probably ignorant of the fact that logging activity, in the same way as the oil palm industry, served state interests because both activities could accelerate high income to the state, and therefore appeared to be more important than the Seng-oi rights over the same areas. A similar view was proposed by Williams-Hunt (1995: 38):
Land policies of the state, on the other hand, are based on a system where individualism, materialism, and opportunism feature foremost. Consequently, with such an orientation, the principle of economic rationality and organisational efficiency dominate. State policies and legislation therefore serve not the interest of the community, but rather that of individual or groups of individuals vested with capital (and also political) control. Concepts and procedures are therefore defined to cater for the need and motives of this group. Land and the natural resources it contains are viewed as mere commodities, devoid of spirituality and life, to be owned and traded, and to be exploited for private gain and profit.

The Post-Independence and Post-Emergency era witnessed the younger generation of the Seng-oi beginning to voice their concerns over land rights issues. The people still inherited their land and traditional areas but without secure title. Their concern therefore focused on the issue of secure tenure. Since Malaysia gained its independence in 1957, the Seng-oi have only relied on the loose protection over their land which was provided in Act 134. This act provides a right for the Seng-oi to live and inherit their traditional land, but it is subject to state interests. This act contains discretionary provisions and is insufficient to protect Seng-oi land rights (see Hooker, 1991). Williams-Hunt (1995: 38) offers the same opinion:

Inevitably Orang Asli ancestral land codes stand in direct contradiction with state land policies and legislation. The Aboriginal Act 1954 (revised in 1974), or Act 134 as it is popularly known, defines Orang Asli ancestral rights over land and forest under Section 6 to 11 of the act. None of these provisions however are included in the National Land Code, which is the main legislation covering land matters in Peninsular Malaysia. The exclusion is prejudicial to any attempt to invoke Act 134 to resolve Orang Asli land problems and the reason for its exclusion is not clear.

Although the Seng-oi urged the state to revise this act and to include a clearer statement of the land rights of the Seng-oi in the National Land Code, the state still maintains that the present act is sufficient to protect Seng-oi rights.

According to its legislation, Act 134 provides permission to the state to take over Seng-oi land if it is needed for other purposes in the interest of the state. This means absolute right is held by the state rather than the Seng-oi. Williams-Hunt (1995) has pointed out that the lack of secure tenure deters the Seng-oi from using their lands for commercially viable projects. Their land can not be used to raise loans. This is also prohibited by Section 9 of Act 134:
No aborigine shall transfer, lease, charge, sell, convey, assign, mortgage or otherwise dispose of any land except with the consent of the Commissioner and any such transaction effected without the Commissioner's consent shall be void and of no effect.

This insecure land title discourages other state agencies from helping the people to develop their land. The Perah people experienced loss due to this discretionary provision when the contractor who was given the job to develop the rubber replanting programme, ran away before finishing the job. The agencies concerned, especially the JHEOA, could do nothing about this because all arrangements to develop this programme were made informally.

In addition, the state is now promoting the development of rubber mini-estates throughout the country because it is claimed that they can increase production by up to 100 per cent compared with land worked by smallholders. The same concept has also been promoted in Seng-oi areas, and is most likely to be approved by the state. As experienced by the people of Perah, however, this kind of project does not benefit smallholders. The Seng-oi of Perah agreed with the project because they had no choice but to accept it. They lacked the capital to develop the area by themselves and were unable to borrow money against the land. Since the state has the control over Seng-oi land, most of the land development projects undertaken in the Seng-oi areas depend on its suggestions and approval, and its interests. The same problem, insecure land title, seems to be an obstacle faced by the people of Tangkai Chermin, which resulted in their plan to develop the area into an oil palm estate being abandoned until today. Although the state encourages the people to develop their land through privatisation concepts, when it comes to Seng-oi land, the state seems to be reluctant to promote the idea. In the long run, the Seng-oi have become losers, as was suggested by Williams-Hunt (1995: 42):

Dispossession from their land caused the Seng-oi to be continously entrenched in poverty. Economic poverty is also associated with cultural poverty and a low quality of life.

Therefore, it seems that the Seng-oi are victims when dealing with the state regarding their land. According to Itam Wali, the state, whether the ministers, EXCOs, politicians, District Officers or other high-rank officers, will criticise, or even condemn, the Seng-oi for whatever stand or decision they have made:
If the Seng-oi voice their concern about their land problems in public, the state will label them as anti-government, accuse them of not knowing how to appreciate the government, and/or dub them as having been influenced by opposition parties, especially the Democratic Action Party (DAP), by international activists or by NGOs. If the Seng-oi keep silent and give full responsibility to the JHEOA to solve their land problems, the state will blame them for not making any effort to solve their own problems; i.e. they are lazy and are adopting the so-called ‘dependency syndrome’ attitude. If the Seng-oi forward official applications asking for the right of their traditional land to be recognised, the state will accuse them of ‘making too much noise’, as well as being influenced by NGOs because, according to their myths, the Seng-oi are not educated enough to come up with such good proposals.

The Seng-oi also become the scapegoat when the state tries to deflect public attention from its failure to create progress and to provide better facilities for the Seng-oi (see Nicholas, 1992; Pernloi Gah, 1991; The Star, 1 August 1989). The latest state criticism came from its Health Minister, Datuk Chua Jui Meng, who accused the Seng-oi of still having a tribal mode of living, which caused the Ministry of Health to be unable to provide health facilities for them. He claimed that:

The ministry faced a problem when health facilities were not fully used and were abandoned as the Orang Asli were always moving from one place to another.

This kind of claim seems to be just tenuous, but the Seng-oi cannot challenge it because the state has full authority to regard their own false and out dated statement as true. Any challenges would be regarded as anti-establishment, and the state could easily attack the challengers through its controlled media. This conflict of interest will result in the Seng-oi remaining a scapegoat as their right to tell the truth about their achievements is ignored by the authorities. In addition, they do not have an independent channel through which to voice their aspirations.

In terms of land policy, the State of Perak was the second state after Kelantan to come up with regulations to award land to the Seng-oi. This regulation is called Dasar dan Garispanduan Pelupusan dan Pembangunan Tanah kepada Orang Asli Negeri Perak Darul Ridzuan, and was passed by the EXCO in mid 1993. According to this policy, each Seng-oi family of the state will be given not more a 10 acres of title land. This land must be developed with a viable economic project and the owner must pay annual tax. The need to pay tax appears to be an indirect call for the people to work on their land: the people must work it...
efficiently in order to pay the tax. However, the state has first to sort out a few obstacles before it can implement this legislation. One of the provisions in the regulation requires the Seng-oi to surrender their area in the Malay Reserve in which they are located. This means the people of Perah have to surrender their area of 300 acres: 200 acres was given by the ancient Malay State of Perak in 1925, and another 100 acres was given according to Provision 6(A), Act 134 of 1954 (revised 1974). Since there is no other empty land around Perah, the remaining area of about 550 acres is not enough to provide the people with 10 acres for each family.

The same situation is faced by other Seng-oi villages, one of which is Bendang village of Central Perak (see Edo, 1994). In 1948, the BMA moved the people from Changkat Pinggan and Gaib areas to this area, which was a Malay Reservation, as part of the Briggs Plan. Here, the BMA encouraged them to get involved in paddy cultivation in order to deter them from going into the jungle and being exposed to the threat of Communist guerillas. Meanwhile, their entire traditional area of Changkat Pinggan and Gaib had been granted to individual owners, mostly to Chinese and Malay cultivators. This occurred in the Post-Independence area. If the regulation regarding Seng-oi land in Perak is implemented as such, the people of Bendang will move from their village completely, because the land belongs to a Malay Reservation. These people then have nowhere to go. Although the JHEOA officer suggested that the villagers split into groups and each group go and join their distant relatives in other villages, this suggestion seemed not to be very feasible. This is because of a cultural practice, in which the entire population of Bendang has regarded itself as an extended family, and it is not wise to break their family alliances since living in an extended family is still an important component of the Seng-oi cultural system. If this suggestion is implemented, the Seng-oi will lose not just their land, but an important aspect of culture. This kind of issue is one which the state will probably need to address, and it will take years before the regulation can be implemented.

The tax and land production component of this regulation reflects state interests, as both could contribute to increasing the state’s income. However, it contradicts people’s rights. In regard to the reaction of the Seng-oi to this regulation, the people of both Perah and Tangkai Chermin agree with the area of land the state
wants to give them because, according to them, they do not have that much land at the moment. However, they were divided in their opinion on the tax issue. The younger generation seem to accept the regulation, but the older generation are quite uneasy with it. For villagers of the older generation, paying land tax is a new experience, and probably a cultural shock for them because it has never happened in their lives. Because of this, they have tried to persuade the state to give them the reserve land first, and suggested they take the grant (land title) stage-by-stage as they improve their economic situation, probably not in their life time but in the life time of their children or grandchildren. I asked Ata’ Bek Makar the reason he refused to pay land tax. He shook his head and explained:

This shouldn’t happen to the Seng-oi because we were never subjected to any tax from the period of Nyenang Raq. The state now seems to give us a burden. I thought the more modern we were, the more free things we would gain!

I then provoked him by saying: Why cannot you pay land tax, you can pay road tax for your bike, your driving licence, your television licence, and electricity and water bills. He reacted quickly to my argument by saying:

That’s the reason I cannot pay land tax because I have to pay other taxes, licences, and bills.

He then added:

I dont mind if I can’t pay road tax for my bike, the most that can happen is that I cannot ride my bike on government-built roads. If I cannot pay the licence for my television, the most the government will do is seize my set. If I have money, I can buy a new one. If I cannot pay my water bill, the most the government will do is cut the supply; I still can fetch water from the wells. But if I cannot pay land tax, the government will seize my land, and that is a disaster because I will never have a chance to become rich to buy new land. Probably, I will die earlier because I have no land to work, and no money to buy food!

Compromise as a Form of Struggle

In the context of Southeast Asia, the legal system has not always presented a good option in preserving people’s rights, especially when those rights conflict with state interests. In the case of the indigenous people of Malaysia, the people have sometimes won a court battle. In most cases, however, the state soon used the same process to dismiss the decision. In the case of the Bakun Dam project
of Sarawak, for instance, the indigenous people who live along the Balui river, or *Batang Balui*, once won a court case to stop the development of the project. In this case, the people disagreed with the way the state presented the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), which was, according to the Bakun Development Committee, not according to procedure and misleading. Soon after that, however, the state used the same process to overturn the previous court decision, and gained the clearance it needed to continue the project.

A similar situation was experienced by the Orang Asli of Peninsula Malaysia. Between the late 1980s and early 1990s, a group of Jahai people of the Banun Resettlement of Northern Perak won a decision to stop logging activities in their area because they were not satisfied with the proportion of the profit gained from this project distributed to them. They wanted to run the project themselves, so the profits could be used for local development. This decision, however, was dismissed by the state soon after that.

In a recent case, the Orang Asli of Sungai Linggiu of Johor won a case to obtain fair compensation for the loss of their ancestral land. Their land was affected by a dam, the water from which is supplied to Singapore (see Hooker, 1997). However, I presume that this case is still going on as the state is trying to appeal for a reduction of the amount of compensation. In addition, the Jakun of Buluh Nipis, Pahang, were recently detained by the Police during a protest against the logging activity in their area (see Berita Harian, 29 December 1997). The people tried to block the lorries transporting the logs through their village because they were unhappy with the unfair distribution of profits allocated to them. In this case, they were charged with organising an illegal assembly and blocking the log transporter’s route. This case is still being heard.

Similar disadvantages were experienced by the Temuan in a few villages in Selangor, two of which were Busut and Bukit Lanjan. In the case of Busut, this village was taken over as the state wanted to build a new airport, Kuala Lumpur International Airport, in preparation for the 1998 Commonwealth Games. The people involved were paid a small amount of compensation, based on the loss of their main crop (palm oil), houses, and other possessions. They are now resettled in a former swamp, which has been filled with laterite. Despite efforts to build a
new life, the people have a lot of problems as they were provided with smaller houses, incomplete infrastructure and amenities, and an inadequate irrigation system: when it rains, the area is flooded. They cannot flush their toilets as the water stagnates underneath the soil surface. In the case of Bukit Lanjan, on the other hand, their village was taken over by the state to be converted into a housing estate due to the expansion of Kuala Lumpur city. The people were paid a small amount of compensation and were promised houses for each family in the housing estate which was established on their former village land. They are now temporarily resettled in a long house built by the government on the fringe of Kuala Lumpur. Some of the residents are, however, not satisfied with this settlement and are trying to challenge it in court. The case is still going on.

The Orang Asli of Kelantan have undertaken more direct struggle. In the 1990 and 1995 General Elections, the majority of the Temiar of Gua Musang electorate supported the opposition party, Parti Melayu Semangat 46 (see Awang Mat, 1991/92). In between these two General Elections, a gu of Jahai of Sungai Rual near Jeli town was involved in a fight with a group of Gop who encroached on their village (see New Straits Times, 27 April 1993). In this fight, three Gop were killed, while eleven Jahai men were detained by the police, nine of whom were charged with culpable homicide. After years of hearing, the court finally decided that the Jahai were not guilty. The indirect impact of these cases has led the State of Kelantan to recognise the rights of the Orang Asli to access to land. The state, which, from the federal point of view, is governed by a coalition of opposition parties, has granted the Orang Asli six acres of leased land for each family. Presumably the struggle will go on because the Orang Asli want to have freehold rather than leased land.

All these unfavourable occurrences, experienced by Orang Asli all over the peninsula, were mainly brought about by an unclear policy over Seng-oi land. Nevertheless, the state, including some officers of the JHEOA, blamed the Seng-oi and their association, POASM, for ‘complicating’ the settlement processes of these cases. Some of their leaders were interrogated by the Police Special Branch, who threatened to charge them under the Internal Security Act (ISA).29
Such disadvantages, especially due to lack of bargaining power, as well as lack of legal protection, have led the Seng-oi to adopt a strategy of subtle negotiation rather than overt opposition in their struggle. Between the early 1980s and early 1990s, for instance, they voiced their concern through various channels, such as academic forums held by the University Kebangsaan Malaysia, through the Senator who represented the Orang Asli, and through the POASM. However, the state was uneasy with such approaches. Each time the Seng-oi voiced their concern over such matters, they received negative feedback from the state. Realising that such approaches were not effective, the Seng-oi returned to the old and classic approach of maintaining good relationships with the state. They only employ aggressive approaches, such as legal battles, when they have no choice, or to voice their concern politically when the time is appropriate.

In addition, the Seng-oi have adopted a ‘low profile’ attitude in dealing with the state, probably modelled on relationships between them and the supernatural beings. In this sense, the Seng-oi assumed the position of inferior while the government was regarded as superior. In this relationship, the Seng-oi always compromised in relation to rules and orders imposed by the government, although some of the outcomes did not benefit them. Such compromises have been demonstrated in all periods: during the ancient Malay kingdom era, colonial period, and in the post-independence period. Traditionally, the Seng-oi were allied to the ancient Malay state. Later, during the colonial period, they helped the government fight the Communist guerillas through both direct and indirect involvement, and supported the Malays against the land laws and the Malayan Union. In the post independence era, the Seng-oi became loyal supporters of the Barisan Nasional, the leading party. They also accepted the offer to join UMNO, and agreed to accept trial projects to be implemented in their village. The implicit aim of such compromises was to gain sympathy from the government for their ‘loyalty’, and an image of being ‘easy-going’ citizens who create no trouble. In return, the Seng-oi hoped to gain political approval from the government, especially to recognise their land rights.

The people of Perah and Sungai Galah (now Tangkai Chermin) also emphasise compromise in an attempt to preserve their rights over their ‘remaining land’, the heritage of a group of families. Accepting trial projects, for instance, can be seen as a form of compromise, ie. a form of struggle over land rights. This was
demonstrated when the people of Perah agreed to accept the RISDA Rubber Mini Estate project proposed by the government, although the project did not help them to produce an income. By accepting this project, the people were able to secure their possession over the land, which is located in Malay Reservations, at least for a period of 25 years, the life span of the project. The people of Perah also accepted the fish farms project, although the profit was not promising, as demonstrated when the project failed to provide income to the people due to ecological problems. The only profit the people might obtain would be at the moral level, as the government was impressed with their cooperative efforts and hard working spirit. To please the government is regarded as a moral investment, especially in creating state confidence in gauging Seng-oi attitudes in relation to land. In the future, if the state proposed to allocate land to the people of Perah, they would have less hesitation over the people’s credibility and ability, as they, based on past observations, would be confident that these people could work their land properly and derive benefit from it, which means benefit to the state as well.

A similar approach was adopted by the people of Tangkai Chermin. The people proposed to develop the village according to state recommendations, that is to establish a well-structured traditional village, and to develop the area through privatisation. By following government guidelines regarding privatisation policy, and adopting its ambitions to create a ‘beautiful and well-structured traditional village’, the people hope the government will approve their proposal. In the mean time, the people of both Perah and Tangkai Chermin are exploring other strategies, one of which is to establish a branch of UMNO in the village. By becoming members of the party, they hope to resolve their land problems from within the government. Among the people of Tangkai Chermin, in particular, their involvement in UMNO is partly due to the desire to become political animals, but the main reason is to employ some political insight to persuade the government to waive ‘unclear’ obstacles which have caused delays in developing their land.

The compromise approach seems to be similar to the Agta of the Philippines, who emphasise an ibay, or special friend, relationship with the peasants, or puti; and to the Kubu of Indonesia, who emphasise their relationship with the Jenang, a traditional leader whose authority was established by the Malay. If these two cases applied to the Seng-oi, the puti would be the Gop, with whom the Seng-oi
maintain their special friend relationship, and the JHEOA appears to play the Jenang role.

Conclusion

Land has a close association with the construction of Seng-oi identity. Sharing of land was based on usufructuary rights. When the tribal areas came under the rule of the ancient Malay state, the Seng-oi began to recognise the idea of land ownership as they were encouraged to carry out non-swidden cultivation, especially in dusut. This idea became stronger when these people engaged in planting cash crops, especially rubber. Involvement in permanent agriculture led the Seng-oi to recognise dusut and rubber fields as belonging to their growers. The areas outside these dusut and rubber fields, however, still remained usufructuary. Subsequently, British colonialism caused the Seng-oi to lose their tribal areas. The Seng-oi launched a form of silent resistance by ignoring these laws. After experiencing problems regarding its forest management, the British granted the Seng-oi smaller areas of land, Occupying Permit Areas, for them to settle and work, most of which were their existing residential areas, rubber fields and dusut. From the time of British Colonialism until the Post-Independence era, the Seng-oi have undergone a series of conflicts with the state in an attempt to preserve their remaining land, most of which have not yet been satisfactorily resolved. The Seng-oi have also acted through silent struggle by adopting compromises in their attempts to preserve land rights.

1 This supernatural guardian, or Thunder God, and its roles in controlling human behaviour are also believed in by other Seng-oi sub-ethnic groups, such as Batek (see Endicott, 1979a), Chewong (see Howell, 1984), and Temiar (see Benjamin, 1976).

2 According to the puhnan, a person who could not fulfil his desire, such as having food (or other desires such as getting married, and the like) would be approached by evil supernatural beings, referred to as penyakit or nyaniik. The main reason the penyakit approached such a person was to eat his or her ruwai (spirit, sometimes referred to as head soul), which is considered by the penyakit as their meat meals (menghar). For example, if a person was not given rare food, but this was eaten by another member of the community secretly, the person would face a misfortune, such as being involved in an accident, bitten by snakes or attacked by wild animals. The misfortune would produce one of two possible results, which depended on the strength of that person’s ruwai. If the ruwai of the person was weak, the penyakit might eat it straight away, which meant the person would die on the spot. If the ruwai was strong, it would fight the penyakit, or it would get out from the person’s body to run or hide itself from the penyakit. The absence of ruwai from the body would cause the person’s mind to be weak, and insensitive to any threat from other creatures. It would cause instability and imbalance in life, like a car which moves without a
driver. That would also make the person's body (broog) inactive, so he or she might be tired, weak, and the like. That weakness would cause the person to lack surveillance, and he would be easily involved in accidents or be attacked by wild animals. In another example, if a young man failed to marry the woman he desired, the female penyakit would take over the woman's position to marry the young man. According to Seng-oi belief, the penyakit only wants to marry the man's ruwai. If the hala' failed to prevent this, the female penyakit would possess the man's ruwai forever. The permanent absence of a man's ruwai would make him die. If any member of the community was injured or died, the matter then became a burden to the whole of the community. For this reason, the notion of sharing became a major concern among the Seng-oi in order to maintain their stability and harmony in life (see Dentan, 1968; Juli, 198$).

3 Among the highland Seng-oi, the mourning period will be between 60 to 100 days. At the end of this period, they will perform a ritual called tenamoh. The tenamoh ritual is a combination of events especially magic, music, singing, dancing, and total commitment from the community. It is carried out with the main purpose of refreshing the souls (ruwai, or sometimes referred to as nyawa') of the community, and to throw away all the sadness. Thus, sharing in all aspects of life among this community is a fundamental value which served as the basic notion of indigenous rights.

4 According to Seng-oi belief, the moment the person (Andak Jameah and Itam Langsat) died, her/his kloog was 'collected' by the malikat maut and brought to the surgaak. However, the kloog was not brought directly into the surgaak, but is believed to be placed at the 'waiting terminal' outside the surgaak for seven days. According to Ata' Bek Makar, this 'may be' because the Nyenang wants to 'inspect' whether the person of that kloog has reached the allotted age (cukup umur) or not. If it has, the kloog will be cleaned on the seventh day in order to enter the surgaak. However, if it is not due, the Nyenang will ask his helpers to send back the kloog to its body, and continue its life until its due age. During this waiting period, the kloog is said to secretly visit its real home on earth to see its broog, referred to as 'shell' or 'shirt'. If no body is in the house, the kloog is said to be sad and crying because, firstly, it finds its broog is not there, and secondly, none of its relatives are in the house. This visit is, however, rather short because the helpers will immediately come to return it to the 'waiting terminal'. In addition, the Seng-oi also believe that the maklikat broog, another term referring to kikmoij, of the dead will also wander around as it is a newcomer in its 'new village', the graveyard, and its 'house', the tomb, has not been properly built. During this period, known as idah, the maklikat broog is believed to visit its real house. If nobody is in the house, the maklikat broog will get sad as it feels it has been 'abandoned' by its relatives, and will probably express its sadness by making trouble for its family members. If there are people, the maklikat broog will be happy as it feels it is not being segregated by people. However, the maklikat broog is said to wonder why people do not respond to it. On the fourth night, it starts to make a comparison by putting its fingers under people's noses (and it finds they are breathing), but when it touches its own nose, it is not breathing. From this time, the maklikat broog begins to realise that it is different from human beings, and begins to keep its distance from them. On the seventh day, the people rebuild the tomb by using cement. This is called kremmas tiik, which means to compact the soil, carrying the indirect meaning of building up a permanent house for the maklikat broog (kikmoij). The pawang, through his spell, will tell the maklikat broog that it has an absolutely different world and life to the human. It is, therefore, not allowed to visit or 'remember about' its family in the real world. Beginning from this, the maklikat broog and human are separated, and from this day onwards it will be referred to as kikmoij, which means ghost. The kikmoij can only offer help through its service as gunig.

5 During the days, the sad family were accompanied mostly by women. During the nights, however, the house was 'entertained' by men. Most of the women slept and took turns to prepare food and drink for the entertainers. They played cards, carrum and chess, told
stories and experiences, and sang. Some youngsters, who were in love, took the opportunity to talk to their partners, publicly, probably as a hint to show the seriousness of their relationship. When the dawn came, the men went back to their houses, then to their fields to tap their rubber, or do other jobs, which took three or four hours. After that, they went to sleep, and returned to Andak Jameah and Itam Langsat's houses in the afternoon to fulfil their responsibility till the next morning.

Discussing the same issue, Gomes (1990: 12-36) proposed several concepts of sharing adopted by the people of Batang Padang, two of which were cha' halior and cha' samak. Cha' halior, which means eat alone, is similar to the second concept discussed in this chapter, while cha' samak, which means eating together, is similar to the first and third concepts.

This practice is not followed by human beings today. The Seng-oi therefore believe that the earth is ill now. Its body, the tiik, has suffered a serious skin disease because human beings have aggressively destroyed areas without stopping, and sometimes without any control. The disease has become more serious as the earth has no opportunity to recover due to the concentration of human activities in one area for a long time, such as mining and logging.

In addition to the land crisis, the Seng-oi also moved interior to avoid slave raiding activities, referred to as perag sangkil. Although some scholars assume that the considerable attention given by colonial writers to the issue of slave raiding on the Seng-oi aimed to give the colonial administration the moral support and justification for its interventionist policies (see Dodge, 1981), the slave trade had an enduring effect on the Seng-oi (see Endicott, 1983; Sullivan, 1982). The elders of many other Seng-oi areas still narrate stories from their parents' generation about the atrocities the Seng-oi suffered at the hands of slave raiders during the era of the slave-trade and warfare (see Gomes, 1994). Each Seng-oi group has its own oral history about its members' experience in relation to this phenomenon (see Edo, 1990; 1993c).

According to the chermor, the Seng-oi began to establish a permanent dengri' in Berkei. Here, the people still remained in one group and continued to hold the same idea of rights, and enjoyed the usufructuary ownership over land, as practiced in Lambor. The elders of Perah and Tangkai Chermin claim that they began to establish a good and close contact with Malay chiefs, including the Raja of Perak, from the time they settled in Berkei. In addition, they claim one of the rajas of Perak was descended from a Malay who had become their adopted child. Later, the people fled to Temboh Bekett, not because of any land crisis but to avoid becoming Gop or adopting Islam, which was promoted by one of the Malay chiefs. Other than land issues, the Seng-oi chermor also contain identity and ethnicity themes. This reflects the fact that the Seng-oi have gone through a long struggle to preserve their identity and ethnicity, a struggle which began as early as the precolonial period. In analysing this issue, Dentan (1975) noted that the Semai maintained their ethnic boundaries on the basis of their assumptions or perceptions of Malay identity. In Dentan's words, as Gomes (1994: 177) summarized his opinion: "Semai normally identify themselves as the opposite of Malay along the lines of 'we do this, Malay do that'.” In dealing with this issue, the Seng-oi took the same approach, that was to retreat or run away from the source of problems or threats.

A similar letter is still in the possession of the people of Bord, also known as Sungai Bot, in the Batang Padang District. This letter was obtained by a former leader of this village, Bah Busu. In the late 19th century, Bah Busu had established close contact with a local Malay leader named Tok Bayas, who was interested in traditional healing. Tok Bayas then became the mediator establishing contact between Bah Busu and the Sultan of Perak. As a result of this contact, the Sultan of Perak appointed Bah Busu as one of his 'right hand men', or Apit Maharaja Kanan, and bestowed on him the title Tok Lela Dewa Angsa on 30 April 1909. Together with that title, Bah Busu was given a surat kuasa, which indicated the
area, Warr territory, was under his 'umbrella' (see Appendix E). His position was local Seng-oi leader, whose duty was to look after the Seng-oi of the Warr territory, who were regarded as the rakyat of the interior, on behalf of the ancient Malay state of Perak. This territory was then inherited by the future generations of this people (see Edo, Forthcoming).

This information was gained in a discussion with Dr. Razha Rashid (Universiti Sains Malaysia) at An International Conference on Tribal Communities in the Malay World, held in Singapore (24-27 March 1997).

The opportunities to obtain the title enjoyed by the penghulu' did not become a source of jealousy for the hala' because, as noted previously, the Seng-oi in the old days believed in sharing power. In addition, the pawang were always old and lacked energy to deal with external matters, such as maintaining relationships with the sultan or raja, which needed an aggressive person. For instance, the old pawang always had a problem accompanying the sultan or raja on hunting or fishing expeditions, or lacked energy to carry offerings all the way from his village to the palace, and the like. Nevertheless, the pawang had nothing to lose because the position of the penghulu' and the title constantly changed hands within his community, which meant within his own extended family. In Pengkalan Jering, for instance, Long Tanjung passed the position of penghulu' to his bisat, Tok Singa Merban, while he retained the pawang position. In Perah, Long Jeroneh passed the penghulu' position to his nephew, Alang Tek, while he remained as the pawang.

Each Semang band wanders inside a loosely defined territory referred to as a saka [pesaka'], having an area of from 100 to perhaps 300 square kilometers (see Rambo, 1985).

See F.M.S.Government Gazette, August 2, 1929; File No.1A. Arkib Negara, Malaysia.

Source: Arkib Negara, Malaysia.

Source: Arkib Negara, Malaysia.


The gu of Mat Arip was also given an area of 200 acres within the State Land nearby Padag Krikal (or Kelubi). This dengri' was named Setet after the State Land.


Source: File No. 19 in S.F.O.Pk.90/40; Ad.F.57/40. Arkib Negara Malaysia.


See Berita Harian Online, 21 December 1996.

This fact was mentioned by Haji Karim, in his paper, "Faedah berladang secara estet", presented in Persidangan Pekebun Kecil RISDA in Kuala Lumpur, 1996.

To illustrate his comment, Itam Wali took the case of the people of Teaw Menchaq. In 1993, a group of (about) 70 heads of family of Teaw Menchaq forwarded a memorandum to the Head Minister of Perak, appealing for the state to gazette about 1,500 acres of their traditional land as an Aboriginal Reserve or Rezab Orang Asli. This proposal could be seen as a positive move towards the adoption of the new concept of land ownership proposed by the State of Perak. This, however, aroused the anger of its Land EXCO who then suggested (as recited by Itam Wali): "Since these people are too noisy, give them 500." A few months later, the JHEOA officer went to Teaw Menchaq and told the villagers that the state had approved only 500 acres for them. Itam Wali was not going to criticise the state but was annoyed with its decision because it was made according to an emotional judgement rather than the real situation. He thought the state would react positively to this proposal because in the same year it (the State of Perak) had just introduced a new policy and guidelines.
regarding land alienation and its development for the Seng-oi. He also thought that the state, through its machinery and the DO of Kinta, would study this proposal and hoped that the decision would be made according to the new policy. Logically, according to Itam Wali, the state should approve 700 acres because, according to the new policy, each family would be given 10 acres, or even more than 700 acres because all non-valuable land (such as swamp or rocky and steep locations), areas for public amenities (such as sites for community hall, school, play ground and the like) and reserves (such as water catchment, river and road reserves) should have been excluded from the area proposed to be alienated to the people. In explaining this outcome, Itam Wali presumed such a decision was partly imposed by the mainstream political system, which is mainly based on 'number games'. The majority would benefit more while the minority, such as the Seng-oi, would benefit less.

25 See Berita Harian Online, 10 March 1997.
26 This paper was distributed in a meeting between the POASM and the JHEOA of Perak Branch held at the JHEOA office of Ipoh on 17 November 1995.
27 This case was highlighted on an ABC television programme, Four Corners, broadcast on 16 February 1998.
28 I was told about this by one of the committee members, Kajeng Tobek, during my short visit to Long Bulan long-house in April 1995.
29 This was mentioned by the President of POASM, Majid Suhut, in his opening speech of the 1996 POASM’s AGM.
Chapter Ten

CONCLUSION

This thesis began with a description of the present situation in both Perah and Tangkai Chermin. Of these, Perah is an old village, which was established about 80 years ago as a permanent settlement, while Tangkai Chermin is new, having been established about 10 years. The inhabitants of both villages are members of modern society in the sense that they are (1) well-dressed instead of clothed in bark, (2) live in proper houses instead of tree-huts, (3) are educated (some of them even well-educated) instead of illiterate, (4) are involved in the cultivation of cash crops and in free-market oriented economic activities instead of shifting cultivation, (5) have penetrated the current labour market instead of 'being trapped' in hunting and gathering activities, and (6) have long-term visions for the future instead of short-sighted preoccupations. Gop stereotypes and subjective conceptions of the Seng-oi, which include such characteristics as laziness, dirtiness, stupidity and lack of civilisation, or lead to remarks like: “You don’t want to bathe, like a sakai; you are lazy, like a sakai” (Wan Teh, 1978: 148-151), no longer appear applicable to the people of these villages. They are instead active and knowledgable people whose achievements seem on a ‘par’ with the so-called mainstream society of Malaysia, especially those in the rural areas. Unfortunately, the Seng-oi are never regarded as a worthy counterpart to the dominant society (see Dentan et al; 1997: 54; Leary, 1994: 94). This has forced the people to voice their concern about the need to be treated as equal partners, as noted in Wan Teh (1978: 151): “We are now the same, we are all Bumiputera and shouldn’t be called sakai”.

In the context of Malaysian development, the possession of developed infrastructure is seen as an index of progress. For example, an area is regarded as underdeveloped if it does not have electricity, and is regarded as developed if it does. A similar measure is applied to Seng-oi villages, including Perah and Tangkai Chermin, each of which is regarded as developed, since both have access to most basic infrastructure and amenities, such as electricity, water supply, roads, housing aids, community hall, playgrounds, and education facilities. Some services, however, such as water supply and housing subsidies, have only been provided to Perah and not to Tangkai Chermin, due to physical problems.
and government budget cuts. Nevertheless, access to services has made the standard of Perah and Tangkai Chermin fairly equal to that of other villages, especially Malay villages, in rural areas.

This thesis considers how the Seng-oi of mai direh have adopted new ideas and values regarding land. Traditionally, especially prior to British colonialism, the Seng-oi regarded land as a way of life. On their land they built their houses and opened their selai, and from their land they based their knowledge, beliefs, and cultural traditions. Since land was associated with many kinds of supernatural beings, it could not be possessed individually, but had to be shared among members of the community. To own the land individually meant to own its spiritual aspects as well, which was viewed as 'unusual', 'impossible', and an attitude which could endanger the community, since these supernatural beings could only safely be approached by a hala' or pawang, a figure whose responsibility it was to promote and maintain social solidarity. Beginning with British colonialism, however, Seng-oi ideas and values regarding land began to allow a certain degree of ownership. This change was brought about mainly by two events: loss of traditional land due to the introduction of land laws by the state, and involvement in the rubber industry due to the expansion of the influence of capitalism. These were then reinforced by two other factors: modernisation (such as modern education, mass media, increased interaction with outsiders, and involvement in labour markets), and state policies in distributing land development projects.

The concept of possession was demonstrated when the people of Sungai Galah returned to their village after the War, and the people of Perah reoccupied their village after the Emergency. Both crises separated the Seng-oi from their homeland for ten to twenty years. This alienation 'failed' to change the Perah people's idea of land ownership which they had developed before the crises—family ownership—when everyone came back into the village and worked on their own land. The people retained this idea because they faced the problem of lack of land due to the fact that the Malaysian government maintained the colonial land laws, which disadvantaged the Seng-oi. This disadvantage was strengthened by the state, which distributes its development projects, such as rubber plantations, fish farms, housing subsidies, and the like on an individual family basis rather than on a communal one.

332
The idea of sharing land, especially regarding its common usage, is no longer held by the *Seng-oi*. They view their land as family property, especially when the land, whether it be *dusut*, a rubber field or an oil palm field, has become a major source of income for the family. It is only inherited by members of the family. Selling and buying have begun to appear in land transactions. The only exceptions are the graveyards, which are reserved for communal use. In Perah, land for housing, rubber fields, fish farms, and *dusut* are divided into plots, each of which belongs to individual families. The people of Tangkai Chermin, on the other hand, have forwarded a proposal to the government on how to develop their village, which clearly reflects their idea of land distribution. The people have systematically broken the village area into three sections according to usage, i.e. residential area, *dusut* and vegetable garden, and oil palm estate. Each of these sections is then broken into plots, to be divided equally between all families within this community, including those who are working and living temporarily outside the village. If this proposal is approved, each family will get an equal area of land, consisting of a plot for housing, a plot for *dusut* and vegetable gardens, and a plot for palm oil planting. Lack of land has also changed the attitude of the *Seng-oi*. They have become more aggressive in defending their land.

The *Seng-oi* have engaged in direct and indirect 'struggles' in an effort to secure their land. They have compromised with all kinds of state directions and orders, except those dealing with the question of religion and identity. As provided in the National Constitution, Malaysians are free to practice religion. According to the mainstream perspective, however, religion only refers to those belonging to one of the great traditions because these have been adopted by the majority of Malaysians, and each has its own administrative institutions. Due to the lack of such institutions in the indigenous religion, as well as the fact that it is practiced by indigenous minorities who are politically powerless, such systems are not regarded as a religion. Nevertheless, the *Seng-oi* maintain that their belief system is a religion, as has been suggested by anthropologists such as Benjamin (1976) for the Temiar, Endicott (1979a) for the Batek-Negrito, Howell (1984) for the Chewong, Mohd. Salleh (1978) for the Semelai, and Edo (1988) for the Semai. But, due to the constant provocation of the followers of the great traditions, the *Seng-oi* are becoming increasingly confused about their world views. If the indigenous belief system is not recognised as a religion, and the state continues to regard the great traditions and identities as the only real positions from which
land may be bargained for, the Seng-oi will be in great difficulty. They may secure their land but lose their identity, or they may secure their identity but lose their land, or they may lose both.

Nevertheless, the State of Perak has recently introduced new guidelines for granting land to the Seng-oi. The Seng-oi seem to agree with the provision to grant them ten acres of title land for each family. The implementation of this provision, with the recognition of and emphasis on family ownership, will reinforce the change in Seng-oi ideas about land ownership. However, such guidelines are still in an experimental and evolving stage; many circumstances and possible problems need to be considered before they can become standard. Until that happens, the Seng-oi will be at a disadvantage with regard to land rights, as Dentan et al (1997: 74) writes:

Because Orang Asli have been, until recently, ignorant of Malaysian land laws and have not had access to government land offices, few Orang Asli have individual titles to the land they live on. Thus, almost all Orang Asli, even though living on land their ancestors occupied for many generations, are legally “squatters” on state land...
Appendix A

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON THE AREA OF FIELDWORK

Perah

Marriage Custom
Perah villager society is basically bilateral. They maintain close family networks on both sides, that is the father’s side as well as the mother’s side. This kinship system is partly ‘created’ by the marriage system. Basically, Perah villagers have adopted the Seng-oi marriage system. The custom comes from the same source, but might be different in terms of practice, or paham, pengham. The Seng-oi used to say, “adat nanek, pengham makgar”. This phrase means that the rule is one, but the practices are different. According to custom, the Seng-oi do not encourage marriages between people who have close family relationships, such as first cousins and second cousins, in the belief that the couple involved would be attacked by a penyakit called Sumoq. People in such relationships are encouraged to seek partners from outside the family or outside the village. However, they allow marriages between third cousins. According Ata’ Bek Makar, an elder who was appointed by the people of Perah as adat leader, or referred to as rakna’ adat, the Seng-oi marriage custom is a fair system. First, it encourages people to widen their family network by only allowing marriages with outsiders. Then, when the relation within the family is getting distant, the custom reunites them by allowing marriages between third cousins. This system allows the Seng-oi to have a large family network all over the Seng-oi region. The differences in pengham of the Seng-oi marriage system are caused by the fact that the system is a non-written custom. It is inherited orally from one generation to another. The Seng-oi in each village have their own way of inheriting this adat. Since it has gone through many generations, changes and modification in the custom have occurred.

Formerly, the Seng-oi had a clear system in regard to locality after marriage but this has become unclear recently. Until the 1930s, a recently married couple had to live with both parents alternately. After marriage, the newly married couple
first stayed in the bride’s house. Then, they built their own house near her parent’s house. The same process occurred when they moved to the groom’s place or village. First, they sheltered with the husband’s parents, and then built their own house. On their next return, either to the wife’s place or husband’s place, they would move straight into their own house. Traditionally, a couple had to stay with one of their parents for a rice season. In their first year in the wife’s place, they had to plant a paddy field of their own. After the harvest, they then moved to the husband’s place and went through the same process for the next season. This process went on alternately. However, this practice began to fade in the 1930s when people switched their activity from planting rice to planting rubber towards the end of that decade. The people of Perah abandoned the practice in the 1920s after they started planting rubber. This new activity requires them to concentrate in one sector. In addition, there was a lack of land for paddy fields as well as restrictions by the government. The people of Perah are now widely adopting a combination of residence patterns. Nowadays, a newly married couple is allowed to live in a new place, such as in the town in which they work. When the couple comes back to the village to visit their parents, they can go anywhere they like, either stay with the husband’s or the wife’s family. Sometimes they stay with the husband’s family for one holiday and on the next holiday they will spend their time with the wife’s family. Sometimes they visit one family in the morning and another family in the afternoon. Sometimes the husband sends his wife to her parents’ place while he returns to his parents’ place.

While I was doing my fieldwork, I had the opportunity to witness nine Seng-oi marriages. Five of those were among people who had adopted the lowland Seng-oi way of pengham, and the other four were among people who had adopted the highland Seng-oi way of pengham. Out of the five marriages in the lowland, three of them were in Perah, while the other two were in the neighbouring Bekau and Gedong Batu’, a sub-village of Bota. The first marriage in Perah was between a local girl and a Chinese. The second was between a local girl and a man from Sahom. While the third was between a local girl and boy. Out of these three, I found the second marriage to be the most classic in regard to the difference in pengham. A Perah girl, Ina Pawong, had got engaged to a young Seng-oi, Bah Sam, from Sahom. The meeting between two families, or waris, was held on 24 April 1996. It was very interesting because the girl’s family adopted the ‘lowland’ way of practice, or in Seng-oi, pengham mai direh. On the
other hand, the man’s family adopted the ‘highland’ ways of practice, or pengham mai ditah.

According to Seng-oi marriage custom, the girl’s family appears to be more dominant in bargaining power then the man’s family, who is considered to be the white cloth, or abad byeq. Therefore, the girl’s family is called Mas while the man’s family is called Wali. At the meeting, both parties investigated their own people, that is the girl and boy who were engaged in that pre-marriage relationship. The investigating session is started by the Mas, who according to Seng-oi adat is an uncle from the girl’s maternal side. The Mas, named Alang Rindang, asked his niece, Wa Ina, whether her intention to marry came from her own desire, or had she been persuaded by her boyfriend, or forced by her family. Wa Ina replied that the intentions came from her own desire, and nobody had persuaded or forced her. Then, Alang Rindang advised his niece not to get married so soon because marriage is not as easy as it seems. It is full of responsibility, patience, sacrifice, and the like. Wa Ina replied that she would take the responsibility, and be alert about the need for patience and to sacrifice her freedom. After Mas finished his investigation, Wali took his turn to investigate his people, that is the man. Wali is the uncle of the man from his mother’s side, who in this case was represented by Bah Pandak. Wali ask the same questions as Mas, and then gave the same advice to his nephew. His nephew, Bah Sam, gave the same answers as Wa Ina. After getting the same answers from the couple, Mas and Wali had no objection to the marriage proceeding.

As is orally stated in the Seng-oi adat, the Mas asks the man to fulfil a certain amount of adat payment, as in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items in adat terms</th>
<th>Terms of adat payment</th>
<th>Actual value ($)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belanja tubuh</td>
<td>enam puluh tengah tige</td>
<td>61.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belanja hangus</td>
<td>seratus</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adat dengri’</td>
<td>enam ringgit suku</td>
<td>6.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Langkah bendul</td>
<td>tige ringgit suku</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A.1: Adat Payment in Seng-oi Marriage Systems (Perah)
*Belanja tubuh* can be interpreted as bride-wealth, which the man must pay to the girl who will become his wife. According to *Seng-oi adat*, the money is sustainable, or *sui*. The wife can only spend this money on permanent items such as a ring, or ear-rings, etc. Whatever she purchases will be a proof of their marriage. So she needs to look after it carefully. If the couple face family problems in future, they should present this as proof of their marriage to the elders who exercise the *adat*. By presenting themselves in this manner, they employ a customary *adat* way of getting attention from the *rakna*’ *adat*, and thus assistance so as to resolve their problem. The *belanja tubuh* once again becomes a bargaining item in a divorce case. If the problem is the fault of the husband, the wife can keep the *belanja tubuh*. If the divorce is caused by the wife, the *adat* requires her to refund the *belanja tubuh* to her husband.

*Belanja hangus* is the money that is used to buy drink and food for the meeting. It is expandable. If the families want to have a big marriage ceremony, they can increase the *belanja hangus* to whatever amount they can afford. A long time ago, the *belanja hangus* was only $50. At that time, all consumer goods were cheap. With just $50 one could have a big feast. Since the spending money was sufficient with $50, the people called it *adat lime puluh*. This amount is no longer sufficient. In order to suit present needs, the elders agreed to increased it to *seratus* ($100), but the name of the *adat* for *belanja hangus* still remains *adat lime puluh*.

The money for *adat dengri’* is given to the *rakna*’ *adat* in appreciation of his role in that meeting. It is also regarded as an *adat* fee for his responsibility to endorse the marriage and to keep the marriage oath of the couple. If the couple want to divorce, their relation can only be untied by the *rakna*’ *adat* who originally endorsed their marriage. Therefore, if the *rakna*’ *adat* is old, he has to have a younger shadow assessor beside him who in future can replace him and untie the couple if they want to get divorced. *Langkah bendul* is the money that must be paid to the host of the meeting, who is most likely of the house of the *hala’*.

The amount paid for all of the above are generally flat rates, which means they apply to all people without taking their social status into consideration. From my observation, however, I found that this was more true for the *pengham mai direh*, the lowland practice. *Pengham mai direh* also requires the man to pay the entire
belanja hangus for his marriage ceremony. The Mas therefore allows the Wali to decide how much the man’s waris can afford. However, the Wali in this case disagreed with this formula because it was extremely different from their practice. This then led them into an argument. The Wali had no problem with the adat dengri' and langkah bendul, but he disagreed with the belanja tubuh and belanja hangus. According to pengham mai ditah, the belanja tubuh is paid by the man according to the social status of the girl, whether she is a daughter or grand daughter of the headman (penghulu’), or of the assistant of headman (setin), or of the ordinary people (belayet). If the girl is a daughter or grand daughter of the headman or penghulu’, the belanja tubuh would be enam puluh tengah tige (or $61.50), and the belanja hangus would be tiga puluh lime suku (or $31.25). If she belongs to a setin family, the belanja tubuh would be half of that amount, that is tige puluh lime suku (or $31.25), and the belanja hangus is due puluh lima’ (or $25). Lastly, if she belongs to a belayet family, the belanja tubuh would be due puluh lima’ (or $25), and the belanja hangus is tengah tige belas (or $12.50).

After a long argument, the Wali side accepted the fact that they were ‘white cloth’ and agreed to pay the belanja tubuh according to pengham mai direh. Both sides also agreed to expand the belanja hangus. However, the Wali still disagreed with the way the belanja hangus was supposed to be provided. According to pengham mai ditah, the cost for the marriage ceremony should be decided by the Mas, and not by the Wali. Then, both parties must take responsibility on a fair basis, that is 50-50. According to the Wali, this custom has been practiced by the elders for generations. Although the Mas finally agreed that the pengham mai ditah had the right to ask for an increase in the belanja hangus (the Wali asked for $900), he stuck with his practice that the Wali must provide all the money. Wali argued that the custom they practice had also been inherited from the elders. The sessions once again turned into a long argument between the two parties. Everyone who attended the meeting felt like going to sleep, except the Mas and the Wali. In that session, the rakna’ adat of Perah acted as a judge, referred to as Penghulu’ Raja’. If the two parties fail to achieve any fair agreement, Penghulu’ Raja’ will use his ‘veto’ power to decide. This is just what happened in this meeting. Since the two parties remained strongly committed to their stand, the Penghulu’ Raja’ stepped in and used his ‘veto’ power. He started his advice by rephrasing the essence of the Seng-oi marriage custom, whereby the Wali has to comply with the Mas because their
people (the man) came to take Mas' people (the girl). He then advised the Wali to come to terms with the situation by using a Malay phrase, rephrased in Seng-oi, “lain ie padag, lain ie chug” (a different field will have a different grasshopper). By this he indicated that different places adopt different practices (pengham). He added that if his people were to go to Wali's place, his people would obey their practice.

Another difference in pengham is shown in the session to introduce the bride and groom to their parents-in-law. On the wedding day, the bride and groom are introduced to the public and announce their engagement as husband and wife through a besanding session. In this session, the bride and groom will be seated along side one another on the wedding stage or pelamin. After the besanding, the bride and groom are escorted by their waris into a house for another important adat session, known as the advising session. Regarding this session, I found that the pengham of mai direh and mai ditah are similar in some aspects. They both start the session with Mas and Wali advising their 'people' turn by turn. The session begins with Mas advising his niece (the bride) about the role and responsibility of being a wife. Then, the Wali takes his turn, and advises his nephew (the groom) about the role and responsibility of being a husband. This is then followed by a session to introduce the couple to their parents-in-law. This differs slightly between the two groups.

In pengham mai ditah, the Mas and Wali will take turns, or they sometimes get together, to introduce their ‘people’ to their parents-in-law. However, in pengham mai direh, the session must proceed turn by turn, begun by the Mas, and followed by Wali. The session in which the couple have to bow (sembah) and shake hands (salam) with their parents-in-law, called sembah menantu, or sometimes sembah mentua, also differs. As I observed Seng-oi marriages in the State of Perak, I found that the people of mai ditah had not included the sembah mentua session in their pengham, or they had stopped the practice. The sembah mentua session began with Mas helping his niece, who is addressed as Anak Mas, to bow to and shake hands with the Penghulu' Raja'. After she does this, the Penghulu' Raja' will declare to the public how he is going to address the bride, either to regard her as his daughter (kenoon), or as his grand daughter (chenok). Ata' Bek Makar regarded the bride as his grand daughter. Then, the groom's family came to the front one by one. Anak Mas, their new daughter-in-law, had
to bow and shake hands with each of them. First, the *Wali* came to the front. After his daughter-in-law bowed and shook his hand, the *Penghulu*’ *Raja*’ asked him how he was going to address or regard his new daughter-in-law. He answered that he would regard the bride as his daughter, which means he can call her by name. However, if he regards the bride as his daughter-in-law or *mengsaw*, he needs to address her with an *adat* term, *un*. Then the husband’s father and mother, and the rest of her husband’s family members followed. When the bride finished bowing and shaking hands with all her husband’s family members, the groom took his turn. He was helped by his *Wali* in the session. The same process continued, starting with bowing and shaking hands with the *Penghulu*’ *Raja*, and then followed by his wife’s *Mas* and other family members. After the *sembah mentua* session was finished, an offering gift to the *Penghulu*’ *Raja*’ followed. This session is the same with *pengham mai ditah*. The session ended by having tea or coffee and a meal.

The above case gave me the impressions that the *mai direh* is more egalitarian in their marriage system compared to *mai ditah*, which still adopted a degree of social class consciousness. The *mai ditah* charged a different rate of *belanja tubuh* and *balanja hangus* according to the social status of the girl. In contrast, the *mai direh*, particularly in Perah, apply a flat rate *belanja tubuh* and *balanja hangus* regardless of the status of the girl. After observing the differences of *pengham*, I found that the *mai direh* like the people in Perah have a close similarity with the *Gop* system that requires the boy to be responsible for providing of cost of the marriage ceremony. This situation might be the result of the long interaction between the ancestors of the *Seng-oi* and the *Gop*.3

The mode of marriage is basically monogamous. The people of Perah consider polygyny an accepted norm, but polyandry is regard as an incest taboo. The old people used to practise polygyny but it is very rare nowadays. The oldest man in the village, Ata’ Bek Pakai, has five wives. He got divorced from four of them and still has the last, who is living with him. “She is from Sahom, that’s why I love her,” he joked to me. Ata’ Bek Pakai is an interesting man, and sometimes very funny. When I first saw him, he asked me how many wives I had. I told him, only one. He laughed at me, and then suggested, “people like you should have more than one wife. You have a good job, a big car, and are handsome too”. I was so surprised because I have never considered myself handsome in all
my life. "No, actually the car is not mine. I borrowed it from my university," I replied shamefully. "It does not matter, the important thing is that you can drive the car," he convinced me.

Then, Ata' Bek Pakai taught me how to please a girl I took a fancy to. He explained, "First, you should wear a thin white shirt. Then, put about ten Malaysian Ringgit notes, which are red, in your pocket. When you are near the girl you like, you bow down, pretending that you are collecting something on the ground. Let the money fall from your pocket. Then stay put there, pretending that you have not noticed that your money has dropped from your pocket. Wait until the girl tells you about your money on the ground. Once she tells you about the money, just pretend you are surprised about it and about her kindness too. Then, offer her some of the money, if she needs it. Ask her name and invite her for a drink or a meal. Once you are in touch with her, keep your relationship going."

After counselling me, he laughed very loudly. I was laughing too. "How about if she picks up the money and goes away. Should I chase her and ask for my money back?" I tried to check his opinion. "No, no, don't do that. It will ruin your reputation. Let her go, and find another one!" He suggested. "That means I have to have many ten ringgit notes," I checked him again. "Of course, that's called investment!" He replied spontaneously, as he imitated an advertisement on television about the government's share scheme for the Bumiputera, named Amanah Saham Bumiputera. Both of us then laughed very loudly. We stopped laughing when his wife called him to fetch a pot of coffee from the kitchen. "I think your suggestion is very old fashioned," I started to tease him. "No, no, you can try, I am sure it will work," he assured me. I continued my teasing, "Girls nowadays have much money, much more than I have. They work in factories, and offices. They are not attracted to ten ringgit notes, and cars. They will be looking for a guy they like and they know better." He and I laughed together. Then he admitted that the life today is very much different from his young days. He told me about the modern lifestyle of his grand children, whose father works in Orang Asli Hospital in Gombak, near Kuala Lumpur. Before I left him for that day, he suggested I try his formula. "I am sure it is going to work, I am sure," he kept assuring me.
During my stay in the village, I never came across a husband who had more than one wife at one time. Most of my key informants, such as Mara' Semae, Long Apon, Ata' Bek Makar, Bek Makar and Bek Tambun had been married more than once, however, they married their present wife after divorcing their previous wife or wives. My adopted brother, Pak Sofee, was the same. There are wives with many husbands too, but they do not have more than one husband at one time since polyandry is considered a first degree taboo. A younger sister of my adopted mother, Ken Esah, married her second husband after her first died. However, I did come across husbands who wanted to have a second wife, but had to abandon their desire after taking into consideration their economic stability, and the 'loyalty' of their present wife. Since they were getting older, they also felt ashamed because of their teenage children.

I had a chance to become involved in the men's conversation about this issue during Itam Langsat’s funeral. While digging the grave (jirat), a man, named Bek Gimbol, expressed his feeling about having a second wife (bekenah pai), and told us about his amorous experiences. It was very funny when he told of his affairs with another widow, or janda', and how he approached that woman during a feast festival. Everybody was laughing instead of mourning. However, he advised young husbands, like me, not to follow his bad example. He admitted that his naughtiness had ruined his family life. He divorced his first wife and is now living with his second one. The experience he told us about eventually was about the woman he desired to be his second wife. He succeeded in marrying her, but at the same time he had to surrender his first wife.

Other than this case, there is a general tendency for husbands to talk about their intention of having another wife, which they always express in a humorous way during public occasions such as in the advising session to the bride and groom. During this session, as noted above, they will advise the couple about the responsibility of being a husband and wife, and the need for patience and sacrifice. In those advice sessions, they will often add their desire to have another wife by joking, "If possible, I want to have a new wife too, but I cannot afford to carry the responsibility." However, the public just accept that kind of 'silent desire' as a sense of humour. Despite that, this kind of joke carries indirect meaning to the couple getting married, particularly the husband, not to look for another wife because it is very heavy in terms of responsibility.
Divorce (wiswes) is a rare phenomenon among the people of Perah. This might be because the husbands and wives are always in love (or hak hok). It might also be due to the divorce adat which is a very painful trial. The rakna' adat has to untie their relationship, which is very hard for the elder's leader to accept. The public attends the hearing of a divorce case. The couple face embarrassment during the hearing because they have make everything public, including their personal secrets. If they fail to persuade their waris with enough concrete facts about their intention to obtain a divorce, their waris might postpone the divorce and advise them to rebuild their relationship. The waris will try to avoid divorce because it is regarded as an unfortunate development.

If the divorce is caused by the wife, she has to refund her belanja tubuh to her husband. In addition, she has to pay fines on every single offence of adat she has committed in relation to the cause of the divorce. She will also not be allowed to remarry a new husband for three months after her divorce, and this period is called idah. The people have a reason for this prohibition. If the wife gets pregnant within her idah, it means the baby still belongs to her ex-husband. If she is not pregnant and goes through the period without incident, it means she is free from her ex-husband's 'seed', or benih. So, if she gets married after three months and gets pregnant, the baby clearly belongs to her new husband. The waris are afraid that if the baby still belongs to her ex-husband's benih, her new husband might not accept it, which will lead the wife to face another family crisis.

If the divorce is the fault of the husband, the wife does not have to refund her belanja tubuh. If the husband has abused his wife mentally or physically, he will be fined according to adat. The husband is also not permitted to marry a new wife within three months. The waris hope the couple will change their minds within this period, and wish to reunite again. That will be much easier if neither of them has no other ties. If the divorce goes through, the husband and wife have an equal right to custody of their children. A long time ago, the divorcees had to take turns to look after their children. The children also had freedom to choose which side they wanted to live with. The Seng-oí are quite flexible in this sense because they do not want to break the relationship between the children and their father or their mother.
The tapping method is the same in all of three types of fields in Perah (see Chapter Two). The tapping knife (known as yoj mutong) is the main tool used to tap the skin of rubber trees. However the people have three ways of processing and selling the product. The old way consists of processing the latex into a rubber sheet (kepig). This method is not very popular among the tappers because it is complicated and time consuming. First, after collecting the latex from the tree, it has to be filtered to separate it from other things such as leaves and sticks. Then it is poured into a stagnating pot and mixed with Formic Acid (or penglai) to make it coagulate. When it has coagulated, each sheet is taken out one by one from the pot and pressed by hand and leg to make it flat. After that, the flat rubber sheet is flattened once again with a rolling machine. Lastly, the rubber sheets are hung outside in the sun in order to make them dry before the people can sell the commodity. In Perah, only Long Dahaman is still practicing this method. According to him, it is very nostalgic, reminding him of the old days. Furthermore, he has more time than other villagers because as a headman, he has to be available at home most of the time.

The second method is to make the latex into rubber bundles and scrubs (or buku'). This method is much easier. After tapping, the latex is just allowed to flow into a pot which is tied at the lower part of the rubber tree itself. If the weather looks like rain in the afternoon, the tappers will go to their fields again to pour penglai into the latex in the pot to make it coagulate faster. Otherwise, it will mix with rain water and became useless. However, using the clay pot, which is small, they need to collect the bundles every day. So, they have to do two activities at the same time, that is tapping the tree and collecting the bundles from the pot. Now, however, they are replacing the clay pot with a plastic bag which is bigger and thicker, so they can tap for a longer time. Sometimes they will tap for a week until the plastic bag is full. It is also more practical to prevent rain water from going into the plastic by tying the top part of the bag with scrub. Most of the tappers in Perah use this method, so they have more time for other activities, including fetching their school children from the bus stop at the junction outside the village. The third way is to sell the latex, or susu, straight to the dealer. However, the dealers only want to buy latex from the mini-estate since they want to maintain the quality of the commodity.
The people sell their rubber sheets and bundles to various dealers such as the nearby *Gop* or straight to dealers in Parit town. They can also sell their rubber to local dealers. There are two dealers in the village, Bah David and Bek Tambun. Bek Tambun has a licence for buying and selling rubber, but Bah David has not. The prices vary from one dealer to another. If they sell in Parit town, the price would be higher than selling to the local dealer, but the difference is just about 15-20 per cent of the market price. On one of my visits, Bek Tambun let me try to weigh a rubber bundle, which was wet and very smelly. "For the villagers, that smell is good because it means money," he joked to me. It weighed 25 kilograms. He deducted five kilograms because the bundle was wet. He did this because that was about the weight of water in the bundle. If the bundle is dried, the actual weight would be around 20 kilograms. He knew this because he has long experienced in the business. The price he offered was $1.60 instead of the market price of $1.85. He has access to the daily price provided by the RISDA since he has a licence to operate the business. According to Bek Tambun, it is very difficult to buy and sell rubber because its price is not stable. Sometimes he made a profit but sometimes he made a loss. For example, he suffered a big loss in 1993 when rubber prices were very high, but toward the end of that year the price fell drastically, down to about 40 per cent of the previous price. Since he is a religious man, he accepted that loss as God’s will.

I did not have the chance to talk seriously with Bah David. He is still a bachelor and quite timid. I visited him a few times. We just had a chat but when I started to ask him questions related to my research interests, he was quite uneasy and just smiled. At last, I had to abandon my enquiries in order to keep my good relation with him. I just managed to take a photograph of his shop and his rubber store. My adopted sister’s husband, Pak Yan, told me that that was typical of Bah David. He acted like that not only to me but to the rest of the villagers. According to Pak Yan, he was ‘unpredictable.’

**Feasting Day**

The main feast among the *Seng-oi*, including the people of Perah and Tangkai Chermin, is the rice feasting day, called *Ngenggulang*. *Ngenggulang* is held at the end of the harvest season, which falls between December and April. During this feasting, the people will perform a ritual called *Ngenggulang*. This is conducted by a *pawang*. In this ritual, the *pawang* will make an offering to
Pangkal Tiik, meaning the root of the earth. This supernatural being is believed to be the guardian of the village. The offering is of ordinary food such as sticky rice, chicken egg, beef curry, and sour juice. The food, however, must be prepared with all flavours: rich with coconut flavour (lemak), sweet, salty, hot, and sour. The main goal of the offering is to show people’s gratitude to the Pangkal Tiik for giving them a good harvest, good health mentally and physically, and a harmonious life during the past season. In the same ritual, the pawang also asks the Pangkal Tiik to grant them a prosperous life and harvest for the coming season. The pawang conveys his gratitude and wishes by singing a song called cadak or kebut.

The people of Perah used to perform this ritual, even though they had not been planting rice for a long time since they were involved in the rubber industry. They celebrated the Ngenggulang until the mid 1980s, when the last pawang, Ata’ Bek Semae, died. After he died, there was no qualified pawang to take over his role. According to Long Dahaman, it seems that the people nowadays are not interested in continuing the ritual. Nobody likes to deal with supernatural beings anymore. To be a pawang, they have to deal with supernatural beings which, according to them, is very risky and dangerous. The current situation is also not suitable for the ritual. Performing the ritual involves a number of strict prohibitions. Some of these prohibit them from going into the jungle, from dealing with blood and white things, from digging the earth and from making noise. If they do, the supernatural being will be angry, and their anger will transform into a disaster for the community, such as diseases of human beings and plants. The period of the prohibition is short, only seven days, but it is very difficult to control modern people even for a single day. Long Dahaman pointed out a few examples. For instance, the pawang cannot stop people from going to tap their rubber, the latex of which is white. He cannot stop people from hunting. The hunters deal with animal blood. Neither can he stop school children from making noise during their physical exercises. Sometimes, the pawang just does not know what the people are doing, since there are so many ‘heads’ in this village. “We cannot enforce the supernatural law in this modern world, especially when our children start comparing those laws with their school lessons, and start questioning the rationale of it,” Long Dahaman, said expressing his concern over the matter.
The elders had a few meetings, and finally they decided not to carry on this ritual. They are ready to face supernatural anger. During my stay in the village, a young man who had just married a girl from Cameron Highlands road in Tapah area, suddenly fell sick a day after his wedding ceremony. This sickness led to the cancellation of the in-law receiving ceremony, or sambut menantu. His family in Perah wished to celebrate the sambut menantu a week after his wedding ceremony. One old chap, who still believed in Pangkal Tiik and Ngenggulang ritual, told me that the boy’s sickness might have been caused by the anger of the Pangkal Tiik. A long time after that, I asked Long Apun about this possibility. Long Apon did not think that it was possible, but he gave an alternative explanation. According to him, the girl who became the wife of the sick boy might have had many boyfriends before. When she married the boy, one of her old boyfriends might have been jealous and put a spell on her just married husband. After that story, Long Apon kept on telling me stories about the black magic practiced in the past. Long Apon is a smart story teller. He embellished his stories with funny things that made us laugh. I was just listening to all the thrilling stories straight from the mouth of a popular shaman or haia in the village. I realised that he was often visited by Malays who came to ask for ‘love potion’ perfume, or minyak chenuai. “Another source of income, isn’t it?” I just wanted to tease him. He looked and smiled at me.

Furthermore, they no longer plant paddy, but they buy rice from town. Some of them joked that the supernatural beings will be angry for three years at most. The supernatural beings will give up after that. According to Bek Diah:

> I think we are right. We have no more trouble with the supernatural beings. Death always happens everywhere. In India, for instance, thousands of people die every year in train accidents. We don’t have that problem here. So far, we have a good life although the Pawang from our neighbours told us that the Pangkal Tiik of this village will be angry at us in no time. We just ignored it because we don’t want to have any complex relationship with supernatural beings anymore.

As a replacement for the Ngenggulang ritual, the villagers have a new feasting day, or jiis cha’ entoi, which is held on 31 December every year. The jiis cha’ entoi is an annual social gathering among the villagers. On this day, all the families who live outside the village come home and celebrate. Their relatives from other villages also come. They meet each other and strengthen their relationship. Since my family and I had become part of the village, I had to go home to the village during this jiis cha’ entoi every year. The main food during
the feast is sticky rice cooked in bamboo, called lemang. It is eaten with meat and chicken curry. The villagers organise a dancing party or runggin at night, which goes on until next morning.

Other than jiis cha' entoi, the Christians celebrate Christmas, and the Muslims celebrate hari raya. My adopted family organises their own family day in June every year, which carries the same goal as a social gathering. The family organise this together with other family members, particularly the children and grand-children of Andak Jameah. These families get together to prepare foods. Then, they invite all the villagers who are also their family to enjoy the food together. In 1994, they organised a runggin at night. However, they did not celebrate their family day in 1996 due to the death of Andak Jameah in April, followed by the death of Itam Langsat in June.

These two feasts, that is, the jiis cha' entoi and family parties such as the one established by my adopted family, carry no religious significance. They are held mainly to fulfil social needs, especially to strengthen family relationships. They are also indirectly meant to strengthen people's networks in order to sustain the community as a social unit, namely the Seng-oi, or hiik Seng-oi. This is because the Seng-oi have close relationships with people all over the region. For example, the people of Perah have close links with the people in Gopeng, Sahom, Batang Padang Area, Kampar, Bota, Chenderung Balai, and elsewhere. Just name the village, and they will point out that they have relatives there. Not just that, they will give the name of their relative, tell of their kinship link, and the history of their relative there, and the like. They consider all the Seng-oi in the State of Perak, in particular, as a big family or mukah beradik hiik or ayat leui. However, their relationship is becoming more distant due to the fact that they are living in different villages. Nevertheless, they 'make use' of these feasts to refresh and strengthen their relationship. This is the only mechanism they can use to fulfil their main concern and aspiration, that is to unite their people in a family network and to sustain them as a social group vis a vis the hiik Seng-oi.
Tangkai Chermin

Marriage Custom
The people of Tangkai Chermin have adopted a bilateral *Seng-oi* kinship system. They have the same degree of relationship with the mother as the father’s side. However, in marriage, for instance, the mother’s side of the bride appears to be more powerful in bargaining power compared to the groom’s side. This contrasts with the inheritance system where there are tendencies for the father to pass on his ‘wealth’ to his sons. Keling Nawan told me the rationale for the system in *Seng-oi*, “*Kerdor bi’ bercha’ ya ie gengsir, keral ka ha bercha’ ie kenah,*” meaning that the girl be will fed by her husband, while the boy has to feed his wife. This saying provides the rationale for the son to inherit the family’s ‘wealth’ because he needs it to support his family. The daughter will depend on her husband because he uses his family’s ‘wealth’ to build his family. However, this system is not rigidly adhered to. Some people, such as Panjang Long, do not like to follow the system. He will pass his ‘wealth’ to any of his children who need it for their livelihood. He will give his land, for instance, to his daughter who lives in the village rather than to his son who is working with the government and only occasionally comes back to the village. By giving to his daughter, she will work on the land and make it fruitful for her family’s livelihood. That is more meaningful than giving it to his son, who would do nothing on the land, except leaving it overgrown. These kinds of variation, however, do not change the overall pattern of family relationships in a bilateral society. The locality and rules regarding marriage and divorce are similar to Perah. Newly married couples are free to choose their locality.

Regarding the marriage system, the people of Tangkai Chermin are said to have adopted the *pengham mai direh*. However, it appears that there are some practices which combine the *pengham mai direh* with the *pengham mai ditah*. Once again the phrase “*lain ie padag, lain ie chug*” appears to be most significant. According to Keling Nawan, most of the people of Tangkai Chermin allow trial marriage or *manjat*, but there are also people who do not believe in it. In *manjat*, the man can sleep with a girl for three nights straight without being questioned by the girl’s family. On his third night of *manjat*, the *Mas* of the girl will ‘detain’ the man and ask him about his intentions regarding the girl, who is his *Anak Mas*. If the man wants to marry her, the *Mas* will send that message to
the *Wali* of the man. This will then be followed by a meeting between the two families or *waris*, and other marriage processes. If the man is just having fun with his *Anak Mas*, the *Mas* will bring that case to the *rakna*’ *adat* also referred to as *penghulu*’ *adat*. The man will be fined for embarrassing the girl’s family, the *penghulu’,* and the village as a whole.

Those who do not believe in *manjat* might have adopted the *pengham* from their neighbours, that is the people of Kelubi. They are scared that the man will cheat them as they have observed that the men nowadays lack socialisation in *Seng-oi adat* and values, and are likely to have devised their own *adat*. As a result of this concern, relatives will ‘detain’ and ‘interrogate’ the man during his first night with the girl, which applies to all situations, whether the man sleeps with the girl or just has a date with her. A man from Teaw Menchaq, Bah Achin, was ‘caught’ by the *Mas* of his wife while he dated her a distance away from her house. He told us his funny experience in a humorous way. He saw a few lights from torchlight approaching but thought that they belonged to the people who go *nyuluh*. Therefore, he did not run or hide himself. When the lights came near, they were shone into his eyes together with an order for him and his girl to stay put. He was questioned by the uncle of his girl about his reasons for dating. Then, he and his girl were brought to the girl’s house to face another interrogation by a bigger crowd. Among them were the girl’s father and mother, her uncle and other relatives. After that, the family allowed him to sleep with the girl because by that time they were considered husband and wife. “I was so panicky. I didn’t know what to do. My body started shaking. I think that, even if had I drunk eight bottles of Guinness Stout straight at that time, I wouldn’t have got drunk!” He was joking. I missed his marriage ceremony as well as other rituals which take place during the pre-marriage process since I was away in Sarawak. That was the only marriage that occurred in the village during my fieldwork.

In order to marry a girl, a man in Tangkai Chermin is required to pay a certain amount of *adat* fees as shown in the table below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item in adat term</th>
<th>Term of adat payment</th>
<th>Actual value ($)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belanja tubuh</td>
<td>Enam puluh tengah tige</td>
<td>61.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belanja hangus</td>
<td>Seratus kering</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adat dengri'</td>
<td>Enam ringgit suku</td>
<td>6.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Langkah bendul</td>
<td>Enam ringgisuku*</td>
<td>6.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(or Pembelit deurg)</td>
<td>Lime suku**</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:  
*For Penghulu’s house.  
**For belayet’s house

Table A.2: Adat Payments in Seng-oi Marriage Systems

If the man does manjat just to have fun with the girl and he refuses to marry her, he is considered to have broken his promise and would be fined according to adat. He has to pay the belanja tubuh to the girl, that is enam puluh tengah tige ($61.50), another tengah tige belas ($12.50) to the girl’s family for embarrassing them (known as kemalu’), and lime puluh ($50) to the penghulu’ for teasing the leader and contradicting the Adat.

The belanja tubuh is a flat rate without concern for girl’s social status. The belanja hangus is also a flat rate, but it is expandable. However, the people in Tangkai Chermin believe in the spirit of working together or adat muafakat. If they agree to increase the belanja hangus, the top up amount is shared on a fair basis, that is 50-50 between Mas and Wali. The people of Tangkai Chermin have therefore combined both pengham mai direh in charging a flat rate for the belanja tubuh and belanja hangus, and pengham mai ditah in taking responsibility for sharing the top-up amount of the belanja hangus. The other pengham that they have adopted from mai ditah is the langkah bendul, sometimes known as pembelit deurg (housing ties). The adat payment for this shows some status consciousness since the rate is different for the Penghulu’s house compared to the house of the belayet or of ordinary people’s. The payment for adat dengri’ seems similar in all pengham.

Another issue that interests me is the new attitude shown by a few people who do not believe in trial marriage, although it is still being practiced by the villagers.
This change of attitude gave me the impression that these people are alert to the social problems that can arise through an open relationship. Their concern is also increased by changes in the youngsters’ world view today. Previously, the elders used supernatural prohibition such as incest taboos to control them. These days all elements of supernatural control have lost their effectiveness because modern youngsters are vague in their folk beliefs. This development has made the elders reconstruct their adat. Their doubt about manjat is seen as an early move towards preventing possible social problems.

For a couple who are both locals of Tangkai Chermin, the bilocal system seems to be more dominant. The neolocal practice is adopted by couples who work outside the village. The people of Tangkai Chermin also practice similar pengham to Perah regarding divorce. The waris have the responsibility to counsel the troubled couple. If they fail to dissuade the couple from going ahead with their divorce, the subsequent bargaining concerns the belanja tubuh. However, the pengham in Tangkai Chermin is slightly different in regard to adat fines (denda’) and time of idah. If the husband is found to be responsible for causing the divorce, for instance, he is required to pay tengah tiga belas ($12.50) to his spouse’s family, and another tengah tiga belas to his own family. He is required to pay denda’ to both sides because he has broken his oath, and has embarrassed his spouse and his own family. Despite that, he has to pay denda’ as much as lima puluh ($50) to the penghulu’ for breaking his promise to be a good husband, a promise he made during the marriage ceremony. He has also embarrassed the village with his irresponsible behaviour. Other than that, the husband is also required to obey an adat punishment, called ban jamin or gerantin (this term might have originated from an English word, quarantine), which forbids him to get married for a period of three years after his divorce. This ban jamin or gerantin punishment is seen as a way to educate him to be more responsible and respectful of his own adat in the future. If he breaks the ban jamin, he will be punished with a bigger denda’ of money, the amount depending on the elders. The same punishment is exacted of the wife if she is found responsible for the divorce.

Feasting Day
The people of Tangkai Chermin also celebrate the Ngenggulang, the ritual which has been practiced since they were in Sungai Galah. However, they cannot
perform the ritual in its original manner due to the mining activities around the area, especially the use of the tin dredge by mining companies, which was very destructive to their environment and beliefs. Although the industry has now collapsed, the effects remain. Before the mid-1980s, when the tin industry was still active, the people could feel the earth vibrate when dredgers were digging. This kind of earth destruction ‘forced’ the supernatural custodians, called Pangkal Tiik or Pawang Tiik, to flee. The destruction also ‘forced’ the people to reduce the Ngenggulang ritual performance to a minimum because the situation around them did not suit the performance of the ritual in its correct manner.

Long ago, especially before the mining industries arrived in their area, Ngenggulang was performed on its secret site. Before the performance, the pawang invited the Pangkal Tiik and other good and helpful supernatural beings like the keramat through a singing ritual call kebut. The supernatural beings were invited to Ngenggulang and receive food offerings from their ‘grandchildren’. In ritual terms, the people of a particular village are considered to be the grandchildren of the Pangkal Tiik of that village. The kebut ritual was originally performed for seven days, but then was reduced to three days, and now could be said to no longer occur. On the last day of the kebut, they used to build a small house, called Sangkak Chachak Empat, on the ground at the secret site. Then, they would put all the food offerings on the sangkak. The ritual took place in the early evening (in Malay, senja) which is in turn believed to be in the morning for the Pangkal Tiik. This is due to the Seng-oi beliefs that the real world is in opposition with the supernatural world. The pawang invited the Pangkal Tiik and other good supernatural beings to accept the offering by eating the food. At the same time he expressed his gratitude to them for giving the people good health and luck during the previous season, and requested the same blessing for the coming season. Due to the destruction caused by mining activities, the people are now only able to stage small-scale Ngenggulang performances, at the pawang’s house instead of at the secret site. They performed this style of ritual when they moved to Tangkai Chermin. According to Long Panjang, there was an elder named Bek Chereck who had performed the authentic Ngenggulang ritual in Tangkai Chermin long before they moved into the village. He performed Ngenggulang in order to obtain blessings from the Pangkal Tiik to give him a good harvest for that season. However, the harvest during that season was bad, so the people presumed the Pangkal Tiik was not so kind to them.
An elder who obtained the nickname, Mara’ Straw, through his habit of taking beer by sucking it straight from the bottle with a straw, told me that he had dreamed that the Pangkal Tiik of Tangkai Chermin had fled from the area a long time ago. According to him, the area is now just occupied by another supernatural that is, 50-50, meaning that it could be good, and could be bad too. I suggested that Mara’ Straw might be referring to the tiger that used to occupy the cave on the top of the hill in the Tangkai Chermin area. Mara’ Straw disagreed with me and maintained that the tiger was either an ordinary wild animal or the keramat. He told me that only keramat can turn their image into all forms of living things, such as human beings, animals, trees, and the like. In contrast, the Pangkal Tiik is a real supernatural being whose image is the same as a human being but always invisible.

Since the area is presumed to have no real Pangkal Tiik, the people do not consider it necessary to perform the authentic Ngenggulang ritual which is very complex. Instead, it is enough just to perform a minimal ritual as previously carried out in Sungai Galah in order to please the unknown supernatural being in the area. The pawang told me that supernatural beings should not be ‘domesticated’ through actual or full offerings, but only familiarised with simple ones. They said the ritual was simple, but it seemed to me that it was not. On the Ngenggulang day, the pawang made the food offering to the Mai Dengri’ at his house instead of at the secret site. At the same time, he began chanting. In his chants, he declared his gratitude to the Pangkal Tiik for giving the people good health and good luck and harmonious life for the past season. Then followed his wish that the Pangkal Tiik may give him and his people the same blessings in the coming season. After finishing the ritual, he and the villagers who attended the ritual had a meal together.

According to old adat of Ngenggulang, the people from other houses in the village should take the foods which are prepared for that feast only after this ritual. The people believe that the foods which are prepared for the feast are protected by the Pangkal Tiik after this ritual. If the foods are taken before the ritual, the Pangkal Tiik and other supernatural beings might ‘query’ (kerek) this. They might want to join the feast because they think that the foods are for them. Eating the same food together with supernatural beings is considered bad. The
supernatural beings will only eat the foods’ spirit or ruwai, leaving the real food as ‘waste’. If people eat these waste foods, they will become ill.

In traditional Malay society, if the people (rakyat) invited the raja to a feast or kenduri, the Raja as an honoured guest had to taste the food first, followed by the people (or rakyat) and the house host. The raja was given priority because he was the ruler of the state (or negeri) and the custodian of the rakyat of that negeri. If the rakyat took the food first, the raja might became very angry, and he could punish the ‘irresponsible’ person with what ever sentence he liked. The Seng-oi appear to have adopted the same notion. The Pangkal Tiik is regarded as the custodian of the people, and is ‘given’ priority to taste the food first rather than the people, including the pawang as host. If people take the food first, the Pangkal Tiik will kerek, which means bad luck for the people who have disregarded the rules.

Most of the ritual’s procedures and prohibitions have been offended by the activities of outsiders. In Tangkai Chermin now, the Ngenggulang ritual is performed for two main purposes. The first objective is to sustain the people’s relationship with supernatural beings, and the second objective is to strengthen their social networks, as is the case in Perah. Due to the minimal performance of the ritual, the people feel reluctant to name their feast Ngenggulang. They may be frightened of possible adverse supernatural reaction for using the concept Ngenggulang, given that they are not performing the actual ritual as it is supposed to be. Therefore, they refer to their feast as raya’ or cha’ entoi. They hold their raya’ twice a year. The major feast is called cukup tawon, and is held in the early part of the year, that is on 2 January. The minor feast, which is named raya’ haji, is held on 15 June. The way the people celebrate the feast has been adopted from mainstream practice, especially the Malay feasting style. There are foods such as biscuits, sticky rice (pulut or in Malay, lemang), dishes and drinks in every house of the village. It is really an open house. Guests who come from other villages can enjoy the food at any house they like, but of course they will go to their closest friend’s or relative’s house. Guests might feel ashamed or malu to go to houses where they do not know the house host very well. The villagers organise runggin on the night of raya’ cukup tawon as a way of showing gratitude to their relatives and friends who have come from other villages by having fun and dancing all through the night.
The way the feast is celebrated and its frequency carry more social than religious significance. As in the case with the people of Perah, many of the villager's families work outside the village and occasionally come back. The people of Tangkai Chermin also have relatives in other villages. Living separately from their relatives seems to be a barrier which divides them from their families and relatives. These two feasts are seen as a way to break the barrier. They allow the people to get together and strengthen their family network in order to achieve their ultimate goal, that is to uphold the Seng-oi solidarity.

---

1. *Sumog* looks like a wild cat, and is believed to live under the armpits of married cousins. This *penyakit* causes the disease described in modern medicine as leprosy.

2. *Rakna adat* in the context of this research means an elder who was appointed by the villagers as their opinion leader, or *primus inter pares*, in order to exercise and preserve Seng-oi's custom (adat) and cultural belief.

3. Interactions with *Gop* is still going on and maintained by the new generation in Perah today. This spirit is adopted by seng-oi teenagers although the *Gop* tend to look down upon them. The school children generally have bad experiences in their relation to the *Gop* school children, especially the boys. In their school bus, the *Gop* boys purposely put their school bags on the bus seat as a way not to allow the Seng-oi children to get a seat. So, they stand all the way to school in Parit town and on the way back from school, although empty seats are available. However, that kind of bad interaction has never prevented a Seng-oi pupil going to school. A friend of mine, Bek Diah, always advises his children to be patient, *sabar*, at all time. According to him, nothing will happen if his child is *sabar* and avoids becoming involved in aggressive behaviour. That's a Seng-oi value, he added.
Appendix B

A BRIEF HISTORY OF BRITISH INTERVENTION IN PERAK

This section will discuss the history of the State of Perak in the transition period which ended with the British taking over the administration of the state from the chaotic ancient Malay state. Although the seng-oi have never been directly involved in power struggles among the Malay aristocrats, and between the Malay and the British, these historical events also had a great impact on them as rakyat. It is important, therefore, to examine the impact of this political transition, in particular whether it contributed to social and cultural changes among the Seng-oi, especially in regard to their notion of land.

In regard to the State of Perak in particular, the pre-colonial period and the early British era were separated by the Pangkor Treaty, which was signed in 1874 between Raja Abdullah and Sir Andrew Clarke, who represented the British. The main concern of this treaty was to end the chaos in the State of Perak caused by several issues, including the rivalry among the princes of Perak over the position as the Regent (or Raja, Yamtuan, or Sultan) of that state, the conflict between two groups of Chinese miners who were fighting to dominate the tin areas in the state, and the political pressure from Selangor in the south and Siam in the north, both of which sought to dominate Perak.

The rivalry between the princes occurred due to a unique system of succession of the Regent. According to this system, the position of the regent was not inherited within one family line of a Sultan, but the regency was supposed to be held in rotation among all the royal family of Perak, as shown in Chart 1. The family member who succeeded as Sultan had first to hold three lower positions, starting from the lowest strata to the highest i.e. Raja Di Hilir, Raja Bendahara and Raja Muda. This system, however, was ignored after Sultan Jaafar, who became the Sultan in 1857 (see Chart B.1).

Before the era of Sultan Jaafar, the Regency was held by Sultan Abdullah Muhammad Shah. During his time as the Sultan, Raja Jaafar succeeded as Raja Muda, while Raja Ali succeeded as the Raja Bendahara and Raja Yusuf became
the Raja Di Hilir. When Sultan Abdullah Muhammad Shah passed away in 1857, Raja Jaafar became the Sultan, and Raja Ali became the Raja Muda. However, Raja Yusuf was not elevated to Raja Bendahara, this title being given to Raja Ismail; while Raja Abdullah, the son of Sultan Jaafar, succeeded as Raja Di Hilir. Raja Yusuf 'disappeared'. When Sultan Jaafar passed away, Raja Ali became the Sultan. However the Raja Muda title was given to Raja Abdullah, instead of to Raja Yusuf as it should have been, or to Raja Ismail who held the Raja Bendahara title. The problem arose after Sultan Ali passed away in 1871 and these three princes, Raja Ismail, Raja Abdullah and Raja Yusuf, all claimed the succession.

Generally a Perak Sultan is succeeded by the Raja Muda. The Raja Bendahara takes possession of the regalia of the deceased ruler and temporarily administers the government. At the expiration of seven days he sends or heads a deputation to the Raja Muda inviting him, the heir-presumptive, to attend the obsequies and be installed as Sultan. In accordance with this rule, Raja Bendahara Ismail, at the death of Sultan Ali, invited Raja Muda Abdullah, who lived in a palace downriver on the Perak river, to attend the obsequies at Sayong. The invitation was, however, not in a proper form, which made Raja Muda Abdullah hesitate to go as he feared that he might be attacked and murdered by a family rival, Raja Yusuf, at Senggang on the way upriver. Meanwhile, Raja Muda Abdullah had his own problems as his wife, Raja Tipah, the sister of the dead Sultan, had been abducted by Raja Daud, a raja of Selangor. After waiting more than a month with the body of their late king still unburied, which Winstedt (1974: 94) described as "an offence to heaven", the chiefs lost patience and installed Raja Ismail, who had been Raja Bendahara to two Sultans, as the Sultan of Perak. He then took the title of Ismail Mu'abidin Shah (Wilkinson, 1923: 115-16; Winstedt, 1974: 93-4).

Sultan Ismail Mu’abidin Shah was accepted as the ruler by the chiefs (except the admiral or Laksamana), by the British and even by Raja Muda Abdullah whom he had supplanted. Soon after his installation, however, Sultan Ismail ran into trouble when he took the official scales of the custom officer at the estuary of Perak river or Kuala Perak away from the Laksamana’s son and gave them to a chief just appointed by himself, the Raja Mahkota. Raja Muda Abdullah and his people attacked Raja Mahkota and seized the scales.
The stressed relationship between the princes of Perak was exacerbated by several other issues, which finally cast doubt upon the validity of Ismail’s Sultanate. The conflict became worse when Raja Muda Abdullah became involved in a struggle between two groups of Chinese miners, the Ghee Hin and the Hai San. He sided with the Ghee Hin group, which conflicted with Ngah Ibrahim, the Minister of Larut and a supporter of Sultan Ismail, who sided with the Hai San group (Adil, 1972: 67; Winstedt, 1974: 94). During that time, there was endemic civil war between the Ghee Hin and the Hai San, who were struggling to gain control of the tin mines. This was known as the Larut war. This civil war was out of the control of the Sultan, and the Malay chiefs themselves took sides. It was in these circumstances that administration began to break down, and the local government proved unable to provide protection for those who had investments in the mines. The government was no longer able to restrict the influx of Chinese immigrants to the mines and, of course, had no means of stopping the secret society wars which soon followed (Ryan, 1965: 115). Raja Abdullah sought help from the British to end the civil war and to instal him as the Sultan.

The development of the tin industry in the State of Perak had attracted many parties to gain control of the state, particularly in the district of Larut. As early as the 16th century, Perak was conquered by Acheh, and the Achinese controlled the state until the early 17th century. Then followed the Dutch, who gained control over the industry from the middle of the 17th century to the end of the 18th century. The decay of the Dutch company in Perak was due to the opening of Penang as a port by the British in 1786. The British then took over from the Dutch in 1795, and in the same year, the Dutch company surrendered their tin factory in Perak.

Soon after the end of Dutch influence, Perak was threatened by its neighbour from the south, the State of Selangor. In 1805 the Sultan of Selangor, Sultan Ibrahim, attacked and occupied the southern half of the state. After that success, Sultan Ibrahim warned the British in Penang not to came to Perak because the state was under his control. The attack of the Sultan of Selangor forced the Sultan of Perak, Sultan Ahmaddin Shah, to move upriver and settle in Kuala Pelus. He died there in 1806. His successor, Sultan Abdul Malik, turned down all claims made by Sultan Ibrahim over the area that he had conquered.
Ibrahim once again attacked Perak but his second attempt failed. Sultan Ibrahim then agreed to end the war peacefully with the help of a third party. The Sultan of Selangor only gained control over the estuary of Bidor river or *Kuala Bidor*, a Perak river tributary, which was then known as Telok Anson town (Adil, 1972: 42-9).

After the civil war with Selangor, Perak faced another threat from its neighbour to the north, the State of Kedah. In 1818, the King of Siam had forced the Sultan of Kedah, Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin Halim Shah, to attack Perak. Perak was defeated in that war. Then, there was a development where both parties agreed to end the war peacefully. In 1821 Siam had conquered Kedah, and then occupied Perak. The King of Siam, who was also known as the Raja of Ligor, required the Sultan of Perak to send a tribute of golden flowers to Bangkok. In 1822, Selangor helped Perak to expel the Siamese conqueror. The Sultan of Perak, however, had to agree to pay tribute to Sultan Ibrahim, who, as early as 1819, had left a relative Raja Hussain to collect it (Winstedt, 1974: 66). Soon afterwards, the Raja of Ligor prepared to reconquer Perak. This threat forced the Sultan of Perak to renew his tribute to the Raja of Ligor, and he sent gold and silver flowers to Bangkok. In 1824 the Sultan of Selangor captured 40 Siamese boats which were fully loaded with tin for the Raja of Ligor. This incident upset the Sultan of Perak. In 1825, Perak invoked Siamese protection and aid against Raja Hussain and the Selangor people in Kuala Bidor.

Meanwhile, a British company based in Penang tried to save Perak and Selangor from conquest by Siam. The British claimed that they were the right party to replace the Dutch, and to gain control over the production of rattan and tin ore in the State of Perak. The British also aimed to gain a monopoly over the tin trade in Selangor. The Governor of Penang, Robert Fullerton, warned the Siamese not to conquer Perak and Selangor. The British would send their warships to stop any Siamese attempt to occupy these two states. This was then followed by the Burney Treaty, which was signed between the British company and Siam in 1826. Through this treaty, the Raja of Ligor agreed not to threaten Perak and Selangor, and Selangor also agreed not to attack Perak.

These developments contributed to the Pangkor treaty and also led the British government to change their policy from non-interference in the internal affairs of
a native state to intervention. In the Pangkor treaty, the Sultan of Perak was required to accept and act upon the advice of the British Resident, except in matters relating to Malay custom and Islamic religion. The British also ignored Ngah Ibrahim’s position as the Minister or Mentri of Larut. The Pangkor engagement is considered to be the beginning of British colonialisation over Malaya, while the time before that is still considered the pre-colonial period although the British already ruled three states in Malaya, i.e. Penang (1786), Singapore (1819), and Melaka (1825). Full British colonialisation occurred in 1919 when all states in Malaya came under some degree of formal subordination to the British rulers (Andaya, 1982: 157-204).

These political chronicles did not directly affect the Seng-oi, including the people in Perah and Tangkai Chermin. They were not involved directly in the Malay political-economy agenda, except as a part of the rakyat of the Sultan, and thereby also contributed to the economic development of the state. During this transition period, most of the seng-oi were shifting small-holders, rattan collectors, and small scale tin miners. Towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of twentieth century, the Seng-oi were closely allied with some of the Malay Sultans and chiefs. They paid their annual tribute to the Sultan, the Raja, and to some of the Malay chiefs by sending farm and jungle products. The Seng-oi leaders also obtained their titles or gelar from the Malay Sultan or Raja, who administrated the ‘territories’ or mukim.
Malaya’s involvement in World War II began in December 1941 when the Japanese army landed in Kota Baharu, the capital city of Kelantan State. From there, the army moved west and south to Singapore. The British army tried to retaliate and two big battles occurred at the Kampar and Slim River towns, in both of which the British were defeated. When the troops at Slim River were defeated, the British army in the south tried to regroup in Singapore. However, on 15 February 1942, the last bastion of the British army in Singapore was defeated when Lieutenant-General A.E. Percival surrendered to the Japanese Commander. In this conflict, the British suffered great casualties. According to the official British war records (see Kirby, 1957: 473 cf Tregonning, 1964: 274):

It has been recorded that the total loss to the British Commonwealth, of men killed or captured by the Japanese, was approximately 166,600. Of the three Japanese divisions, led by General Yamashita, that effected this victory over the British in Malaya, their casualties were approximately 15,000.

The three and a half years of Japanese occupation was a period of great hardship for the population in Malaya. Food was scarce, imports were non-existent, the currency became worthless, and worst of all, the Japanese military regime was ruthless.

The British soldiers who escaped from the war organized resistance groups to harass the Japanese and prepare for an eventual allied counter-attack. These groups hid away in the Malayan jungle out of reach of the Japanese army, which was mainly centred in the towns. These groups, called the Malayan People’s Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA), consisted of British officers who liaised with the allied forces in India, the Chinese nationalists both the Communist and Kuomintang, and a few Malays. These groups scattered all over the jungle and mainly hid in seng-oi areas. They maintained rather loose contact with each
other by radio and through agents. They also received air-drops of arms and ammunition from the Special Air Service (SAS). In 1943, the MPAJA were joined by Force 136 officers who came secretly from India by air and submarine to coordinate the activities of the resistance group. The MPAJA hoped to undertake useful work behind the lines when the re-invasion of Malaya occurred.

The Japanese surrendered in August 1945 after atomic bombs were dropped in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This unexpected surrender meant the British, including the MPAJA, were unprepared to take over the administration of Malaya. This situation left Malaya without rulers for a period of several weeks between the Japanese capitulation and the return of the British. This gap was filled by the members of MPAJA, especially the Communists, who came out of the jungle and attempted to take over the administration. Many of the guerillas took advantage of this period to pay off old scores by killing those whom they considered had collaborated with the Japanese. The country became chaotic at this time due to the collapse of administration and law and order.

The British forces landed in September 1945 to begin the period of British Military Administration (BMA) in Malaya. However, they were not welcomed by the Chinese, especially the members of Malayan Communist Party (MCP). The communists redirected their struggle from anti-Japanese to anti-BMA efforts.

The British introduced law and order. However, they failed to change the constitution by introducing the Malayan Union, according to which the British gave the same status to all Malayan citizens without considering their racial background. The Malays, supported by a Seng-oi group from Selangor, opposed the Malayan Union because it meant they would lose their special political status. In addition, it seemed that the British no longer considered the state as a Malay state. The Malays, who acted through a political organisation called United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), agreed with the Federation of Malaya which was established in February 1948. This Federation provided more privileges to the Malays and led then to gain independence peacefully on 31 August 1957.
Meanwhile, the MCP had its own agenda, to take over Malaya and establish a republican state. In its attempts, the MCP managed to gain control of the labour unions and organised hundreds of major strikes between 1946 and 1947, mostly on the estates. Their main aim was to disrupt the economy and to create instability, which the MCP could then take advantage of to topple the BMA. In February 1948, a meeting of the Russian-controlled World Federation of Democratic Youth was held in Calcutta. The meeting decided to endorse Communist ideologies in other countries, with the possibility of armed rebellion, as had successfully occurred in China.

In Malaya, the Communist rebellion occurred in June 1948. The Communist attack first concentrated on rubber estates and tin mines in an attempt to disrupt the Malayan economy. The murder of three European planters in Sungai Siput led the British to declare a state of Emergency in Perak, and then extend this to the whole Federation as murders took place all over the country. Together with the emergency declaration, the British introduced Emergency Regulations which gave the government wider powers to arrest and detain people suspected of subversive activities. The MCP was then banned by the British. This development thwarted all Communist attempts to gain control and left only armed struggle with the BMA as a last resort.

The communists turned the struggle into a guerilla war. They forced the Chinese who lived on the fringes of the jungle to support their struggle. In 1945, there were probably 400,000 Chinese living on the fringes of the jungle, who were referred to as squatters. They provided a stronghold for the guerillas to gain support and get food and medical supplies. Such support enabled the Communist guerillas to launch a series of hit-and-run attacks, destroy infrastructure, public property and other amenities, kill people, mostly planters, miners, innocent civilians, and members of the armed forces, and assassinate the High Commissioner, Sir Henry Gurney, in 1951.

The BMA took the first steps to regain control, which were mainly defensive, by expanding the security forces. They recruited a larger number of police personnel, mainly comprising Malays, and formed para-military forces called Special Constables (SC) and Home Guards, comprising Malays and Chinese. The police were assigned to protect the railways, police stations, and other
vulnerable targets of attack, while small units of para-military troops were scattered to guard estates and mines. This task, however, was not effective as the security forces faced problems in distinguishing between guerillas and 'innocent' people, especially among the squatters, as described by Ryan (1965: 200),

... in the first place it was difficult to find the enemy or even know who was the enemy. A person might be a rubber tapper by day and a terrorist by night... Many people, especially the squatters who lived away from the towns and villages on the edge of the jungle, were terrorised into helping the Communists.

In 1949, Lieutenant-General Sir Harold Briggs was appointed as Director of Operations. Briggs realised that the guerillas were gaining support from the squatters. He establish a resettlement plan known as the 'Briggs Plan', which resettled squatters in 'new villages', each of which was surrounded by wire fences and protected by police posts. The main aims were to give protection to those who had been forced to support the struggle, and to cut all supplies to the guerillas. In these new villages, the settlers were introduced to a semi-urban way of life, and were brought into contact with the government. Briggs also introduced security committees, called War Executive Committees, at federal, state and district levels. These were composed of civil, police and military representatives, whose responsibility was to coordinate operations. These committees confirmed the fact that the civil authorities at all levels retained final control and the responsibility to end the guerilla war.

After several years of fighting, the Communist guerillas were forced back onto the defensive. They sought sanctuary in "deep jungle bases" and forced the Seng-oi to support their struggle. During the emergency, about 30,000 out of 50,000 Seng-oi lived in the jungle and its outskirts. In 1953, almost all these Seng-oi were under the effective control of the guerillas, especially the two tribes, Semai and Temiar, who were completely dominated by the insurgents. The Seng-oi had no choice but to support the guerillas, as the armed forces were concentrating on clearing terrorism from the towns. The BMA then expanded the Briggs plan into the Seng-oi areas in the jungle, and resettlements, called forts, were established. The BMA also established a special Department of Aborigines to help the military implement the programme, and appointed Major P.D.R. Williams-Hunt as Adviser on Aborigines Affairs. In 1954, five forts had been constructed at strategic points, and 11 of them by 1959. In each fort, the British built an air base for helicopters and pioneers, guard posts, schools, clinics,
and shops, and supplied the people with rations. The police force was assigned to protect the forts, while personnel from the Department of Aborigines were responsible for creating an intimate relationship with the *Seng-oi* in order to win over their hearts towards the government.

However, the resettlement programme in the jungles undertaken by the BMA to alienate the *Seng-oi* from the guerillas was not successful enough to end the war. The BMA then took the second step, that was to involve the *Seng-oi* in fighting the guerillas. A special *Seng-oi* field force troop called *Seng-oi Praq* ("Fighting Aborigines") was formed in 1957, together with other para-military units, the Home guards and intelligence scouts. The *Seng-oi Praq* was trained by the SAS, while para military units were mostly trained by local police troops.

When all these steps had been taken, the government started to use their full strength to fight the guerillas. At the same time, General Sir Gerald Templer, who was a soldier, was appointed as the new High Commissioner to replace the assassinated Sir Henry Gurney. Gerald Templer had successfully convinced the British and Malayan government to take full measures to end the Emergency. He employed all seven battalions of the Malay Regiment, and was joined by a Ghurkha Brigade and battalions of troops from Britain, Fiji, East Africa, Australia and New Zealand to bring about the campaign to end the Emergency in a joint Commonwealth exercise.

These actions undertaken by the government resulted in the guerillas losing their supporters and their supplies, which paralysed their movement. The guerillas had failed to bring about a collapse of the Malayan economy. Full measures of military sanctions and psychological warfare gradually brought about peace in the state. Most of the areas which used to be dominated by Communist guerillas, referred to as ‘Black Areas’, were cleared and declared ‘White Areas’. Lack of communist threats then contributed to the development of local politics, which finally allowed Malaya to gain independence from the British in 1957. Independence, however, did not mean freedom from communist threats. The guerilla movement still threatened stability, and government attempts to fight Communist terrorism continued after independence in both military and psychological wars or *gerak saraf*. In 1960, independent Malaya declared the end of the Emergency, although the guerilla movements still existed and parts of
the jungle were still Black Areas. The Communist threat ended totally in 1990, when the banned MCP Secretary, Chin Peng, signed a peace declaration with the Malaysian Government.

Bek Tambun’s Experience

Bek Tambun and his uncle, Bek Hanit, came to Pancor in mid-1941. Bek Tambun wanted to visit his father, Kulop Jasin, and at the same time wanted to collect paddy seeds. He planned to bring the seed back to Denak for the coming selai season in early 1942. While he was in Pancor, however, the war broke and this forced him to cancel his plan to return to Denak as he scared of being caught in the fighting. When the clash between the British and the Japanese ended in that area, Kulop Jasin became worried about the life of his relatives in Denak and Temboh Bekett, and decided to come along with Bek Tambun and Bek Hanit to Denak. On their way back, Kulop Jasin intended to drop into Temboh Bekett to visit relatives there. They also decided to walk to their destinations rather than riding bicycles. They were afraid that the British would mistake them for Japanese because in that war, the Japanese rode bicycles. When they reached the Nordin Bridge, Bek Tambun recalled the story about the three bombs told by Long Apon three days before. He then asked his father and his uncle to go to the ruined bridge and see the bombs. When they found the bombs still there, Bek Tambun tried to lift one but he had no strength to do it alone. His father and his uncle then joined him to try and lift the bomb. This was successful. “It was really a meaningless effort. If the bomb had exploded, all of us would have died!” said Bek Tambun recalling their ‘stupid’ effort.

On the way to Temboh Beket, they found dead bodies along the road, which were very smelly. Some were without heads and legs, and were rotting. After about seven hours walking from Nordin Bridge, they reached Tembuh Bekett. They found everyone in the village depressed and anxious to know what was happening in the town. Bek Tambun, his father and Bek Hanit told the Temboh Beket villagers about what they had seen along the way from Perah, including the three bombs. They slept overnight in Temboh Beket and continued their journey to Denak the next morning. From Temboh Bekett to Denak they walked via a jungle track, and it took about three hours to reach the village.
The situation in Denak was the same as in Perah, where people relied on rattan. After a while in Denak, Bek Tambun and his father moved to Temboh Beket to live with his maternal uncle. The life style in Temboh Beket was the same as in Denak and Keramat (Perah). Most of the villagers depended on rattan and selling their farm products to the Communist Chinese, who represented the MPAJA, and were led by Achok Kew.

One day, Bek Tambun and a relative, Bah Ngah, visited a relative in Bekau. As soon as they reached there, Achok Kew detained them on suspicion of spying for the Japanese, whom he referred to as hantu Jepun (the Japanese ghost). The Penghulu' of Bekau went to Achok Kew to assure him that Bek Tambun and Bah Ngah were his nephews and not Japanese spies. Achok Kew then warned them that if the Japanese came to Bekau within two weeks, the Chinese would kill them all. “Luckily the Japanese did not pay any visits to Bekau within that time, otherwise we would have died for no reason,” Bek Tambun told me of his first threatening experience. After two weeks, Achok Kew allowed Bek Tambun and Bah Ngah to go back to Gedung Batu' and gave them the same warning.

On another occasion, Bek Tambun trapped a wild boar. He decided to sell it to a small township called Chengwor (now Sri Iskandar), where the Chinese leader resided. On the way to Chengwor, he met a Chinese man who grew vegetables nearby. The man asked to buy the wild boar because he had not eaten the meat for such a long time since the Japanese came. Bek Tambun refused to sell it and explained to the man about the consequences. If he sold the game to the man and Achok Kew found out about it, he (Bek Tambun) could be charged for not supporting the MPAJA and for that wrong doing, he could be executed. Finally Bek Tambun felt pity for the Chinese man and agreed to sell the wild boar, as the Chinese man agreed to keep it secret. The price was only $60 in Japanese Currency. Three or four days after that, Achok Kew came to Temboh Beket and once again arrested Bek Tambun. He was accused of breaking the ‘agreement’, which he and other villagers had never signed, that the Seng-oi could not sell their goods to anyone apart from members of the MPAJA. For that ‘wrong doing’, offenders would be sentenced to death. Bek Tambon's father, Long Jasim, and his uncle, Bek Bab, asked for mercy from Achok Kew. Then his uncle, Bek Lembeh, who was a close friend of Achok Kew and was regarded as his assistant, persuaded Achok Kew not to take serious action towards Bek
Tambun. Finally, Achok Kew agreed to release Bek Tambun and warned him not to repeat that wrong doing as there would be no compromise for a second offence. "That was the value of my life during that time, $60 in Japanese currency," Bek Tambun told me while laughing.

Long after that, Bek Tambun faced another threatening experience, this time with the Japanese. Before the incident, which probably occurred at the end of 1944, Bek Tambun and his father went to Denak to sell their rattan. In Denak, the price of the commodity was slightly higher than Temboh Beket. From that transaction, Bek Tambun managed to get $200 while his father got $400 in Japanese currency. They came back to Temboh Beket in the evening. Two or three days after that they planned to go to Tronoh town to buy salt. Bek Tambun also intended to buy a pair of trousers. They planned to go early the next morning so they could avoid the heat of the sun.

They started their journey at about five o'clock in the early morning and reached Gedung Batu' at about six. On the way through Gedung Batu' village, they heard a man who was sneezing. They stopped walking for a while. Kulop Jasin told his son that that was not a good sign. According to an old belief, it would mean a danger (mara') waiting ahead. Bek Tambun asked his father to go back to Temboh Beket and make plans for some other time. His father, however, decided to continue their journey and surrender their fate to God. They continued walking. After about two hours walk from Gedung Batu', they reached Chengwor. In Chengwor, they suddenly saw people moving from the bush towards the track with guns in their hands and ordering them to stop. At first Bek Tambun thought that they were Achok Kew's troops, and started to prepare answers for possible questions. However, his guess was proved wrong when Japanese soldiers appeared from the bush. His father took a quick look behind them and realised that they had been surrounded by the Japanese. His father suddenly muttered to himself, "har dat, har," meaning, "we both are going to die." Bek Tambun felt his life hung in the balance as in the Malay phrase, telor di hujung tanduk (meaning, like an egg on the end-top of a horn), which would fall down at any time.

Among the Japanese were a number of Malay personnel. One of these then interrogated Bek Tambun and his father with all kinds of questions, while the
Japanese checked their pockets and seized their *golok* (a type of machete). Bek Tambun and his father were then escorted by the Japanese to Tronoh town. On the way Bek Tambun continually reminded his father to say nothing about their contact with the Chinese. "*Jon doh apak, ament bi tanya' pasal Cina' doh, jon pasal pek paney taleh,∗" (meaning, "Father, if they ask you about the Chinese, just tell them you know nothing about it,") He was scared his father would panic and tell about their contact with Achok Kew. "We would be murdered if the Japanese knew that we had contact with the Chinese," said Bek Tambun.

Half way to Tronoh town, the Japanese arrested another old Banjarmasin-Malay man (referred to by the Seng-oi as *Gop manjar*) who was also heading to the town. They seized his sword and ordered him to walk with Bek Tambun and his father. On the way, the *Gop manjar* kept on reciting 'bismillah', a Quranic verse, seeking God's protection. Bek Tambun asked his father to recite his spell (*cenagoh*), which also sought supernatural protection. His father and the *Gop manjar* both invoked their charms until they reached Tronoh Town.

When they arrived in one area of Tronoh town, they saw a group of Chinese families who had been arrested the previous night. Their legs were chained and they were guarded by the army. This group were then ordered to walk together with Bek Tambun and his 'companion' towards Bota, a township about ten miles from Tronoh. On the way to Bota, the children and women cried. Since their legs were chained, they had problems walking normally and fell down together a few times. Once again the children and women cried. Bek Tambun, his father and their *Gop manjar* companion were unchained, but the Japanese ordered them to carry rice and other possessions belonging to the Chinese.

After about two and a half hours' walk, they reached a junction. Japanese officers were waiting for them there. The Japanese soldiers escorting them asked their prisoners to sit down in the middle of the road. According to Bek Tambun, they were really tortured as their heads were heated by the sun and their buttocks by the tar road surface. In front of the truck was a small table and two chairs. Soon after that, a Japanese and a Malay officer got out of a vehicle which was parked at the other side of the truck, and sat on the chairs. They then interrogated the Chinese men and women, one-by-one, except for the children. Bek Tambun and his father just watched the 'session', while their *Gop manjar*
companion kept on reciting the *bismillah* verses. When the interrogation of the Chinese finished, that of the *Gop manjar* and the *Seng-oi* followed.

The *Gop manjar* was called first, and was questioned for about half an hour. After questioning him, the Malay officer asked him to sit back with Bek Tambun. Kulop Jasin was called second. Bek Tambun was very worried that his father would tell them about the Chinese in Temboh Beket. Meanwhile, the *Gop manjar* who sat beside him cursed the Malay officer in Banjarmasin accent, “*Tak gunah punya Melayu, mampuslah engkau!*” (meaning, “Useless Malay, go to hell!”). Bek Tambun was relieved when his father managed to keep their secret. His turn then followed.

“*Engkau orang apa?*” (meaning, “what is your race?”) The Malay officer started his questioning. “*Orang darat, tuan,*” (meaning, “inland person, sir.”) Bek Tambun replied. “*Apa darat?*” (meaning, “What inland?”) asked the officer back in a higher tone, pretending he did not understand. “*Orang sakai, tuan,*” (meaning, “A sakai, sir,”) replied Bek Tambun. “*Oh, Sakai..., hah hah hah,*” the officer pretended that he only knew about the *Seng-oi* at that time and laughed teasingly. “*Mahu pergi mana, pagi-pagi, nak jumpa Komunis, ya?*” (meaning, “Where did you want to go early in the morning? To see the Communists?”) he suddenly stopped laughing and continued with his questions. “No sir, I just wanted to buy some salt, tobacco and a pair of short pants. My pants are torn!” Bek Tambun replied. “Where did you get the money?” the Malay officer asked back. “I sell rattan, sir!” Bek Tambun replied. “Sell rattan, ah... or selling foods, rice, tapioca, vegetables?” The officer tried to interrogate deeper. “No sir, just rattan!” Bek Tambun replied calmly. “Have you met the Communist Chinese in your village?” asked the officer. “No, sir,” answered Bek Tambun. The Malay officer then spoke in whispers to his Japanese colleague, and his colleague just nodded his head. “If you meet the Communist Chinese, let us know immediately,” urged the officer. “I will, sir,” Bek Tambun pretended to cooperate with the Japanese. “Okay, you can go and sit with those two men over there!” ordered the Malay officer while pointing at his father and their ‘Malay companion’. Bek Tambun was once again relieved that the Japanese was not suspicious of him for having contact with Achok Kew, but he still wondered what was going to happen to them next.

372
About half an hour later, two trucks arrived. The Japanese soldiers shouted to the Chinese to get into the trucks quickly. When all the Chinese were loaded in the trucks, the Japanese then collected their possessions on the road and threw them into the trucks, hitting the heads of the Chinese. Once again the children and women cried. When everything was loaded, the Japanese moved away led by the officers in their vehicle. The Japanese did not say anything to Bek Tambun nor his father and their Gop manjar companion. When the trucks disappeared, all of them stood up, spontaneously beating and rubbing their buttocks to get rid of the heat caused by the road surface. The Gop manjar asked Bek Tambun, “What are we going to do now?” Bek Tambun told him to collect his sword and go home. The Gop manjar then unsheathed his sword from its cover and said, “If I had this sword with me just now, I would have cut off the Japanese heads!” Bek Tambun and his father just smiled. “Let’s go home, dad!” Bek Tambun told his father to hurry because it was already late afternoon, probably around four o’clock.

On the way back, Bek Tambun admitted that they were not totally free from mara’. He believed another mara’ was still waiting ahead in the form of Achok Kew and the Chinese. He was sure Achok Kew would question them and, as usual, threaten to kill them. Recognising the possible mara’, Bek Tambun once again advised his father that, if he was asked by Achok Kew, to say that they had mentioned nothing about the Chinese to the Japanese. His suspicion became reality soon after that when they were stopped nearby Tronoh town by four Chinese, who claimed to be heads of the Communists. All of them were new and neither Bek Tambun or his father had ever met any one of them before. He and his father faced another interrogation which took about one hour. Bek Tambun and his father assured the Chinese a few times that they said nothing about the Communist movements in their area to the Japanese. The Communists were finally satisfied with Bek Tambun’s explanation and let them go home. The Chinese, however, warned Bek Tambun and his father that if the Japanese undertook any operations in their area within one month from that day, the Communists would kill them both. Their life became extremely tense during that time. “In that situation, my father and I might have died even if the Japanese had come into the village just to buy a chicken,” said Bek Tambun, releasing a deep breath.
They arrived home at midnight. The villagers of Temboh Beket were wondering about their lives. In general, people detained by the Japanese never had a chance to come back again. The same situation occurred if the people were detained or taken away by the Chinese. The victims never came back. Bek Tambun and his father, however, were regarded as very lucky since both of them were still alive.

At home, especially within the one month ‘trial’ period given by the Communists, Bek Tambun and his father surrendered their fate to Nyenang. Due to depression, they just stayed at home most of the time and worked in their tapioca garden. Bek Tambun had no choice but to wear his torn short pants. “I was a young man during that time, you know, and felt ashamed to walk in front of young women as my buttocks showed through my torn pants,” Bek Tambun recalled his feeling during the war. He then took his mother’s torn sarong, cut it into two pieces, covered it with latex, and stuck it over the torn parts of his pants. With that repair, he felt a little more comfortable except that the rubber, which stuck on his pants, was rough and scratched his skin.

One month later, the ‘curfew’ period given to Bek Tambun and his father was up, and it brought great relief for them. “It was lucky that the Japanese never visited our village until they surrendered in 1945,” said Bek Tambun, who told me how his tension was released after that. That ‘freedom’ allowed them to go ‘shopping’ in Chengwor. Bek Tambun bought a pair of used trousers for $150 in Japanese currency. The waist was a quarter larger than Bek Tambun’s waist. At home, his mother cut the bottom off the trousers and made another pair of short pants. With the creativity of his mother, Bek Tambun managed to get two short pants. “After that, I felt quite satisfied. No more embarrassment, and it even allowed me to show-off to a young girl I liked!” Bek Tambun recalled his love story with a girl whom he finally married.

A few months before the Japanese surrender, Bek Tambun’s uncle, Bek Bab, went to Perah to join his grandfather, Mat Melaka. When Bek Bab arrived in Perah, however, he stayed with another relative in Keramat. According to Bek Tambun, Bek Bab went to stay in Keramat because his girlfriend, who has since become his wife, lived there. During that time, the villagers of Keramat were still assisting Alek and his troop. His presence added more ‘man power’ to assist the Communists. Alang Tek scolded him for coming to Keramat to join their
suffering. Bek Bab defended his move and told Alang Tek that they faced the same situation in Temboh Beket. Eventually Alang Tek admitted that the same situation occurred everywhere but he still tried to prevent people from coming into the village and assisting Alek and his troop, whom he regarded as the source of their suffering and destroyers of their freedom.

**People’s Experience in the Armed-forces**

In September 1956, the *Seng-oi Praq* troop was established to help in the extermination of the remnants of the force of terrorists belonging to the MCP, and to be the jungle-thrusting arm of the Federation Army. The Adviser of the Department of Aborigines, R.O.D. Noone, was responsible for the establishment of the troop.\(^2\) In 1958, Noone sought a second intake. He went to Denak, Temboh Beket and other villages in the *mai bareh* and invited the *Seng-oi* to join the troop and to fight the Communist guerillas. According to Bek Tambun, more than 100 *Seng-oi* from Denak, Temboh Beket, Teaw Ba’ and Gedung Batu’ must have been recruited that year as his number was 104, and tens more joined after him. They then regrouped with *Seng-oi* from other areas in Perak and Pahang. He and Long Dahaman, however, were located in different sections. One section consisted of 12 personnel, each of which trained in a different training centre and were assigned to different operations.

The section which Bek Tambun was in was trained by the SAS Regiment in the 5th Milestones of Gombak Road, Kuala Lumpur. He was then appointed Sergeant\(^3\) and his section was assigned to patrol the Malaya-Thailand border. His section started their operation from Gua Musang town in Kelantan, moved across the Peninsula along the Belimbing river and came out at the Tiang river in the north of the State of Perak. Their duties were rather simple but dangerous. They were ordered to track down the Communist guerillas, identify their location or camps and report these to the SAS. The SAS then sent their bombing squadron to destroy the detected areas by air strikes. The *Senoi Praq* was therefore regarded as the most efficient ‘radar’ screen in the jungle. Some of the operations of the *Seng-oi Praq* were very difficult and dangerous because they acted as commandos. In addition to a few clashes with insurgents, Bek Tambun’s section had to go through jungle survival because they were not given enough rations. They usually received sufficient rations for two weeks or three...
but their operation sometimes extended to six months. Most of their time was spent in the jungle, fighting insurgents, wild animals, leeches and insects, especially mosquitos and bees. During his service in the Seng-oi Praq, Bek Tambun was involved in five main operations, and all of them took more than six months. Since most of his time was spent in the jungle, he had a family crisis with his wife, Ken Abu. He left the Seng-oi Praq in 1960 to try to save his marriage but it ended in divorce. After the divorce, he and his children came to Perah. His Father, Bek Jasim, was very old at that time and wanted to spend the rest of his life in Denak. He then bequeathed all his rubber fields in Pancor to Bek Tambun.

Long Dahaman and his section trained in Ipoh. His section was then assigned to track and fight the insurgents in Central Perak, especially in Lasah and Jalong of North Sungai Siput town. They had the same duties as Bek Tambun’s section. Dahaman left the Seng-oi Praq when the Emergency ended. He went back to Gedung Batu’, and came back to Perah at the end of the same year (1960). He left the troop because he wanted to be with his family as they were already in the post-independence era. In addition, he also wanted to open rubber fields while the land was still available around Perah. “If I spent all my time in the Seng-oi Praq, I might have no land nowadays because it would have been worked and then possessed by others who lived in the village at that time. I realised our area was getting smaller and smaller, and our access to new land was also limited because most of our traditional areas had been taken away by the state.” These were the reasons Long Dahaman gave for leaving the Seng-oi Praq.

Other villagers who joined the security forces were Long Apon and his father, Ngah Pok. Both of them were attached to the Intelligence Scout section of the para-military unit, and were called Operation Scouts. Before joining this unit, Long Apon had experience much. When the people of Perah split into groups in Padang Changkat, Long Apon and his family moved to Gedung Batu’ to join their relatives who had resettled there from Teaw Batu’. After more than one year in Gedung Batu’, he married a girl he did not love in a marriage arranged by the girl’s parents. He was unhappy in that marriage and asked for a divorce several months later. At the same time, the people in Kelubi where his aunt, Ken Linchot, lived had clashed with the Communists. One of the Kelubi people was killed and many others were injured. Long Apon decided to visit Ken Linchot as
he had not seen her since they moved from Teaw Batu'. He stayed with Ken Linchot for a few months, and joined his uncle to collect rattan. After that, he developed an interest in buying a bicycle. He went back to Gedung Batu' and asked his father to work with him in the dredger in Tronoh. They moved to Tronoh in 1954 or 1955 and lived in the quarters. After a few months working, he and his father managed to buy bicycles. With these, they always visited their family in Gedung Batu', Kelubi, and the people of Denak who had resettled in a camp in Sungai Durian or Sempa' Toug. His father then asked him (Long Apon) to find a girl and get married. According to his father, it was inappropriate for a divorcee to live solo for such a long time. A year after that, he married Ken Son, who is his wife now.

About one year after Long Apon married Ken Son, a massacre occurred involving his wife's family. On that day, the family went to Tronoh town. On the way home, they stopped at their quarters and had lunch with Long Apon and his wife. They continued their journey home in the late afternoon to avoid the heat of the sun. Half way home, they were stopped by a troop of guerillas at a place called Sindin. The guerillas then slaughtered all nine of them, including the children, as they were suspected of being the 'eyes' of the British. The victims consisted of eight members of one family, and a younger brother of Ken Son. That massacre caused great anger among the Seng-oi of Sempa' Toug, who wanted to revenge the inhumaneness of the Communist Chinese. Long Apon and his father immediately left their jobs in the dredger. Two or three days after the funeral of the victims, Long Apon, his father and nine other men went to Tronoh Police Station and met the Deputy OCPD, a Mai Byeq known as Tuan Kitis, and explained their intentions to the officer. Tuan Kitis welcomed their move to fight the guerillas. They were then sent to Siputeh, a small town near Ipoh town, to undergo intensive training. According to Long Apon, the training was very difficult as most of them did not understand English. Long Apon and his father could understand the orders, as they had attended English lessons in Teaw Batu', but they could not speak the language because they had not practiced speaking since they had left. Their relationship with the Mai Byeq officers was exactly like the Malay phrase, macam itek dengan ayam, meaning like ducks with chickens. They mainly used sign language during the three months of training.
After the training ended in 1957 or 1958, their group was named Operation Scouts and was attached to Tronoh Police Station. Their duty was mainly to reconnoitre suspected areas before the military launched an attack. They were only given rifles and no other military equipment, and were paid a small allowance, $90 per month. The police, however, paid them a reward of $2,000 for every guerilla they could kill. As the leader, Long Apon was equipped with a semi-automatic rifle, which was later replaced by a Bren gun. They were then assigned to reconnaissance in the jungle and swampy areas around Denak, Temboh Beket, Gedung Batu’, Bekau and Perah.

During their two and a half years of operations, they detected tens of communist ‘nests’ in the area, which were then destroyed by the Mai Byeq and the Ghurkha army. Whenever the British military exchanged fire with the guerillas the Commander asked them (the Operation Scout squad) to hide behind them and support the attack if necessary. “It was really unprofitable for us because we could not kill the guerillas, which meant we could not get the reward,” Long Apon recalled their commitment and complained about the income gained in the operations. During their operations, they just managed to get rewards for five guerillas, one of whom was a woman, whom they shot dead in two of their operations. Not very long after they enjoyed a reward, four of their members were killed in an ambush in the Denak, which occurred in 1959. During that time, Long Apon and his father were on leave, and the nine members on duty were ordered to reconnoitre a Communist nest near Denak. Four of them died as they were struck by hand-grenades.

Their Operation Scout squad was ‘dissolved’ when the Emergency ended. The British, however, invited the members of the squad to join the Seng-oi Praq troop. They could be absorbed into the troop straight away without undergoing any training or recruitment. Long Apon was invited to join the Special Branch Unit of that troop but he turned that offer down. He highlighted his views and hopes in the post-war and post-independence era by saying: “I had fulfilled my responsibility to fight terrorism, and I needed the rest of my time to live alongside my family and tap my rubber.” His father took the same decisions. He and his father went back to Gedung Batu’ and lived there for several months. They then moved permanently to Keramat to work in their rubber fields.

378
See Ryan (1965) and Carey (1976).


3 Regarding the appointment of a Seng-oi as the Sergeant, Leary (1995: 152) mentions that such appointments had been 'enforced' since its (the Seng-oi Praq) early establishment in 1956 where there were two sections: Semai (Seng-oi) and Temiar, each commanded by an Orang Asli Sergeant elected by the men in the section.

4 According to Leary (1995: 153), "They [the Seng-oi] had the added advantage of being able to move quickly and silently in the jungle and could carry rations for sixteen days without resupply. They were in fact ideal counter-guerrilla jungle fighters."

5 Long Dahaman and Bek Tambun's involvement in the Seng-oi Praq troop had, in some ways, contributed to the end of the Malayan Emergency. According to Leary (1995: 154), "The Senoi Pra'aq [Seng-oi Praq] illustrated the failure of the MCP/MRLA [Malayan Races Liberation Army] to control the Orang Asli in the jungle... It was ironic that the formation which was the most successful in clearing out some of the remaining guerillas in 1959-60 come from those people whom the MCP/MRLA believed would be their allies and help them to retain control of the jungle when they decided to withdraw their main strike force into the forests in October 1951. Furthermore, R.O.D. Noone claimed that the Seng-oi Praq's record of terrorist eliminations was higher than any Security Force unit, Commonwealth or Federal in 1959-60 (See Noone, 1972: 201-202; Leary, 1995: 154)."
Appendix D

LAWS PERTAINING TO THE ORANG ASLI

STATE OF PERAK
ENACTMENT NO. 3 OF 1939
1 ASSENT

&

AKTA 134
AKTA ORANG ASLI 1954
(Disemak—1974)
Published in the Government Gazettes of the Federated Malay States and of each of the States of Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and Pahang of October 12, 1939, No. 22, Vol. XXXI, Notification No. 4967

STATE OF PERAK

ENACTMENT NO. 3 OF 1939

1 ASSENT

R.A. AZIZ,
Sultan of Perak

An Enactment for the Protection of the Aboriginal Tribes of Perak

It is hereby enacted by His Highness the Sultan by and with the advice and consent of the State Council as follow:

1. This Enactment may be cited as the Aboriginal Tribes Enactment 1939.

2. In this Enactment
   "Aboriginal" means a person whose parents were members of an aboriginal tribe and includes a desendant through males of such persons.
   "Aboriginal Area" means an Aboriginal Area declared under this Enactment.
   "Aboriginal Reserve" means an Aboriginal Reserve declared under this Enactment.
   "Aboriginal Tribe" means a tribe included in Schedule A to this Enactment.
   "alienated" has the meaning assigned to it in the Land Code.
   "Deputy Protector" means a Deputy Protector of Aborigines appointed under this Enactment;
   "Protector" means a Protector of Aborigines appointed under this Enactment and includes a Deputy Protector;
   "The Protector" means in respect of any area the Protector appointed for such area.

3. The Rule in State Council may by notification in the Gazette include the name of any tribe in Schedule A to this Enactment.

4. If any doubt shall arise as to whether any person in an aboriginal the same shall be referred to the Resident who shall decide the same and such decision shall be final and not subject to question in any Court.

5. (i) The Ruler in State Council may appoint as many Protectors of Aborigines as he shall think fit and many define the area within which such Protectors shall exercise their powers and perform their duties.
(ii) The Ruler in State Council may appoint as many Deputy Protectors of Aborigines as he may think fit to be Deputies of any Protector.

(iii) A Deputy Protector shall exercise his powers and perform his duties in conformity with the directions of the Protector whose deputy he is and within the area for which such Protector is appointed.

(6) (i) The Ruler in State Council may by notification in the Gazette declare any area of land to be an Aboriginal Area and may in like manner revoke such declaration wholly or in part and may likewise include in any such Aboriginal Area any land not previously included therein.

(ii) No land within an Aboriginal Area shall be declared to be a Malay Reservation.

(iii) No land within an Aboriginal Area shall be alienated or leased for mining until the alienating authority has consulted the Protector as to the possible effect of the alienation or leasing of such land upon the welfare of any Aborigines within the said Aboriginal Area.

7. (i) The Ruler in State Council may by notification in the Gazette declare any area of land whether within or without any Aboriginal Area to be an Aboriginal Reserve and may in like manner revoke such declaration wholly or in part and may likewise include in any such Aboriginal Reserve any land not previously included therein.

(ii) No land within an Aboriginal Reserve shall be constituted a reserved forest or declared to be a Malay Reservation or alienated or leased for mining nor shall temporary occupation thereof be allowed under any written law for the time being regulating the occupation of land.

8. (i) The Resident may grant rights of occupancy of any land not being alienated land or land leased for mining within any Aboriginal Area or Aboriginal Reserve.

(ii) Such rights may be granted to:

- any individual Aboriginal or
- the members of any family of Aborigines or
- the members of any Aboriginal Tribe

(iii) Such rights may be granted subject to such rent as the Resident may see fit to impose or rent free at the Resident's discretion.

(iv) Such rights may be granted subject to such conditions as the Resident may see fit to impose.

(v) Such rights shall be deemed not to confer on any person any better title than that of a tenant at will.
9. (i) If any land in an Aboriginal Area is alienated or leased for mining or if any Aboriginal Area or Aboriginal Reserve or any right or privilege granted to any Aboriginal under this or any other Enactment is revoked wholly or in part the Ruler in State Council may at his absolute discretion grant compensation therefor.

(II) The Ruler in State Council may pay such compensation to the person or persons entitled in his opinion thereto or he may if he sees fit pay the same to the Protector to be held by him as a common fund for the benefit of the members of such family or tribe as the Ruler in State Council may direct and to be administered according to rules made under this Enactment.

10. (i) Whenever it shall appear to the Ruler in State Council upon the written information of the Protector and after such enquiry as the Ruler in State Council shall deem necessary that it is desirable that any person should be prohibited from entering or remaining in any or all Aboriginal Areas or Aboriginal Reserves the Ruler in State Council shall make an order to that effect in the form in Schedule B to this Enactment.

(ii) Such order may be served on the person named therein by a police officer or by any person whom the Resident may direct to serve the same.

(iii) The order shall if practicable be served personally on the person named therein by showing him the original order and by tendering or delivering to him a copy thereof signed by the Resident.

(iv) If service cannot conveniently be effected as aforesaid the serving officer shall affix a copy of the order to some conspicuous part of the house or other place where the person named in the order ordinarily resides and thereupon the order shall be deemed to have been duly served.

(v) A certificate signed by the Resident that an order has been duly served on the person named therein shall be admissible in evidence in any judicial proceeding and on the production of such certificate the Court shall presume until the contrary is proved that such order was duly served.

(vi) Any person on whom an order has been served in accordance with the provisions of this section who is found within any Aboriginal Area mentioned in such order or within any Aboriginal Reserve mentioned in such order shall be guilty of an offence punishable with a fine of one hundred dollars.

(vii) Any person found committing an offence under the foregoing subsection may be arrested without warrant by the Protector or any police officer.
11. The Ruler in State Council may make rules for all the purposes of this Enactment and also for
   (a) the definition and regulation of Aboriginal settlement within Aboriginal Areas and Aboriginal Enactment;
   (b) the manner of evidencing and recording rights of occupancy granted under this Enactment;
   (c) prohibiting the planting of any particular product on lands over which rights of occupancy have been granted;
   (d) the registration of Aborigines within Aboriginal settlements;
   (e) permitting and regulating the felling of jungle within Aboriginal Areas and Aboriginal Reserves;
   (f) establishing schools within Aboriginal settlements;
   (g) declaring the rights of Aborigines to take forest produce in Aboriginal Areas and Aboriginal Reserves;
   (h) regulating the taking of wild animals and birds by Aborigines;
   (i) imposing penalties in respect of breaches of rules made under this Enactment.

12. In framing rules under this Enactment the Ruler in State Council may expressly or implicitly enact that all or any of the provisions of any written law shall not have effect in any Aboriginal Reserve.

SCHEDULE A

DISTRICT OF KUALA KANGSAR

The Ple-Temiar Senoi on the Ulu Plus and its tributaries including the Sungei Korbu.

The Ple-Temiar Senoi at Ulu Kuang in the district of Kuala Kangsar.

The Ple-Temiar Senoi on Gunong Kledang range (Sungei Bekor and Sungei Chermin).

The Semai Senoi in Parit Forest Reserve near Bota (Seluang Sungei Padi and Lubok Benta).
ABORIGINAL TRIBES

DISTRICT OF UPPER PERAK

The Kintak Negritos of Kroh.
The Kintak Negritos of Blukar Semang.
The lowland groups of Negritos in Belum Mukim.
The lowland groups of Negritos in Temengor Mukim.
The highland groups of Negritos in Temengor Mukim.
The lowland groups of Negritos in Grik Mukim.
The lowland groups of Negritos in Kenering Mukim.
The lowland groups in Negritos in Lenggong Mukim.
The lowland groups of Negritos in Temelong and Durian Pipit Mukims.

DISTRICT OF BATANG PADANG

The highland groups of Semai Senoi at Ulu Batang Padang, Ulu Bidor, Ulu Sungkai, Ulu Slim and Ulu Behrang.
The lowland groups of Semai Senoi at Sungei Ellow, Chinchok, Subang, Tekrak and Tegal near Chenderiang.
The lowland groups of Semai Senoi at Sungei Geroyang, Sungei Merbau, Sungei Chikus and Kuala Woh near Tapah.
The lowland groups of Semai Senoi at Gepai, Sungei Bikam, Sungei Ewan and Sungei Pelawin near Bidor.
The lowland groups of Semai Senoi in Trolak Forest Reserve near Trolak.
The lowland groups of Semai Senoi at Rasau, Sungei Bil, Buluh Seruas and Changkat Bintang near Slim.
The lowland groups of Semai Senoi at Chinain and Kiah near Behrang.

DISTRICT OF LOWER PERAK

The lowland group of Semai Senoi at Pengkalan Jering.
The lowland groups of Semai Senoi at Changkat Pinggan (Kerikal, Peluhut and Kemian).
The lowland groups of Semai Senoi at Ponggor (Gaib and Tenang).
The lowland group of Semai Senoi at Sungei Kroh (Ayer Kuning).
The lowland group of Semai Senoi at Langkap.
The lowland group of Semai Senoi at Sungei Erong (Changkat Kreta).

SCHEDULE B

State of Perak

Aboriginal tribes Enactment 1939
ORDER UNDER SECTION 10

To......

Whereas it appears to the Ruler in State Council that it is desirable that you should be prohibited from entering or remaining in ........ being (an) Aboriginal Area(s) Reserve(s) declared by Gazette Notification(s).....

It is hereby ordered by the Ruler in State Council that you be and you hereby are prohibited from entering or remaining in the aforesaid Aboriginal .....

Given under my hand this ........ day of .......... 19 ........

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

British Resident

*Description of Area(s) and or Reserve(s). Strike out unecessary letters and words.

1939
KUALA LUMPUR
PRINTED AT THE FEDERATED MALAY STATES GOVERNEMENT PRESS BR. W.R. WARN
GOVERNMENT PRINTER, PERAK

To be purchased directly from the Government Printing Department, Kuala Lumpur, Federated Malay States: from News, Kelly & Wales, Limited, Raffles Place, Singapore, solicitors book Emporium, Old Market Square, Kuala Lumpur; the Croysh Agency for the Colonies and Medhunk, London, S.W. G; and the Malay Informations Agency, Malaya House, St. Charing Cross, London, S.W.1

PRICE: 30 Cents or 9d.
AKTA ORANG ASLI 1954
(Disemak—1974)
Dikanunkan tahun 1954 sebagai Ordinan No. 3 tahun 1954.
UNDANG-UNDANG MALAYSIA

Akta 134

AKTA ORANG ASLI 1954
(Disemak—1974)

SUSUNAN SEKSYEN-SEKSYEN

Seksyen

1. Tajuk ringkas dan pemakaian.
2. Tafsiran.
3. Takrif bagi orang asli.
4. Pentadbiran orang asli.
5. Pernantikan Pesuruhjaya dan Timbalan-timbalan Pesuruhjaya.
7. Rizab orang asli.
8. Hak-hak menduduki.
9. Transaksi mengenai tanah oleh orang asli.
10. Masyarakat orang asli tidak berkewajiban meninggalkan kawasan-kawasan yang diisyiharkan Rizab Orang Melayu, dll.
13. Pengambilan paksa tanah untuk kawasan atau rizab orang asli.
15. Memindahkan orang-orang yang tidak diingini.
17. Orang asli tidak boleh dihalang daripada belajar di mana-mana sekolah.

JADUAL.
UNDANG-UNDANG MALAYSIA

Akta 134

AKTA ORANG ASLI 1954

(Disemak—1974)

Suatu Akta untuk mengadakan peruntukan bagi perlindungan, kesentosaan dan kemajuan orang asli di Malaysia Barat.

[25hb Februari, 1954.]

   (2) Akta ini hendaklah dipakai hanya di Malaysia Barat sahaja.

2. Dalam Akta ini melainkan jika kandungan ayatnya menghendaki makna yang lain—
   "bahasa orang asli" termasuklah apa-apa bahasa dan apa-apa ubahsuaian loghat atau apa-apa bahasa bentuk kunaan yang lazim digunakan oleh mana-mana orang asli;
   "cara hidup orang asli" termasuklah hidup secara masyarakat menetap dalam kampung-kampung sama ada di kawasan pendalaman atau di pesisiran pantai;
   "diberimilik" berhubung dengan tanah mempunyai erti yang diberi kepada dalam undang-undang bertulis berhubung dengan tanah yang berkuatkuasa di Malaysia Barat;
   "kawasan orang asli" ertinya kawasan orang asli yang disyiharkan sedemikian di bawah Akta ini;
   "kumpulan kaum orang asli" ertinya satu daripada tiga kumpulan utama orang asli di Malaysia Barat yang terbahagi mengikut kaum kepada Negrito, Senoi dan Melayu-Proto;
   "kumpulan rumpun bangsa orang asli" ertinya suatu bahagian persukuan orang asli yang berbeza dengan yang lain sebagaimana terbukti dari ciri-ciri kebudayaan, bahasa
3. (1) Dalam Akta ini orang asli ialah—

(a) mana-mana orang yang bapanya adalah seorang dari kumpulan rumpun bangsa orang asli, yang bercakap dalam bahasa orang asli dan lazim mengikut cara hidup orang asli dan adat dan kepercayaan orang asli, dan termasuklah seseorang keturunan melalui lelaki orang itu;

(b) mana-mana orang dari apa-apa kaum yang diambil sebagai anak angkat semasa masih kanak-kanak oleh orang asli dan yang telah dididik sebagai seorang orang asli, lazim bercakap dalam bahasa orang asli, lazim mengikut cara hidup orang asli dan adat dan kepercayaan orang asli dan adalah seorang dari sesuatu masyarakat orang asli; atau

(c) anak dari apa-apa persatuan antara seorang perempuan orang asli dengan seorang lelaki dari suatu kaum lain, dengan syarat bahawa anak itu lazim bercakap dalam bahasa orang asli, lazim mengikut cara hidup orang asli dan adat dan kepercayaan orang asli dan masih lagi menjadi seorang dari sesuatu masyarakat orang asli.
ORANG ASLI

(2) Mana-mana orang asli yang tidak lagi berpegang kepada kepercayaan orang asli oleh kerana ia telah masuk sesuatu ugama atau oleh kerana apa-apa sebab lain, tetapi ia maseh mengikut cara hidup orang asli dan adat orang asli atau bercakap dalam bahasa orang asli tidak boleh disifatkan sebagai tidak lagi menjadi seorang orang asli semata-mata oleh sebab ia mengamalkan ugama itu.

(3) Apa-apa soal sama ada seseorang adalah seorang orang asli atau bukan orang asli hendaklah diputuskan oleh Menteri.

4. Pesuruhjaya adalah bertanggungjawab mengenai pentadbiran, kebajikan dan kemajuan am orang asli:

Dengan syarat bahawa tiada apa-apa jua dalam seksyen ini boleh disifatkan sebagai menghalang mana-mana ketua orang asli daripada menjalankan kuasanya dalam hal-hal adat dan kepercayaan orang asli dalam mana-mana masyarakat orang asli atau mana-mana kumpulan rumpun bangsa orang asli.

5. (1) Yang di-Pertuan Agong boleh melantik seorang Pesuruhjaya bagi Hal Ehwal Orang Asli, dan beberapa Timbalan Pesuruhjaya bagi Hal Ehwal Orang Asli dan lain-lain pegawai sebagaimana yang dihkirkannya perlu bagi maksud-maksud Akta ini.

(2) Adalah sah di sisi undang-undang bagi Pesuruhjaya itu melakukan segala perbuatan yang menasabah perlu dan bersampingan atau berhubung dengan melaksanakan tugastugasnya di bawah Akta ini termasuk menjalankan penyelidikan mengenai apa-apa aspek kehidupan orang asli.

(3) Semua kuasa Pesuruhjaya di bawah Akta ini boleh dijalankan oleh Timbalan-timbalan Pesuruhjaya.

(4) Tiap-tiap orang yang dilantik di bawah seksyen ini hendaklah disifatkan sebagai penjawat awam dalam erti Kanun Keseksaan.

6. (1) Pihakberkuasa Negeri boleh, melalui pemberitahu dalam Warta, mengisyiharkan mana-mana kawasan yang diduduki kebanyakannya atau hanya oleh orang asli, yang
belum lagi diisyiharkan sebagai rizab orang asli di bawah seksyen 7, sebagai kawasan orang asli dan boleh meng-
isytiharkan kawasan itu sebagai terbahagi kepada satu atau beberapa kariah orang asli:

Dengan syarat bahawa di mana ada lebih dari satu kumpulan rumpun bangsa orang asli maka hendaklah ada sebilangan kariah yang sama banyaknya dengan bilangan kumpulan rumpun bangsa orang asli.

(2) Da'lam sesuatu kawasan orang asli—

(i) tiada mana-mana tanah boleh diisyiharkan sebagai Rizab Orang Melayu di bawah mana-mana undang-
undang bertulis berhubung dengan Rizab Orang Melayu;

(ii) tiada mana-mana tanah boleh diisyiharkan se-
bagai suatu tempat perlindungan atau rizab di bawah mana-mana undang-undang bertulis berhubung
 dengan perlindungan binatang-binatang dan burung-
burung liar;

(iii) tiada mana-mana tanah boleh diberimilik, diberi,
dipajak atau dilepaskan secara lain kepada orang-
orang yang bukan orang asli yang biasanya tinggal
dalam kawasan orang asli itu atau kepada mana-
mana pengusaha perdagangan tanpa berunding
dengan Pesuruhjaya; dan

(iv) tiada apa-apa lesen bagi memungut-keluaran hutan
di bawah mana-mana undang-undang bertulis
berhubung dengan hutan boleh dikeluarkan kepada
orang-orang yang bukan orang asli yang biasanya
tinggal dalam kawasan orang asli itu atau kepada
mana-mana pengusaha perdagangan tanpa ber-
unding dengan Pesuruhjaya dan pada memberi
sesuatu lesen itu maka bolehlah diperintahkan
supaya tenaga orang asli digunakan mengikut kadar
yang ditentukan.

(3) Pihakberkuasa Negeri boleh dengan cara yang sama
membatalkan kesemua atau sebahagianinya atau mengubah
mana-mana pengisyiharan mengenai kawasan orang asli
yang dibuat di bawah seksyen-kecil (1).
7. (1) Pihak berkuasa Negeri boleh, melalui pemberitahuan dalam *Warta*, mengisytiharkan mana-mana kawasan yang diduduki hanya oleh orang-orang asli sebagai suatu rizab orang asli:

Dengan syarat—

(i) jika didapati orang-orang asli tidak mungkin akan tinggal kekal di tempat itu, tempat itu tidak boleh diisytiharkan sebagai rizab orang asli tetapi hendaklah menjadi sebahagian daripada kawasan orang asli; dan

(ii) suatu rizab orang asli boleh diadakan dalam sesuatu kawasan orang asli.

(2) Dalam sesuatu rizab orang asli—

(i) tiada mana-mana tanah boleh diisytiharkan sebagai Rizab Orang Melayu di bawah mana-mana undang-undang bertulis berhubung dengan Rizab Orang Melayu;

(ii) tiada mana-mana tanah boleh diisytiharkan sebagai tempat perlindungan atau rizab di bawah mana-mana undang-undang bertulis berhubung dengan perlindungan binatang-binatang dan burung-burung liar;

(iii) tiada mana-mana tanah boleh diisytiharkan sebagai hutan rizab di bawah mana-mana undang-undang bertulis berhubung dengan hutan;

(iv) tiada mana-mana tanah boleh diberimilik, diberi, dipajak atau dilepaskan secara lain kecuali kepada orang asli dari masyarakat orang asli yang biasanya tinggal dalam rizab itu; dan

(v) menduduki mana-mana tanah secara sementara tidak boleh dibenarkan di bawah mana-mana undang-undang bertulis berhubung dengan tanah.

(3) Pihak berkuasa Negeri boleh dengan cara yang sama membatalkan kesemua atau sebahagiannya atau mengubah mana-mana perisytiharan mengenai rizab orang asli yang dibuat di bawah seksyen-kecil (1).
Hak-hak menduduki

8. (1) Pihak berkuasa Negeri boleh memberi hak-hak menduduki mana-mana tanah yang bukan tanah yang diberimiliki atau bukan tanah yang dipajakkan bagi apa-apa maksud dalam mana-mana kawasan orang asli atau rizab orang asli.

(2) Hak-hak menduduki boleh diberi—

(a) kepada—

(i) mana-mana orang perseorangan orang asli;
(ii) ahli-ahli sesuatu keluarga orang asli; atau
(iii) mereka dari sesuatu masyarakat orang asli;

(b) bebas daripada sewa atau tertakluk kepada apa-apa sewa yang dikenakan apabila hak-nak itu diberi; dan

(c) tertakluk kepada apa-apa syarat yang dikenakan dengan pemberian hak-hak itu,

dan hendaklah disifatkan sebagai tidak memberi kepada seseorang sesuatu hak milik yang lebih baik daripada hak milik seorang tenan ikut ihsan.

(3) Tiada apa-apa dalam seksyen ini boleh menghalang mana-mana tanah daripada diberimiliki atau diberi atau dipajakkan kepada seseorang orang asli.

9. Tiada seseorang orang asli boleh memindahmilik, memajak, menggadai, memindah, menyerahkan, menggadaijanji atau dengan cara lain melepaskan mana-mana tanah kecuali dengan persetujuan Pesuruhjaya dan apa-apa transaksi seperti itu yang dibuat tanpa persetujuan Pesuruhjaya adalah tak sah dan tidak berkuatkuasa.


(2) Apa-apa kaedah yang dibuat di bawah seksyen ini boleh memperuntukkan dengan nyata bahawa kesemua atau
ORANG ASLI

11. (1) Jika suatu masyarakat orang asli membuktikan sesuatu tuntutan terhadap pokok buah-buahan atau pokok getah di atas mana-mana tanah Kerajaan yang diberimilik, diberikan kepada apabila maksud, diduduki semestara di bawah lesen atau dilepaskan secara lain, maka apa-apa pampasan sebagaimana yang difikirkan patut oleh Pihak berkuasa Negeri hendaklah dibayar kepada masyarakat orang asli itu.

(2) Apa-apa pampasan yang kena dibayar di bawah seksyen-kecil (1) boleh dibayar menurut seksyen 12.

12. Jika mana-mana tanah disingkirkan dari mana-mana kawasan orang asli atau rizab orang asli atau jika mana-mana tanah dalam mana-mana kawasan orang asli diberimilik, diberikan kepada apabila maksud atau dilepaskan secara lain, atau jika apa-apa hak atau keistimewaan di dalam mana-mana kawasan orang asli atau rizab orang asli yang diberi kepada mana-mana orang asli atau masyarakat orang asli dibatalkan kesemuanya atau sebahagiannya, maka Pihakberkuasa Negeri boleh menentukan pampasan baginya dan boleh membayar pampasan itu kepada orang-orang yang pada pendapatnya adalah berhak kepadianya atau boleh, jika difikirkannya patut, membayar pampasan itu kepada Pesuruhjaya untuk disimpan olehnya sebagai suatu kumpulanwang am bagi mana-mana orang itu atau bagi mana-mana masyarakat orang asli itu sebagaimana yang diarahkan oleh Menteri, dan untuk ditadbirkan mengikut apa-apa cara yang ditetapkan oleh Menteri.
13. Apabila mana-mana harta takalih, yang bukan tanah Kerajaan, adalah perlu untuk diambil supaya diisytiharkan sebagai kawasan orang asli atau rizab orang asli, harta itu boleh diambil menurut undang-undang bertulis mengenai pengambilan tanah dan apa-apa perisytiharan yang dikehendaki oleh undang-undang itu bahawa harta itu adalah diperlukan sedemikian hendaklah berkuatkuasa seolah-olah ianya adalah suatu perisytiharan bahawa harta itu adalah diperlukan bagi maksud awam menurut undang-undang bertulis itu.

14. (1) Menteri boleh, jika ia berpuashati bahawa memandang kepada pentadbiran wajar hal kebajikan orang asli dalam mana-mana kawasan orang asli atau rizab orang asli atau tempat yang diduduki oleh orang asli adalah perlu supaya mana-mana orang atau golongan orang patut dialarang daripada memasuki atau berada dalam kawasan, rizab atau tempat itu, membuat suatu perintah bagi maksud itu dalam bentuk yang ditetapkan dalam Jadual.

(a) Perintah itu apabila dialamatkan kepada orang perseorangan, boleh disampaikan kepada orang yang tersebut namanya dalamnya itu oleh seorang pegawai polis atau oleh mana-mana orang yang diarahkan oleh Menteri untuk menyampaikannya.

(b) Perintah itu hendaklah jika praktik disampaikan kepada orang yang tersebut namanya dalamnya itu sendiri dengan menunjukkan kepada mereka perintah asal dan dengan memberi atau menyerahkan kepada mereka suatu salinan perintah itu yang ditandatangani oleh Menteri.

(c) Jika perintah itu tidak dapat disampaikan dengan mudah seperti tersebut di atas maka pegawai penyampai yang berkenaan itu hendaklah menampakkan satu salinan perintah itu di suatu bahagian rumah itu yang mudah dilihat atau di sesuatu tempat lain di mana orang yang tersebut namanya dalam perintah itu biasanya tinggal dan dengan demikian perintah itu hendaklah disifatkan sebagai telah disampaikan dengan sewajarnya.

(d) Sesuatu perakuan yang ditandatangani oleh Menteri bahawa suatu perintah telah disampaikan dengan sewajarnya kepada orang yang tersebut namanya dalam perintah itu boleh diterima sebagai keterangan dalam mana-mana pembicaraan kehakiman dan apabila dikemukakan perakuan itu mahkamah hendaklah menganggap sehingga dibuktikan
sebaliknya bahawa perintah itu telah disampaikan dengan sewajarnya.

(3) Perintah itu, apabila dialamatkan kepada sesuatu golongan orang, hendaklah disiarkan dalam Warta.

(4) Jika seseorang yang telah disampaikan suatu perintah menurut seksyen ini dan ianya dijumpai dalam mana-mana kawasan orang asli, rizab orang asli atau mana-mana tempat yang diduduki oleh orang asli yang disebutkan dalam perintah itu dan jika seseorang adalah dari mana-mana golongan orang yang telah dilarang daripada masuk atau berada dalam mana-mana kawasan orang asli, rizab orang asli atau mana-mana tempat yang diduduki oleh orang asli dan ianya dijumpai dalam kawasan, rizab atau tempat itu maka orang itu adalah bersalah atas suatu kesalahan dan boleh, apabila disabitan, dikenakan denda tidak lebih dari satu ribu ringgit.

(5) Seseorang yang didapati melakukan suatu kesalahan di bawah seksyen-kecil (4) boleh ditangkap tanpa waran oleh Pesuruhjaya atau mana-mana pegawai polis.

15. (1) Pesuruhjaya dan mana-mana pegawai polis boleh menahan mana-mana orang yang dijumpai dalam mana-mana kawasan orang asli, rizab orang asli atau mana-mana tempat yang diduduki orang asli jika ia ada sebab bagi mempercyai bahawa aktiviti-aktivitinya adalah memudarakan kebajikan mana-mana orang asli atau mana-mana masyarakat orang asli dan hendaklah memindahkan orang itu dari kawasan, rizab atau tempat itu dalam masa tujuh hari dari tarikh ia ditahan.

(2) Pesuruhjaya atau mana-mana pegawai polis yang menahan atau memindahkan mana-mana orang menurut seksyen-kecil (1) hendaklah dengan seberapa segera yang boleh melapurkan segala hal-keadaan itu secara bertulisan kepada Menteri.

16. (1) Ketua turun-temurun bagi suatu masyarakat orang asli hendaklah menjadi ketua masyarakat itu atau, mengenai sesuatu masyarakat orang asli dalam masa jawatan ketua itu bukan turun-temurun, seorang yang dipilih sebagai ketua oleh orang-orang dari masyarakat itu hendaklah menjadi ketua masyarakat itu, tertakluk dalam tiap-tiap satunya kepada pengesahan oleh Menteri.

(2) Menteri boleh memecat mana-mana ketua dari jawatannya.
17. (1) Tiada seseorang kanak-kanak orang asli boleh dihalang daripada belajar di mana-mana sekolah semata-mata oleh sebab ianya seorang orang asli.

(2) Tiada seseorang kanak-kanak orang asli yang belajar di mana-mana sekolah boleh diwajibkan menghadiri apa-apa pengajaran ugama melainkan jika persetujuan bapanya atau ibunya, jika bapanya telah mati, atau penjaganya, jika kedua-dua ibubapanya telah mati, telah terlebih dahulu dimaklumkan kepada Pesuruhjaya, dan disampaikan oleh Pesuruhjaya secara bertulis kepada guru besar sekolah yang berkenaan itu.

(3) Seseorang yang melakukan sesuatu berlawanan dengan seksyen ini adalah bersalah atas suatu kesalahan dan boleh apabila disabitkan, dikenakan denda tidak lebih daripada lima ratus ringgit.

18. (1) Tiada seseorang yang bukan seorang orang asli dari kumpulan rumpun bangsa yang sama boleh mengambil kanak-kanak orang asli sebagai anak angkat atau memelihara, menjaga atau mengawalnya kecuali dengan persetujuan Pesuruhjaya dan pada memberi persetujuan itu Pesuruhjaya boleh mengenakan apa-apa syarat sebagaimana yang difikirkannya patut.

(2) Seseorang yang melakukan sesuatu berlawanan dengan seksyen ini atau melakukan sesuatu pelanggaran terhadap apa-apa syarat yang dikenakan oleh Pesuruhjaya adalah bersalah atas suatu kesalahan dan boleh, apabila disabitkan, dikenakan denda tidak lebih daripada satu ribu ringgit atau penjara selama tempoh tidak lebih daripada enam bulan atau kedua-duanya.

19. (1) Menteri boleh membuat peraturan-peraturan bagi melaksanakan maksud-maksud Akta ini dan khususnya bagi maksud-maksud yang berikut:

(a) mewujudkan perkampungan orang asli dalam kawasan orang asli dan rizab orang asli, jenisnya dan kawalan mengenainya;

(b) melarang sama ada secara mutlak atau secara bersyarat dan mengawal kemasukan mana-mana orang atau mana-mana golongan orang ke dalam rizab orang asli, kawasan orang asli, tempat yang diduduki oleh orang asli dar. perkampungan orang asli;
ORANG ASLI

(c) mengadakan peruntukan bagi perlantikan seseorang ketua, dan menetapkan kelayakan-kelayakan bagi-nya dan cara melantiknya;

(d) mengadakan peruntukan bagi pendaftaran orang asli;

(e) cara membuktikan dan merekod hak-hak pendudukan yang diberi kepada orang asli di bawah Akta ini;

(f) melarang dari ditanam apa-apa tanam-tanaman tertentu atas tanah-tanah yang mengenainya hak- hak pendudukan telah diberi;

(g) membenarkan dan mengawal penebangan hutan dalam kawasan orang asli dan rizab orang asli;

(h) membenarkan orang asli mengambil keluaran hutan dalam kawasan orang asli;

(i) mengawal penangkapan burung-burung dan binatang-binatang liar oleh orang asli;

(j) mengadakan peruntukan bagi menubuhkan sekolah-sekolah dalam kawasan orang asli, rizab orang asli dan tempat yang diduduki oleh orang asli dan menetapkan susunan mata pelajaran bagi sekolah-sekolah itu dan kelayakan-kelayakan bagi guru-guru di sekolah-sekolah itu;

(k) menetapkan had-had dan syarat-syarat atas mana orang asli boleh diambil kerja, dan peraturan-peraturan itu boleh mengadakan peruntukan bagi membolehkan Pesuruhjaya menuntut bagi pihak seseorang orang asli apa-apaga gaji yang kena dibayar kepada orang asli itu mengikut peraturan-peraturan itu;

(l) melarang sama ada secara mutlak atau secara bersyarat kemasmuan ke dalam atau pengedaran di dalam mana-mana kawasan orang asli, rizab orang asli atau tempat yang diduduki oleh orang asli apa-apa benda bertulis atau bercetak, apa-apa filem wayang gambar dan segala benda sama ada atau tidak sama jenisnya dengan benda bertulis atau bercetak yang mengandungi apa-apa gambaran yang boleh, atau dengan rupanya, bentuknya atau dengan apa-apa cara lain boleh membayangkan perkataan-perkataan atau buah-buah fikiran dan tiap-tiap salinan dan tiruan atau sebahagian besar tiruannya;
(m) melarang sama ada secara mutlak atau secara bersyarat dari dijual atau diberi apa-apa liquor yang memabukkan sebagaimana yang ditakrif dalam mana-mana undang-undang bertulis berhubung dengan eksais kepada seseorang orang asli atau masyarakat orang asli yang tertentu atau dalam mana-mana kawasan orang asli, rizab orang asli atau tempat yang diduduki oleh orang asli; dan

(n) menetapkan istilah dengan mana orang asli, masyarakat orang asli dan kumpulan rumpun bangsa orang asli hendak disebut.

(o) (Ditinggalkan).

(2) Tiada apa-apa peraturan boleh dibuat bagi maksud-maksud seksyen-kecil (1) (a), (e), (f), (g), (h) atau (i) melainkan Kerajaan Negeri di mana peraturan-peraturan itu akan berkuatkuasa telah dirunding terlebih dahulu.

JADUAL
AKTA ORANG ASLI 1954
(Seksyen 14 (1))

Kepada,

Bahawasanya Menteri berpuasati bahawa memandang kepada *pentadbiran wajar/hal kebajikan/kesentosaan orang asli dalam *kawasan orang asli................................./ rizab orang asli............................................................../ tempat yang diduduki oleh orang asli.................................

tuan adalah dilarang daripada *memasukinya/berada di dalamnya;

Maka oleh yang demikian pada menjalankan kuasa-kuasa yang diberi kepada saya oleh seksyen 14 (1) Akta itu, Saya..............................

Menteri yang bertanggungjawab bagi hal kebajikan orang asli, dengan ini memerintahkan bahawa dari tarikh perintah ini tuan adalah dengan ini dilarang daripada *memasuki/ berada dalam *kawasan/rizab/tempat yang tersebut di atas.

Bertarikh pada.......haribulan......................... 19......

.................................................................

Menteri

* Potong mana yang tidak berkhasian.
UNDANG-UNDANG MALAYSIA

Akta 134

AKTA ORANG ASLI 1954
(Disemak—1974)

_Bu[tir-bu]tir di bawah seksyen 7 (ii) dan (iii) Akta Penyemakan
Undang-undang 1968 (Akta 1)

SENARAI PINDAAN-PINDAAN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Undang-undang yang meminda</th>
<th>Tajuk ringkas</th>
<th>Berkuatkuasa dari</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ord. 60/1956 ...</td>
<td>Ordinan Majlis Lantikan Negeri-negeri Selat (Perubahan Nama) 1956</td>
<td>1-9-1956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.U. 332/58 ...</td>
<td>Perintah Perlembagaan Persekutuan (Ubahsuian Undang-undang) (Ordinan dan Pemasyhuran) 1958</td>
<td>13-11-1958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akta 16/1967 ...</td>
<td>Akta Orang Asli (Pindaan) 1967</td>
<td>6-4-1967</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SENARAI UNDANG-UNDANG ATAU BAHAGIAN-BAHAGIANNYA YANG DIGANTI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Tajuk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 tahun 1954</td>
<td>Ordinan Orang Asli 1954.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note: This letter was originally written on paper made of bamboo.

Letter Appointing Bah Busu as Apit Maharaja Kanan
Appendix F

BIOGRAPHY OF KEY INFORMANTS

Andak Jameah

Andak Jameah is a daughter of Long Jeroneh, who pioneered Perah village. She was born in Temboh Bekett, probably in the early 1900s because when she and her family moved to Perah in the early 1920s, she was about the age of Wa Encorn, her grand daughter who was 19 years old during my fieldwork in Perah in 1995. Andak Jameah grew up in Perah. In the 1930s, she married Itam Bet, a son of a powerful hala' of Teaw Batu'. She used to serve as a traditional midwife of Perah but retired when modern medical facilities reached the village. She was a most respected figure, and was regarded as a pasak inhabitant because she was one of the survivors of the earliest generation of Perah villagers. Although she was about 90 years old when I did my fieldwork, she had a good memory and could remember all cermor, both folk narratives and her own group's oral history. She died due to an asthmatic attack on 23 April 1996.

Itam Langsat

Itam Langsat is a son of Long Raja, and both of them are figures who were involved in establishing Perah village. Itam Langsat was the same generation as Andak Jameah, and was also a respected figure for being a survivor of the earliest generation of the Perah population. In addition to his role as hala', he was also a social figure because of his role as an elder who was responsible for looking after, or preserving and exercising, the adat, the seng-oi custom. He died of old age on 19 June 1996.

Ata' Bek Makar

Ata' Bek Makar is a son of Mat Melaka and was born in Temboh Bekett in the mid 1910s. He moved to Pancor in 1926 when he was about 12 or 13 years old, and grew up in that village until the Malayan Emergency. The active movement of the Communist insurgents in Perah area forced the villagers of Perah and
Pancor to evacuate and flee to various places. Ata’ Bek Makar moved back to Denak and then to Sungai Galah in 1952 or 1953. There, he worked as a labourer and then a surveyor with a dredging company until 1958. During that time, he married a local girl of Sungai Galah. He went back to Denak at the end of 1958 or early 1959 and then returned to Pancor at the end of 1960 after the end of the Emergency was declared. In 1965, Ata’ Bek Makar and other Pancor villages moved to Perah because their village was affected by the route of a high voltage power line in a government project. They resettled in the sub-village of Baring. Two or three years later, Ata’ Bek Makar established Ajoinj sub-village as he does not like the Baring area, which is mainly steep. He still lives there. At present, he is an elder of Ajoinj sub-village, a hala’ and holds a key position as the Penghulu’ Adat, the leader of seng-oi custom of Perah.

Ata’ Bek Pakai

Ata’ Bek Pakai is also a son of Mat Melaka. He was born in Denak in the early 1910s and moved to Pancor together with his younger brother, Ata’ Bek Makar, a few months before the historic flood in 1926. He lived there until he was a young man, when he got married to a daughter of Mara’ Halau of Teaw Batu’ During the Japanese era he moved to Sungai Galah seeking traditional healing for an illness. When he recovered, he continued living in Sungai Galah and worked as a gardener in a bungalow of a Manager of the dredging company. During the Emergency, he joined the semi-military forces, the Home Guards, and was deployed in a few seng-oi villages, including Bekau. He retired in 1960 and went back to Pancor in the same year. During the early reoccupation of Pancor, Ata’ Bek Pakai was the acting penghulu’, adopting the position of his father, who had died during the Japanese occupation. When the people of Pancor moved to Baring in 1965, Ata’ Bek Pakai had to surrender his headmanship because the sub-village was under the Perah leadership. He is now an elder of Baring sub-village and a hala’.

Ata’ Bek Jarah

During this fieldwork, Ata’ Bek Jarah’s age was more than 70 years. He is the second cousin of Ata’ Bek Makar and a grandson of Ata’ Pawang, who had a close relationship with the Raja of Tanjung Belanja during the ancient Malay state era. Ata’ Bek Jarah is a pensioner of the JHEOA, and now lives in Ipoh
city. While he was still working with the JHEOA, he converted to Islam as he married his Malay wife. He is a good hala' and traditional massager. He occasionally visits his elder brother, Bek Apok, in Ajoinj sub-village. He is also called for by villagers who seek traditional healing and massages. Many other Perah villagers are his close relatives or waris and he therefore has to attend all their marriages because of his role in negotiation and endorsement. Although he spends most of his time in Ipoh, he is still regarded as an elder of Perah and of Denak.

**Bek Tambun**

Bek Tambun is a grandson of Mat Melaka. He was born in Denak in 1923. He grew up in Denak and Temboh Bekett, the village of his father and mother. During the Malayan Emergency, he joined the Seng-oi Praq and retired in 1960. About the same year, he got divorced from his wife, ken Abu, which led him to move to Pancor. In Pancor, he inherited all his father’s land because his father was getting old and wanted to spend the rest of his life in Denak. In 1966, he was appointed local leader to run a rubber estate project sponsored by the government. He appears to be a person rich with both folk and modern knowledge, and is talkative too: he can talk for hours without stopping. He is considered a hard working person, who appears to be the only one attempting to revive the fish farm project which is failing due to irrigation problems. In addition to tapping rubber and working on his fish farm, Bek Tambun has increased his economic activities by running a sundry shop and becoming the only licenced rubber dealer of the village. Now, he is regarded as an elder of the Baring people and of the Christian community in the village.

**Mara’ Semae**

Mara’ Semae, also known as Bah Cerut (Mr. Cigar) after his habit of smoking cigars (cerut), is a son of the late Ata’ Bek Semae, the last pawang of Perah. He was born in the 1920s in Temboh Bekett and grew up there. He married a widower of Gedong Batu’ named Ken Ple’. After his marriage, he and his family moved to Teaw Mencharg village of Kampar town and lived there together with the family of his step-son, Mni’ Bah Rom. After about a decade living with Ken Ple’, his marriage broke up. He moved to Perah in 1968 to join his father, while his ex-wife, Ken Ple’, moved back to Gedong Batu’. A few years later, he
married a local woman and his marriage lasted until he died in a road accident on 24 June 1997. During his life in Perah, he was well-known as an extremely aggressive person, who offered no compromise in controversies with other villagers. Apart from his tough personality, he was a joker, a hala’ and an elder who knew most of the cermor.

Long Apon

Long Apon was born in Teaw Batu’ in 1922. When he was about 13 years old, his family moved to Perah because Teaw Batu’ was effected by mining. During the Emergency, he and his family moved to Gedong Batu’. There, he married a local girl, but his marriage lasted less than one year. After his divorce, Long Apon went to stay with his aunt, Ken Lincot, in Krikal (now known as Kelubi). Later, he and his father, Kulop Laru, went to work in the dredger of a mining area nearby Tronoh town. While working here, he married Ken Son, a girl from Denak whose family, together with a few other families of Denak, had been resettled by the British in a temporary camp in a place nearby the mining area referred to by the seng-oi as Sempa’ Touq. A few months after he married Ken Son, his wife’s family was murdered by the Communist insurgents. That tragedy aroused anger among the seng-oi of Sempa’ Touq and of Denak, including Long Apon and his father. They left the dredging job and joined the armed forces to fight the Communist insurgents. He, his father and a group of people from Sempa’ Touq and Denak undertook a short training with the British army. They were then assigned as Jungle Scouts, an intelligence squad, whose main task was to reconnoitre the Communist insurgents in the Denak jungle area. Their commitment helped the British forces to clear the insurgents’ domination of the area. Long Apon and his father retired from the squad in 1960, after the Emergency ended, and went back to Perah. His father died in the 1970s and his wife, Ken Son, died in early 1997. Long Apon is currently an elder of Perah, and carries the responsibility together with other elders of handling the adat. He is also a hala’, a skill which he inherited from his late grandfather, Mara’ Hallaw, a former popular hala’ of Teaw Batu’.

Long Dahaman

Long Dahaman is the first son of Andak Jameah. He was born in Perah in the early 1930s. He grew up in Perah. During the Emergency, he, his family and
other villagers had to evacuate Perah. He and his family moved to a number of places, such as Ipoh, Selat, Kangor camp, Piul, Sadang Estate and Gedong Batu'. While in Gedong Batu', he was already a young man and got married to a girl of this village in 1957. He stayed in this village while his family moved to Bekau. In 1958, he joined the Seng-oi Praq, an elite seng-oi armed forces troop, and retired in 1960. After his retirement, Long Dahaman lived in his wife's village for a while and then went back to Perah at the end of that year. In the 1980s, he succeeded as penghulu of Perah, replacing his cousin, Pertel, who at that time was ill and being treated in hospital. Long Dahaman retains the post until today.

**Pertel**

Pertel, whose real name is Alang Gek, is a son of Bek Runjul, the first penghulu of Perah. As a little boy he did not live with his own family, who lived in Teaw Batu', but with his grandfather in Temboh Bekett, and was looked after by his aunt, Andak Jameah. In 1916, his grandfather and Andak Jameah’s family started to move to Perah area permanently, and settled down in Uda Blap. He was at that time probably ten or eleven years old. Later, probably in late 1917 or early 1918, his family group moved to Kundur Itek, the time when his father, Bek Runjul, came to join them, and was appointed as penghulu. Starting from that time, he grew up with his own family. During the Emergency, he and his family moved everywhere with Andak Jameah’s family. A few years after they reoccupied Perah, his father died. Pertel then succeeded as penghulu. In the early 1980s, he fell seriously ill and his poor health forced him to surrender his headmanship. He is now one of the respected elders of the village, especially due to his pasak position for being one of the earliest Perah generation who is still alive.

**Derboh**

Derboh is a son of Itam Langsat. He was born in Perah about the same time as Long Dahaman. He grew up in Perah and married Uda Saremah, a daughter of Andak Jameah. During the time Pertel was the penghulu', Derboh acted as his assistant. Derboh and his team successfully brought a number of development projects into the village, such as housing subsidies and fish farms. He is now an elder of Perah and is respected for his hard-working way of life: he taps rubber during the day and is a night guard in town.
Keling Nawan

Keling Nawan is a grandson of Long Tanjung, a social figure who established Sungai Galah village in Gumpei Luas territory. Keling Nawan was born in 1914 in Changkat Tin, an area of Gumpei Luas territory. Before settling down in Sungai Galah, his people moved around in several areas within the territory in order to get away from the mining dredger. They then settled in an area beside the Kinta river called Pengkalan Jering. While living here, Keling was a teenager and was working in the dredger. Unfortunately, Pengkalan Jering was also affected by mining, which led its people to move to the only remaining area, called Sungai Galah. After a few years living here, World War II broke out in 1941. Keling and his family fled to Kelubi, a village in Krikal territory, and came back to Sungai Galah after the war ended. At that time, he was already a young man and got married to a local girl, whose family originated from Teaw Sengkuoq of Temboh Bekett area. He spent most of his life in Sungai Galah and was involved in traditional economic activities, such as fishing, cutting and selling wood, growing rubber and tapioca. He and other villagers moved to Tangkai Cermin in 1985 due to lack of land in Sungai Galah. He now holds the post of raknak adat, an elder who is responsible for looking after seng-oi traditional custom.

Panjang Long

Panjang Long is the only son of Long Tanjung who is still alive. He believes that he was born in the late 19th century. He presumes that his age is more than 100 years by now. He grew up in Gumpei Luas area and got married while they were in Pengkalan Jering. During World War II, he already had six children. He and a few other families fled to an interior area close to Temboh Bekett, known as Tok Kacett, and came back to Sungai Galah after the war was over. He is now a pawang of Tangkai Cermin, an elder who is responsible for looking after the seng-oi healing system.

Anjang Makpin

Anjang Makpin was born in 1936 in Sungai Galah. He grew up in this village. During the Emergency, his family moved with Panjang Long. After the war, his
family came back to Sungai Galah. At that time, Sungai Galah had no headman because its former *penghulu*, Tok Singa Meban, wanted to spend the rest of his life in Kelubi. Anjang Makpin’s father, Ngah Lesu, was at that time very close to the government, who attempted to alienate the *seng-oi* from Communist influences. Ngah Lesu was then appointed as *penghulu* of Sungai Galah. Anjang Makpen inherited that social status from his father, who died in 1980, and holds the post until now.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Adil, see Buyong Adil

Ahmad, see Kassim Ahmad


Annandale, N. and Robinson, H. C. 1903. Fasciculi Malayenses: Anthropological and Zoological Results of an Expedition to Perak and the Siamese Malay State, 1901-1902; Anthropology, part I. London: The University of Liverpool.


Awang Mat, see Noraini Awang Mat


Baki, see Aminuddin Baki

Bellwood, P. 1993. “Cultural and Biological Differentiation in Peninsular Malaysia: The Last 10,000 Years.” Asian Perspectives, Vol. 32.


411

(unpublished).

_______. 1980. “Semang, Senoi and Malay: Culture-history, Kinship and
Consciousness in the Malay Peninsula.” Unpublished paper,
Department of Prehistory and Anthropology, The Australian National
University, Canberra.

_______. 1985. “In the Long Term: Three Themes in Malayan Cultural
*Cultural Values and Human Ecology in Southeast Asia*. Ann
Arbor: Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies. Pp 219-278.

_______. 1987. “Ethnohistorical Perspectives on Kelantan’s Prehistory.” In
Arkeologi dan Sejarah di Malaysia*. Kota Bharu, Malaysia:
Perbadanan Muzium Negeri Kelantan.


Kumpulan News Straits Times. 10 Mac 1997.

Straits Times. 29 Disember 1997.

Blagden, O.C. 1894. “Early Indo-Chinese Influence in the Malay Peninsula as
Illustrated by Some of the Dialects of the Aboriginal Tribes.”
*Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*,
Singapore. Vol. 27, pp. 21-56.

_______. 1903. “The Comparative Philology of the Sakai and Semang
Dialects of the Malay Peninsula - A Review.” *Journal of the Straits


Pustaka.

Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press.


Chee-Beng see Tan, Chee-Beng


Eusoff see Ragayah Eusoff


Haji Abdul Rahman see Mohd Tajuddin Abdul Rahman


______. 1982. “Road are For Development?: Some Aspects of Jah Het Social Change.” UNESCO Regional Workshop on Socio-cultural Change in Communities Resulting from Economic Development and Technology Programmes.


Idris see Jimin Idris


Karim see Wazir-Jahan Karim


Majid see Zuraina Majid


Mat Nor see Hasan Mat Nor


Menon, K.P.V. 1976. History and Development of Forestry and Forest Industries in Malaysia. Forest Research Institute, Bibliographies No. 4.


Moh Salleh see Hood Mohd Salleh


Raffie’i see Baharon Azhar Raffie’i


Rashid see Razha Rashid


Taha see Adi Taha

Talib see Rokiah Talib


Teck Ghee see Lim, Teck Ghee


Wan The see Wan Hashim Wan The


________. 1923. *A History of the Peninsular Malaysia with chapters on Perak and Selangor*. Singapore: Kelly & Walsh, Ltd.


