Taming Race: The Construction of Aborigines in Colonial Malaya, 1783-1937

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I hereby declare that this thesis is the original work of the author except where otherwise acknowledged.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a history of the construction of aboriginal races in colonial Malaya from 1783 to 1937. It seeks to understand how ideas of race took shape within anthropological and governmental thought, in the colonial context of British Malaya. In particular, I focus on the connections and disconnections between race within the two areas of anthropological thought and practice and colonial government, in order to destabilise the apparent fixity of aboriginal races. I contend that an ideological separation developed between the two spheres of government and anthropology, as exemplified through my analysis of census reports and anthropological scholarly texts. The different modes of identification of ‘tame’ and ‘wild’ Sakai (the stereotypical and shorthand terms for aborigines in Malaya) within anthropological and government thinking serve to ground my treatment of these two spheres as distinct ideological bodies that maintained different criteria for the identification of aborigines, despite overlap in the personnel and resources of both areas. Through an analysis of the tensions between governmental and anthropological imperatives in colonial Malaya, this thesis offers a history of anthropology that concentrates both on ideas of race and on the specific situations in Malaya that brought them forth, influenced them and situated them. This thesis contributes to the global discussion on the influence of colonialism on anthropology, especially in the context of the latter’s history of ideas.

This thesis seeks to demonstrate that concepts of race were imbued with varying influences that were sometimes unexpected and ran counter to the ways in which some scholars understood race. As with Sakai, who did not meet expectations of primitivity
and were therefore labelled 'tame', ideas of race were imbued with, or perhaps 'tamed' by, the various anthropological and governmental contexts in Malaya. Today, race continues to be a salient feature of Malaysian and other societies because the term is continually made meaningful through the complex history of colonial Malaya and the present-day uses of race in biological, popular and legal discourses at all levels of Malaysian society and government. My emphasis on the situatedness of colonial knowledge about aborigines offers a critique of certain contemporary approaches to Orang Asli (the term for indigenous people of Peninsular Malaysia today) that continue to frame them as under-developed peoples with unchanging racial essences.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION: Indigeneity in Malaya and Malaysia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1: From “Original” to “Aboriginal” Races in the Malay Peninsula</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Originality” and Early Anthropology of the Malay Archipelago: William Marsden and John Leyden</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slavery and Scholarship: Stamford Raffles and John Crawfurd</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of Aborigines and Malays: John Anderson and T. J. Newbold</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2: Jakun, Orang Asal and Aborigines</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Through the medium of a Malay”</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Munshi Abdullah</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translating Aborigine and Race into Malay</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hikayat Abdullah: Looking at Jakun at Panchur Mountain</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hikayat Dunia: Jakun History on the Malay Peninsula and Orang Asal</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jakun and Orang Asal in Hikayat Dunia and “Aboriginal races/inhabitants” in Newbold’s Writing</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3: Sakai and the Colonial Sphere</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production of Knowledge on Aborigines</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sakai within the Government Record</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonial Common Knowledge on Sakai</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 4: Race, Sakai and Census</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“A judicious blend, for practical ends”</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sakai, “Tame” and “Wild”</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Systems of Differentiation .......................................................... 208

CHAPTER 5: Sakai and Anthropology ............................................. 219

The Malay Peninsula and Race Science ........................................ 221
Anthropology within Government ............................................... 235
The Cambridge Expedition (1899-1900) ........................................ 242
Systems of Differentiation .......................................................... 256
Anthropological versus Colonial Extinction ................................... 261
The Status of Sakai Humanity ...................................................... 267

CHAPTER 6: Anthropology and Colonialism, the Case of Ivor H. N. Evans ...... 274
Anthropology after the Cambridge Expedition .................................. 276
Evans and the Colonial Government ............................................. 292
The Pan-Negrito Theory Revisited ................................................ 304
Schebesta and the Re-exoticisation of Semang Negritos ....................... 308

CONCLUSION: Biology, Archaeology and Orang Asli Race Politics ............. 318

BIBLIOGRAPHY ............................................................................. 341
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Aborigines in the Census, 1871-1891 .............................................. 197
Table 2: Aborigines in the Census, 1901-1911 .............................................. 204
Table 3: Aborigines in the Census, 1921-1931 .............................................. 208
LIST OF MAPS

Map 1: The Malay Peninsula and Surroundings, 1906................................. ix
Map 2: The Malay Peninsula, 1906.......................................................... x
Map 3: The Malay Peninsula, Division of States........................................... xi
Map 1: The Malay Peninsula, 1906

Map 2: The Malay Peninsula, 1906

Map 3: The Malay Peninsula, Division of States

Source: Survey Department, Federation of Malaya, 1949.
INTRODUCTION:

Indigeneity in Malaya and Malaysia

This dissertation seeks to understand how ideas of race developed within the contexts of anthropological and colonial governmental thought, through the close consideration of the conceptualisation and identification of indigenous races in colonial British Malaya. The path towards understanding race within anthropology led me to focus on race within the two areas of anthropological thought and practice and colonial government, and to consider the connections and disconnections between the two. The thesis is written in the vein of histories of anthropology that do not solely or primarily focus on the development of anthropological ideas. As Peter Pels and Oscar Salemink have observed, “The history of anthropology … still concentrates largely on ideas, on the formation and background of the theories and methods that are supposed to constitute anthropology’s core.”¹ This history of anthropology concentrates on both ideas of race and the situations in colonial Malaya that brought them forth, influenced them and situated them. By colonial Malaya, I refer to the many states and territories on the Malay Peninsula that were subject to British colonial interest from the eighteenth century onwards, or that were under British rule or influence at the height of British power on the Peninsula from the late nineteenth century until the start of the Japanese occupation in December 1941. Thus, what is included under this general phrase changes considerably over time, and from chapter to chapter in this thesis.

Under certain conditions, colonial Malaya can also refer to the areas north of present-day Perlis, Kedah and Kelantan in Malaysia which were under varying degrees of Siamese rule.²

This study opens with a discussion of the place of “original” peoples of the Malay Archipelago in the work of William Marsden (1775-1810) in the late eighteenth century, and closes with an analysis of the anthropological writings of Ivor H. N. Evans (1886-1957) on indigenous people of Malaya in the 1930s. Since this thesis offers close textual readings of well-known works on indigenous peoples, the time period covered by this analysis is determined by the availability of specific sources that deal with indigenous peoples. The study begins in 1783 with the publication of the first edition of Marsden’s *The History of Sumatra*.³ His history provides some of the building blocks for later conceptualisations of aborigines, and thus forms the beginning of this endeavour to study the changing ways that aborigines were constructed. The thesis ends in 1937, the year that Evans’ *The Negritos of Malaya* was published.⁴ Constituting a significant piece of scholarship on indigenous peoples of Malaya, Evans’ book marks the culmination of his years of study on indigenous

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² Michael J. Montesano and Patrick Jory, “Introduction”, in *Thai South and Malay North: Ethnic Interactions on a Plural Peninsula*, ed. Michael J. Montesano and Patrick Jory (Singapore: NUS Press, 2008), 5. Readers will notice that, for the most part, I follow the boundaries of the modern nation-state of Peninsular Malaysia and I do not consider the scholarship on aborigines in the neighbouring territories of the Netherlands East Indies (NEI). While there is very interesting and relevant research to be conducted on the way aborigines were historically understood in the NEI and regionally (for a present-day study, see Nathan Porath, “‘They have not Progressed Enough’: Development’s Negated Identities Among Two Indigenous Peoples (Orang Asli) in Indonesia and Thailand”, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 41 (2010): 267-289), my thesis focuses precisely on the ways in which British colonialism and interests influenced the formation of knowledge on aborigines on the Malay Peninsula, to the extent that many scholars assiduously followed these colonial demarcations in their work (see Cynthia Chou, *The Orang Suku Laut of Riau, Indonesia: The Inalienable Gift of Territory* (London: Routledge, 2010), 21).


peoples and is the product of the intellectual changes surrounding the thinking on aborigines since the publication of Marsden’s history.

Ideas about race, as articulated by scholars and authors who resided in Malaya, or who included Malaya in a detailed and interested manner in the development of their concepts, are the main focus of this thesis; these ideas influenced the conceptualisation of aboriginal races at the time of their writing and into the British colonial period. In Chapter 1, I begin with an analysis of the work of savants such as Marsden and John Leyden (1775-1810), despite their short sojourn in the Malay Peninsula compared to later authors, because their writing and ideas on originality, primordiality, and autochthony included the peoples of the Malay Archipelago in general, and the Malay Peninsula in particular. Similarly, Chapter 2 offers a critical analysis of a text written in Malay, *Hikayat Dunia* (1855), which demonstrated ideas akin to race but also illustrated key differences that would later leave their impression on anthropological writing on indigenous people of Malaya.

From the late nineteenth century on, the professional anthropology of the Malay Peninsula focused on aboriginal peoples. The University of Cambridge Expedition to the North-Eastern Malay States and Upper Perak of 1899-1900, led by former civil servant and Cambridge-trained scholar W. W. Skeat (1866-1953), epitomised the new anthropological fervour surrounding aboriginal races who were located on land and in the interior and the types of questions that were asked about them.® Because I

® Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholars of Malaya’s aborigines focused primarily on people who lived in or close to the forest. While there are some studies on peoples known as *Orang Laut* (Sea
concentrate on both ideas and situations concurrently, some ideas that would seem important within a general history of anthropology, such as the contested development of monogenist and polygenist positions in nineteenth-century Britain, are not dealt with in detail here since those issues did not appear to be a particular topic of study and conversation in colonial Malaya. The material on originality, primordiality, and autochthony discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 does not reappear in other chapters due to the lack of interest by later anthropologists and others interested in aborigines, an indication that the situation in colonial Malaya had moved on from the concerns of earlier intellectuals. Starting from the advent of serious professional anthropological interest in Malaya from the turn of the twentieth century, which I identify with the start of the expedition led by Skeat and consider in some detail in Chapter 5, the aim of anthropology in Malaya was not to develop ideas based on the studies of aboriginal people found on the Peninsula. Rather, the scholarship sought to confirm or deny specific questions surrounding the number of aboriginal races in Malaya, their parameters in terms of language, culture, locality and physical description, and their relationship to one another and to the assumed category of the ‘Malay’. George Stocking, Jr. characterised this “ethnological” approach as being that which was

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People), who were sometimes considered aborigines during the time period covered by this thesis (for instance, John Crawfurd, A Descriptive Dictionary of the Indian Islands and Adjacent Countries (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1856), 314-315 and J. R. Logan, “The Orang Boduanda Kallang of the River Pulai in Johore”, Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia 1 (1847): 299-302), the discussion on aborigines within the colonial sphere presumed lifeways connected to the forest and not necessarily to the seas or rivers. Hence, my analysis on the development of discourses on aborigines concentrates on the tropes of the forest versus the village or town, and not on the sea. For more information on the unique history of Orang Laut, see Chou, The Orang Suka Laut of Riau, particularly Chapter 3 and Leonard Y. Andaya, Leaves of the Same Tree: Trade and Ethnicity in the Straits of Melaka (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2008), Chapter 6.

carried out "at the level of day-to-day ethnographic practices, as opposed to
comparativist theorising".  

In such an atmosphere, ideas other than originality, monogeny or polygeny gained
greater currency in what became the practical aspects of anthropological research in
order to answer the questions above, even while anthropologists and scholars were
aware of and influenced by trends in global anthropological theories and practices.
Determining racial affinities was the order of the day. To understand how some ideas
came to be more important than others in the practice of anthropology in Malaya, we
need to appreciate, firstly, how those ideas were influenced by the colonial
government and the discourses that swirled around governing Malaya, particularly its
Malay population and natural resources; and secondly, the relational identities that
anthropologists and government officials had to contend with when attempting to
determine the boundaries of the 'Malay' and 'aboriginal' populations. These two
contentions will be dealt with systematically in Chapters 3, 4, and 5, through an
analysis of ideas about aborigines in colonial Malaya and their traces within
government and anthropological texts. Chapter 3 engages with several ideas and
stereotypes about aborigines that were uttered in colonial milieux generally while
Chapters 4 and 5 trace the impact of such ideas in governmental and anthropological
texts specifically. By tracking the changing features of ideas about race within

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7 George W. Stocking, After Tylor: British Social Anthropology 1888-1951 (London: Athlone Press,
1995), 183.
8 Throughout this dissertation, I use the terms 'Malay' and 'aborigines/aboriginal' to refer generally to
populations on the Peninsula who were not considered recent immigrants by the colonial officers and
scholars, and who were separated by them according to stereotypical ideas of how Malays and
aborigines looked like, lived and acted. As will be demonstrated, the criteria by which people qualified
as aborigines and Malays changed throughout time and from one observer to the next. These cavaets are
implicit throughout the thesis whenever the terms aborigines/aboriginal and Malays are utilised.
government, and the science of race within anthropology, I hope to demonstrate the
colonial socialisation of race knowledge in British Malaya and to peel off the veneer
of objectivity and fixity that masks racial designations in particular and science in
general.

I stop short of identifying this study as a history of colonial anthropology due to the
importance of analysing both colonialism and anthropology separately instead of
presenting them as identical or marrying them implicitly by calling anthropology
colonial. Certainly, the colonial milieu was always the context within which the
anthropological activity analysed in this dissertation took place, and part of my
argument is that colonial government influenced anthropological research. In these
two senses, this study is indeed a history of colonial anthropology. At the same time,
however, the use of the phrase ‘colonial anthropology’ has to be explained and the
governmental and anthropological elements within that phrase scrutinised for their
relative importance and influence because there are continuities and discontinuities
between colonialism and anthropology. Anthropology in Malaya was of marginal
importance in efforts to prop up government policies. In essence, the British
government in Malaya did not need justification or support from anthropology to
bolster its position since the British were secure and confident in their authority over
Malaya by the 1900s.9 There was little overlap between the colonial anthropology
found in Malaya and its counterpart within British African territories in the early
twentieth century inter-war years, which “rationalized systematic policies of colonial

9 P. L. Burns, “Introduction”, in R. J. Wilkinson, Papers on Malay Subjects, selected and introduced by
officials".¹⁰ Nor did anthropologists in Malaya take on prominent roles within government programmes and policies where their expertise as anthropologists of aborigines was utilised. The careers of anthropologists in Malaya were therefore less prominent than, for instance, E. H. Man, whose ethnological work on the Andaman Islanders in the late nineteenth century was characterised by Sita Venkateswar as "merely an extension of their [British] political appropriations" and who was Assistant Superintendent of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and Officer in Charge of Andaman Homes, an institution to reform Andamanese according to government policies and to "tame" them.¹¹ Anthropologists in Malaya were also not as confident of their positions within colonial Malaya as Bronislaw Malinowski and other anthropologists studying Africa in the early twentieth century. As Henrika Kuklick argues, these other anthropologists had considerable authority and felt "exceptionally qualified to analyze and prescribe solutions for every other problem confronting colonial governments".¹²

While I assert a certain uniqueness to these anthropological endeavours in colonial Malaya, the case of Malaya still provides many parallels to situations identified elsewhere by other scholars of anthropology and colonialism and contributes to the

¹² Kuklick, The Savage Within, 185.
discussion on the influence of colonialism on anthropology, especially the latter’s history of ideas. Writing on the situation in British colonial territories in Africa, Kuklick notes that evolutionary theory in anthropological thought focusing on British African colonies in the inter-war years “had obvious ties of filiation to the parent model in Britain, but its speciation occurred in the isolated circumstances of the colonies”.¹³ For Malaya, evolutionary theory was not a focus and few writings are to be found on this subject from authors dealing with Malaya. Scholars were, however, preoccupied with methods of identifying races, routes of human dispersal and how human difference came about within the confines of the Peninsula, issues that undoubtedly gained significance under a colonial atmosphere that sought to identify and categorise its subjects for the purposes of governance. Chapters 4 and 5 illustrate the overlapping concerns of government and anthropology by focusing on attempts at identifying and classifying races for the government census and for a thorough anthropological mapping of aboriginal races in Malaya. Yet the divergent aims of the production of knowledge on race within government and the production of racial science within anthropology brought about very different outlines of aboriginal racial categories, showing again the malleability of ideas of race.

The writings of Talal Asad still form the basic building blocks for thinking about colonialism and anthropology and my study supports his assertion that “if the role of anthropology for colonialism was relatively unimportant, the reverse proposition does

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not hold”\textsuperscript{14}. This agreement derives from my analysis of the development of anthropological study and of colonial government, conditions that were idiosyncratic and need to be interrogated for each colonial situation studied. Chapters 5 and 6 will show that the colonial government in Malaya subsumed professional anthropological endeavours within Malaya from its beginning in the late nineteenth century, while anthropology did not play a prominent role in bolstering government programs or policies. By and large, the anthropological study of aborigines in Malaya was of a form of knowledge produced by scholars resident in the Peninsula, and anthropologists and people with a scholarly interest in aborigines were a subset of a much larger group of government officials. While anthropological undertakings were largely subsumed under other governmental endeavours and could be assumed to mirror government ideologies, this was in fact not the case. This ideological separation, in particular on the issue of identifying ‘tame’ or ‘wild’ Sakai\textsuperscript{15} (the stereotypical and shorthand term for aborigines in Malaya) for anthropological and government scrutiny is the reason for approaching anthropology and government as two separate ideological bodies that could and did have different criteria for how to identify aborigines, despite the overlap in the personnel and resources of both areas.


\textsuperscript{15} Throughout this thesis, I use Sakai without inverted commas. Even though Sakai originated in Malay, the term has been adopted as a category of people in most government and anthropological texts of the period I analyse and was not usually italicised or considered to be a foreign word. The term is capitalised to indicate that I regard it as concept with uncertain parameters and subject to change. These conventions also apply to the terms Jakun and Semang. Only when these words are used in Malay writings, such as in texts discussed in Chapter 2, are they italicised.
The scholars that I discuss from the beginning of professional anthropology in Malaya clearly saw themselves as part of the larger discussion on race within anthropology or the science of race. This latter phrase needs some explanation in the context of late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century anthropological developments. Drawing from the work of Bronwen Douglas, the phrases ‘science of race’ or ‘racial science’ refer to the study of biological conceptions of the term race developed by European scholars from 1750 to 1880. Over this period, Douglas identifies a major discursive shift in the meaning of race within science, from “prevailing Enlightenment ideas about externally induced variation within an essentially similar humanity into a science of race that reified human difference as permanent, hereditary, and innately somatic”.\(^{16}\) The biologisation and fixity of race, and its scientific uses, operated within a broader utilisation of the word race within European languages. Within British scientific circles, Stocking notes that in 1850 Robert Knox, the Edinburgh anatomist who was trained in Paris, assumed that he was using race in a novel manner when he insisted that his concept was not that in “daily use”, but rather “to designate physical entities unchanged since the beginning of recorded time”.\(^{17}\) “Race,” Knox wrote, “or hereditary descent, is everything.” In the same section, he explained that “the statesman, the historian, the theologian, the universalist, and the mere scholar ... attached no special meaning to the term [race]” and that they “ascribed the moral difference in the races of men to fanciful causes, such as education, religion, climate, &c., and their physical distinctions sometimes to the same hap-hazard influences”.


Furthermore, “[races] are not convertible into each other by any contrivance whatever.”\textsuperscript{18}

Within British scholarly circles of the 1850s, however, Stocking reminds us that “the process by which race took on a clearly biological meaning was by no means complete, and contemporary biological assumptions in fact justified a confusion of physical and cultural characteristics”\textsuperscript{19}. Most scholars at the time accepted the inheritability of personal or group traits, and that habits and cultural practices were understood as ‘racial’ characteristics. Yet in the uneven biologisation of race, the older ideas surrounding the term as well as contemporary non-biological inflections of the term still influenced its understanding and use; and this was true for colonial officials and scholars in Malaya.

In order to trace a localised genealogy of the word ‘race’ and its meanings, we must look at the etymology of race not only within European languages, but also the translations of race into Malay. \textit{Oxford English Dictionary} entries in the second half of the sixteenth century equated race with “family”, “kin”, “tribe”, “nation” or people from “a common stock”. The English use of race was inflected by meanings derived from continental European languages such as French and German. Race was conflated with descent from a common ancestor or with a shared origin, meanings present in 1694 French dictionary \textit{Le dictionnaire de l’Académie française}, which equated race with those who came from a single noble family. This genealogical meaning of race

\textsuperscript{18} Knox, \textit{The Races of Men: A Fragment}, 13-14.

\textsuperscript{19} Stocking, \textit{Victorian Anthropology}, 63.
persisted in the writings of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European authors who used race synonymously with “tribe”, “nation”, “people” or “species”. The translations of race into Malay in the nineteenth century are indicators of the ways in which the term was used by their authors. James Howison in 1801 glossed race as “tribe” or “panjee” (?), and as “descent” or “ásal” (origin). Marsden’s 1812 dictionary of English words translated into Malay gave a range of meanings for race. Race was first translated in its first meaning, “running”, as “pel-larî-an” (a race), and then translated by Marsden to its second meaning of “generation” as “bañgsa” (people), “asal” (origin), “kaûm” (tribe, family, relations), and “selselah” (genealogy). In 1852, John Crawfurrd, author of the History of the Indian Archipelago (1820), included race in the English-to-Malay section of his dictionary. The terms “Race, [and] lineage” were included as one entry and equated with “darah (blood), turunan (descent), pincher (? punca: source), pûun (?), bangsa, kulawarga, kalurga (keluarga: family), asâl (origin)”, meanings that emphasised race as genealogy. In a later dictionary compiled by W. G. Shellabear in 1916, race was translated into Malay in slightly more genealogical terms and retained its meaning as a general collective noun for people: “race” as in “lineage” was translated as “kaum-kluarga” (members of a family), “baka” (family of descent), “kturunari” (descendants); while “race” as in “tribe, people” was translated as “bangsa”.

22 William Marsden, A Dictionary of the Malayan Language, in Two Parts, Malayan and English and English and Malayan (London: Cox and Baylis, 1812), 522.
Crawfurd's dictionary was published at a time when bodily measurements were regarded as central within anatomical and anthropological circles in Britain.\textsuperscript{25} Crawfurd would have been well aware of the connotations of race within scholarly discourse since he himself was involved in the propagation of the biologisation of race. After retiring from colonial service, during which he was stationed in Singapore and Java, Crawfurd became involved in the scientific politics of London whereby a scholarly faction led by anthropologist James Hunt plotted for control over the Ethnological Society of London. Hunt was a proponent of an anthropology based on the fixity and hierarchy of races and, together with Crawfurd, planned the takeover of the Ethnological Society from 1858 to 1860 in what Ter Ellingson described as a "triumph of anthropological racism".\textsuperscript{26} While Crawfurd in his 1820 history regarded some races as superior to others, Ellingson observed that Crawfurd nonetheless regarded races as part of the same human species. This position, however, modified over time with Crawfurd's association with Hunt, the former gradually accepting the idea of human races as biologically distinct species by the time of the Ethnological Society takeover.\textsuperscript{27} The genealogical emphasis of Crawfurd's translation of race in his 1852 dictionary could be a reflection of his earlier alignment with the idea of races as part of the same human species. At the same time, it is also possible that, though an emphasis on the biologisation of race was of central importance to Crawfurd in the politics of metropolitan anthropological scholarship, underscoring this aspect of race


\textsuperscript{26} Ter Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 271.

\textsuperscript{27} Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage*, 267.
was not as important in his other areas of scholarship such as the production of the dictionary.

My discussion of the meanings of race, from specifically scientific meanings within European languages, to the way scholars with an interest in or stationed in Malaya translated the term into Malay, seeks to interrogate the extent to which race in Malaya was deployed as it was by racial scientists, given that the group with which I am concerned was an amalgam of anthropologists who were government officials and learned men, with a mixture of interests and affiliations within Malaya. Can it be assumed that the biologisation of race was taken for granted by anthropologists such as Skeat, C. O. Blagden and Ivor H. N. Evans, the main producers of knowledge on aborigines from the 1890s to the 1930s? The inflections of race in the dictionary meanings in Malay over the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries illustrate the dense and tangled lines of communication between metropolitan centres of scholarship and learned members of the colonies elsewhere. The brief overview of dictionary meanings above indicates the variety of relationships between ideas of race within metropolitan science and its dissemination in the colonies, and indeed this process must be addressed through consideration of individual authors and their specific circumstances. While the question of the dissemination of the biologisation of race and ideas of races as species may not be answered in full due to the scant attention it received from scholars of Malaya at this time, this study highlights the circumstances of scholars’ operations and how global knowledge trends, such as the biologisation of race, might be relegated to the margins, or indeed might not even be considered, in the
face of the rationales of the colonial state as well as the different realities of the local communities scholars worked with. I aim to demonstrate the localisation and socialisation of race knowledge in the definitions of aboriginal subjects. The very fact that scholars of aborigines had to conduct research in many parts of what was then colonial Malaya and had to engage with local ideas about divisions of people meant that scholars' work had to take into account other modes of differentiation and not only or necessarily ideas of race from metropolitan centres. This points to a colonial socialisation of the resulting race science whereby scholarly ideas about the aboriginal races of Malaya were formed within a colonial situation that had its own ways of differentiating aborigines.

This dissertation is also a history of the study of aboriginal peoples, and how a subject called 'aboriginal' or 'indigenous' was shaped in colonial Malaya. In present-day writings, indigenous is a term subject to definition by international bodies such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations (UN).28 The working definition given by Jose Martinez Cobo in the 1987 UN report is as follows:

Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them. They form at present nondominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems.29

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As Ronald Niezen notes: “[T]oday the term is both a fragile legal concept and the indefinite, unachievable sum of the historical and personal experiences of those gathered in a room who share, at the very least, the notion that they have all been oppressed in similar ways for similar motives by similar state and corporate entities.”

The present history of aboriginal peoples has links to the people covered by Cobo’s definition who are identified as indigenous in Malaysia today. However, by demonstrating the process by which government and anthropology came to delimit very different aboriginal races, an aim of this thesis is to historicise the very laden terms ‘aboriginal’ and ‘indigenous’, and consequently to show how the referent for indigenous changed throughout history.

As I will show in Chapter 1, the people included under the heading ‘aboriginal’ moved from an amalgamation that included the general ‘Malay’ category in Marsden’s writing in the late eighteenth century, to a combination of peoples that did not include Malays from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, but that instead constantly positioned itself against a Malay subject. Early British scholars of the Malay Archipelago used the category “indigenous” to mean ‘from the region’ more generally, or ‘from this particular locality’ more specifically. In his *History of the Indian Archipelago* (1820), scholar and colonial administrator John Crawfurd wrote that “all the indigenous civilisation of the Archipelago has sprung from [the brown

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races]." While this term is found in Crawfurd’s work, it does not occur so frequently throughout the British colonial period of Malaya, writers instead preferring the terms “aboriginal” or “aborigine”. Crawfurd also used aboriginal when he wrote that “[i]n the Indian Archipelago there are- an aboriginal fair or brown complexioned race,- and an aboriginal negro race; and the southern promontory of Africa excepted, it is the only country of the globe which exhibits this singular phenomenon”. Aboriginal was the term most frequently used in official colonial government records, such as the Census of the Federated Malay States where there were chapters entitled “The Aboriginal Peoples” in 1911 and “The Aboriginal Races” in 1921. Aboriginal was also preferred by anthropologists in Malaya whose articles appeared in the Journal of the Federated Malay States Museums (JFMSM) and in lay histories of Malaya such as that written by Abdul Majid Zainuddin, The Malays in Malaya (1928).

The Aboriginal Peoples Act of 1954 in Malaysia’s constitution, revised in 1974, still maintains its use of “aboriginal” and “aborigine” despite the official change to Orang Asli as noted by Commissioner for Orang Asli Affairs in the 1960s, Iskander Carey. The act defines an aborigine as:

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(a) any person whose male parent is or was, a member of an aboriginal ethnic group, who speaks an aboriginal language and habitually follows an aboriginal way of life, aboriginal customs and beliefs, and includes a descendant through males of such persons;
(b) any person of any race adopted when an infant by aborigines who has been brought up as an aborigine, habitually speaks an aboriginal language, habitually follows an aboriginal way of life and aboriginal customs and beliefs and is a member of an aboriginal community;
(c) the child of any union between an aboriginal female and a male of another race, provided that the child habitually speaks an aboriginal language, habitually follows an aboriginal way of life and aboriginal customs and beliefs and remains a member of an aboriginal community.\textsuperscript{36}

Anthropologist Alberto Gomes notes that this definition, based on language, way of life, belief and recognition by a community draws from a similar definition of “Malay” in the Constitution of Malaysia.\textsuperscript{37} According to Article 160 of the Federal Constitution:

“Malay” means a person who professes the religion of Islam, habitually speaks the Malay language, conforms to Malay custom and - (a) was before Merdeka [Independence] Day born in the Federation or in Singapore or born of parents one of whom was born in the Federation or in Singapore, or is on that day domiciled in the Federation or in Singapore; or (b) is the issue of such a person.\textsuperscript{38}

The currency of the term indigenous today and in the past is obviously different, but one difference in particular is important for this thesis. Malays, whom Crawfurd


\textsuperscript{37} Gomes, \textit{Modernity and Malaysia}, 17.

\textsuperscript{38} Malaysia, \textit{Federal Constitution, Incorporating All Amendments up to 1 January 2006} (Kuala Lumpur: Pencetakan Nasional Malaysia Bhd., 2006), 147. However, according to S. Sothi Rachagan, the definition of aborigines in the Federal Constitution is more ambiguous than that of Malays or the indigenous groups of Sarawak since there is no specific definition of which groups are considered aborigines on the Malaysian Peninsula. S. Sothi Rachagan, “Constitutional and Statutory Provisions Governing the Orang Asli”, in \textit{Tribal Peoples and Development in Southeast Asia}, ed. L. T. Ghee and Alberto Gomes (Kuala Lumpur: Department of Anthropology and Sociology, University of Malaya, 1990), 101-111.
regarded as indigenous or aboriginal in the context of the Malay Peninsula, are today not regarded as indigenous in the internationally recognised sense as defined by Cobo. The term indigenous would instead apply to people who are classified indigenous but not Malay in the whole of Malaysia, even though Malays are still considered to be from the region. As with indigenous, the term aboriginal also experienced a restriction in meaning to exclude Malays (see, for instance, a history of Malaya compiled in 1923 by colonial administrator R. O. Winstedt and the chapter heading “The Aboriginal and Malay Races”).

Gomes insightfully explains what he calls “the controversy surrounding the question of indigeneity in the region [Southeast Asia]. In contrast to the immigrant-conscious United States, Canada or Australia, in most countries of Southeast Asia the dominant ethnic groups who usually reside in the urban centres or occupy the lowlands or coastal areas claim to be indigenous to the country”. In the case of Malaysia, “Malays in Malaysia assert bumiputera (‘sons or princes of the soil’) status even though a category of people called Orang Asli (‘original people’) is legally recognized”.

Gomes further states that “[w]hile Malays consider themselves as indigenous and are undoubtedly ‘native’ to the country, by being politically and demographically dominant they do not strictly fulfil the defining criteria for indigenous peoples or communities as promulgated in international conventions (UN and ILO)”.

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40 Gomes, Modernity and Malaysia, 54.
41 Gomes, Modernity and Malaysia, 177 fn 7.
There are still arenas where Malays are called indigenous, such as when their purported lesser economic standing is compared to Malaysia’s two other major racial categories, Chinese and Indians. The initial reality of a newly independent country, where most of the country’s wealth was held in British and Chinese hands, positioned Malays as economically marginalised and minoritised vis-à-vis the Chinese.\(^{42}\) This economically marginalised position was the impetus for the implementation of various national policies designed to address this discrepancy, which was historically set aside in 2009 for a number of industries.\(^{43}\) Hence the wording of Bloomberg’s William Pesk in a recent article in *The Straits Times*: “If you are a foreign company in Malaysia or a locally listed business, you no longer need to set aside 30 per cent of equity for indigenous, or bumiputera, investors”, where “indigenous” is equated in the article with Malays.\(^{44}\) Another area in which Malays are referred to as indigenous is where political systems before or concurrent with the British colonial period in Malaya are mentioned. This is evident, for instance, in the title *Indigenous Political Systems of Western Malaya* by J. M. Gullick.\(^{45}\) In both areas of the national economy and former political systems, non-Malay indigenous people of Peninsular Malaysia, Orang Asli, are ignored because they are not considered economically and politically significant. This thesis seeks to shed some light on the history and politics underwriting this state

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\(^{43}\) Drabble, *An Economic History of Malaysia*, 205.


of affairs by considering the historical process through which understandings of
indigeneity and aboriginality have changed from an undifferentiated mix of people in
the Malay Peninsula to these various layers of indigeneity.

Indigenous people (as understood by international bodies) of the Malaysian Peninsula
are more commonly known by the term Orang Asli. Though a Malay phrase that refers
to indigenous non-Malay peoples of Peninsular Malaysia, Orang Asli is used in
English without italics, and this convention will be followed throughout this
dissertation.\textsuperscript{46} The term is hardly used, however, in the body of the dissertation since
most administrators and scholars of the period addressed here did not use Orang Asli
to refer to aboriginal people. Instead, I use the words ‘aboriginal’ and ‘aborigine’ and
occasionally ‘indigenous’, with the caveat that what is intended by
aboriginal/indigenous does not map itself neatly onto present-day meanings and the
definition offered by Cobo. Many authors in the time period covered used the term
‘aborigine’, and in most cases I maintain that convention since ‘indigenous’ has a
more present-day currency in Malaysia tied to indigenous rights movements. I am
aware of the sentiment expressed by Carey that in Malaysia “aboriginal” is regarded as
a derogatory term indicating “backwardness, under-development and primitiveness”
and I distance myself from that meaning but retain the term aborigine instead of
replacing it with the current term for indigenous peoples of Malaya, Orang Asli. The
literal translation of Orang Asli in English is ‘natural people’, but it is usually
translated as ‘original people’. The genesis of this term, as well as Orang Asal, which

\textsuperscript{46} Colin Nicholas, \textit{The Orang Asli and the Contest for Resources: Indigenous Politics, Development and
Identity in Peninsular Malaysia} (Copenhagen: IWGIA Document No. 95, 2000).
is now more frequently used to refer to all indigenous peoples of East and West Malaysia, lies in the period of Malaya’s Emergency of 1948 to 1960. As Colin Nicholas argued, the usual terms for referring to indigenous peoples during the colonial period were Sakai and aborigines. Sakai is and was generally felt by many indigenous groups to be a derogatory term. However, during the Emergency, communist insurgents referred to them as Orang Asal (also translated as ‘original people’) instead of Sakai in order to gain their help in the forest. The colonial government followed suit, and started using the close-sounding term Orang Asli as a replacement. A look at earlier texts in Malay suggests that the term had a longer history prior to the Emergency. Za’ba, a prominent Malay writer who published articles on the history of Malaya from 1925 to 1926, called indigenous peoples “bangsa2 asli” (original race/people). Another history of Malaya written by Abdul-Hadi bin Haji Hasan in the 1920s has as its first chapter “Orang Liar atau Orang Asli ia-itu Semang dan Sakai ia-lah pendudok yang asli di-Tanah Melayu” (Wild People or Original People that is Semang and Sakai are the original inhabitants of the Malay Peninsula). Chapter 2 deals with an even earlier occurrence of the term Orang Asal, one that approaches Marsden’s concept of “original people” and not the present-day indigenous people.

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47 In 1948, a state of emergency was declared in Malaya after a series of murders and abductions were attributed to the communist armed insurrection. For more details on the role of Orang Asli within this period of Malaya’s history, see John D. Leary, Violence and the Dream People: The Orang Asli in the Malayan Emergency 1948-1960 (Ohio: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1995).
48 Nicholas, The Orang Asli and the Contest for Resources, 6-7.
49 Za’ba, Sejarah Ringkas Tanah Melayu, Di-Kutip Dan Di-Terjemah Dari Bahagian2 Yang Menasabah Dalam Buku “Malaya” Karangan Dr. R. O. Winstedt (Yang Telah Terbit Pada Tahun 1922) (Singapore: Pustaka Melayu, 1961), Isinya [contents].
Sakai has largely been replaced by the term Senoi, which, along with Negrito and Proto Malay, together make up the tripartite division of indigenous peoples in Peninsular Malaysia today.\footnote{A. Terry Rambo, "Why are the Semang? Ecology and Ethnogenesis of Aboriginal Groups in Peninsular Malaysia", in *Ethnic Diversity and the Control of Natural Resources in Southeast Asia*, ed. A. Terry Rambo, Kathleen Gillogly and Karl L. Hutterer (Michigan: Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, University of Michigan, 1988), 19.} Though derogatory, I retain use of the term Sakai (sometimes also spelt Sakei in many sources of the period I study) in this dissertation for several reasons. Firstly, as Nicholas mentioned and as Chapter 3 will illustrate, Sakai was the word used by many colonial officers when referring to people from the Peninsula who lived/had occupations related to the forest, and then as a general term for aboriginal people or indigenous peoples. It was not necessarily used with derogatory intent, even though such may have been its original use. Thus, it is different from the replacement term Senoi, which is largely an anthropological term, and also different from Orang Asli and Orang Asal. Sakai was also the term used in official government journals, documents, and the census and it has a particular historical currency as a focal point for anthropological stereotypes and government assumptions that I wish to retain and to scrutinize in my analysis.

The main site in which ideas of race took shape within anthropology was the colonial situation of Malaya, in which the government assumed a central role. In Chapter 3, I identify a colonial sphere where stereotypes, governmental working categories and anthropological ideas about aborigines coalesce. In Chapters 4 and 5, I concentrate on government censuses and anthropological texts that focussed on race knowledge within that sphere. In approaching colonial government as a fundamental shaper of
anthropological issues, some qualifications are in order. Though I argue that the
colonial government framed to a large extent the ways in which anthropological issues
were studied and questions answered, I do not assume that the British colonial
government in Malaya achieved hegemony over all that it sought to govern.\textsuperscript{52} Scholars
of Malaya will be aware that the conditions of British rule and influence in Malaya
were uneven and highly complex. From at least 1894, the areas under British control
on the Peninsula were named British Malaya by N. B. Dennys, author of \textit{A Descriptive
Dictionary of British Malaya}, even though the polities and people on the Peninsula
were under a variety of governments and rulers who were British, Malay and
Siamese.\textsuperscript{53} At the time of the publication of Dennys’ book, the Peninsula was divided
into the Straits Settlements of Penang, Melaka and Singapore, the only crown colonies
on the Peninsula, and the four “Protected Native States” that had accepted British
advisors or residents, Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and Pahang. Dennys referred
to the other states on the Peninsula that were under Siamese influence as the
“Independent Native States”, but they were also known as the Siamese Malay States
or Northern Malay States.\textsuperscript{54}

The penetration of government bureaucracy and economic endeavours on the
Peninsula was varied. The British had to sign treaties with each Malay state leader in
order to place a resident in control of government, either partially or comprehensively,

\textsuperscript{52} Pels and Salemink, “Introduction”, 19.
\textsuperscript{53} N. B. Dennys, \textit{A Descriptive Dictionary of British Malaya}, with an introduction by Kingsley Bolton
\textsuperscript{54} Dennys, “Preface” in \textit{A Descriptive Dictionary of British Malaya}, v-vi. See also the title of an article
depending on the treaty signed. It was as though the British were dealing with separate countries, each with a sultan who had to be persuaded to accept a resident in exchange for protection against rival states, support for or against a contender for the sultanate, or to ease the state’s debt. In 1896, the Colonial Office considered annexing outright the Malay states then under British protection and advice but decided that forming the four states into a Federation would achieve the desired result of increased bureaucratic efficiency and control over the residents. As James de Vere Allen wrote, the reasons for not annexing the states “were in no way connected to any real interest in the ‘independence’ of the Malay States”.55 The Anglo-Siamese treaty signed in 1909 affected the transfer of influence of Kelantan, Terengganu, Kedah and Perlis from the Siamese to the British, even though Terengganu did not officially receive an advisor until 1919.56 Along with the state of Johor, which accepted a British advisor in 1914, the remaining states were collectively known as the Unfederated or Non-federated Malay States.57

That Britain was an empire that spanned continents from the nineteenth century until the mid-twentieth century was always evident to observers at the time.58 So, too, was the impression among European countries and the United States that Malaya was part

56 Virginia Matheson Hooker, A Short History of Malaysia: Linking East and West (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 2003), 163.
of its colonial brood. Yet, the position of Britain as a colonising power is distinguished in this dissertation from the assumption of an equal and thorough network of colonial government reach into each and every state, district and kampung on the Malay Peninsula, and the government’s "practical capacity to contain resistance and obstruction, whether in the form of direct confrontation or of everyday avoidance and transformation of so-called hegemonic forms". Within this atmosphere of necessarily patchy governance, I will attempt to chart the formation of, influences on and deployment of ideas within anthropological discourse against this very complex interaction of colonial subjects, which I use to refer to both coloniser and colonised. Thus, this dissertation is also a history of colonialism and of colonial interaction.

The relationship between the colonial British government and the aborigines of Malaya was undoubtedly one of colonialism. However, in contemporary scholarship on the interaction between the British government and anthropologists and aborigines in Malaya, the relationship has often been represented as one of neutrality. On the other hand, the excesses of the present-day Malaysian government in attempting to assimilate aborigines and reclaim land set aside for aborigines have impacted on the historical representations during the colonial period, such that the Malay-aborigine relationship is understood as one of increasing antagonism and domination by the former over the latter. Thus the colonial relationship of past and present interest

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59 See the title of O. P. Austin, Colonial Administration, 1800-1900: Methods of Government and Development Adopted by the Principal Colonizing Nations in their Control of Tropical and other Colonies and Dependencies (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1901).

60 Pels and Salemink, "Introduction", 19.

becomes that between two separated and naturalised groups, Malays and aborigines, and not between the British and aborigines. In tracing the changing boundaries of aboriginal races and Malays, I seek to denaturalise both of these racial categories, question the assumption of Malay dominance in the colonial period and hopefully create more intellectual space for a variety of group relationships to be explored. I also hope to draw attention to the role of the British colonial government not only in creating a situation of constant pressure on the lives of aborigines, but also to the role of individual agents of the government in enforcing rules and micro-colonising the lives of aborigines.

Indeed, colonialism was the relationship posited by some British observers between 'Malays' and 'aborigines', the Malays being the early settlers of the Peninsula, displacing aborigines who were already there, a thesis found in John Anderson's 1824 book. In that book, Anderson wrote that since the country did not have be "wrested by force", the "Emigrants", meaning Malays, had a right to control the Peninsula. Begbie also wrote that since the aborigines did not set up any government, as recognised by the British, the "legal" right to the Peninsula undoubtedly went to the party that did, the Malays. Isabella Bird wrote in 1883,

> The Malays are not the Aborigines of this singular spit of land, and, they are its colonists rather than its conquerors. Their histories ... state that the extremity of the Peninsula was peopled by a Malay emigration from Sumatra about the middle of the twelfth century, and that the

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62 John Anderson, Political and Commercial Considerations Relative to the Malayan Peninsula and the British Settlements in the Straits of Malacca (Prince of Wales Island: Printed under authority of the Government, 1824), Appendix, xxxvii-xlvi.
descendants of these colonists settled Malacca and other places on the coast about a century later.\textsuperscript{63}

The colonists married aboriginal women, and the aboriginal tribes “retreated” to “the jungles and mountains as Malays spread themselves over the region now known as the States of Negeri Sembilan. The conquest or colonisation of the Malay Peninsula by the Malays is not, however, properly speaking, a matter of history, and the origin of the Malay race and its early history are only matters of more or less reasonable hypothesis.”\textsuperscript{64} In 1931, the author of the census report for that year, C. A. Vlieland, wrote that Malays were the “earliest settlers” and that “the only strictly autochthonous inhabitants are the nomadic aborigines of the primeval forest”.\textsuperscript{65}

Undoubtedly, British observers and writers had an interest in portraying Malays as colonists in order that they themselves could be seen as yet another in the line of colonists and continuing a trend already present in the country’s history.\textsuperscript{66} But the refrain of Malays individually, and sultanates collectively, acting as colonial powers over aborigines is one that needs to be scrutinised.\textsuperscript{67} The thesis of internal colonialism


\textsuperscript{64} Bird, The Golden Chersonese, 13.


\textsuperscript{66} Positioning Malays as colonists of the Malay Peninsular in general and aborigines in particular draws from a general tendency among European anthropologists and colonial officers to use people they considered more ‘savage’ (such as Pygmies in Congo) to critique other groups seen as more ‘sophisticated’ (such as the Pygmies’ neighbouring Bantu villagers). See Chris Ballard, “Strange Alliance: Pygmies in the Colonial Imaginary”, World Archaeology 38, 1 (2006): 144.

\textsuperscript{67} This analysis of the legitimacy of using the term colonial to describe the relationship of sultanates to forest-dwellers, and the comparison between British and Malay impact on forest-dwellers before and during the British colonial period, is not meant to deny the profoundly negative effects of current and past ruling parties on inland peoples. Indeed, there is no shortage of information on the ways in which
has been applied to many cases whereby social, economic and political relationships within a determined area is said to parallel the metropole-colony relationship posited in colonialism but without the vast distances entailed by conventional studies of colonialism, particularly where the groups involved comprise different cultural backgrounds. Robert J. Hind has noted the presence of the internal colonialism argument in diverse situations such as the exploitation of Indians by Ladinos in several Latin American countries, the domination of West Pakistan over East Pakistan after 1947, and the uneven development within the British Isles made prominent by Michael Hechter’s study *Internal Colonialism*. In Hechter’s analysis, “internal colonialism” is distinguished from “internal colonization”, whereby the former entails “political incorporation of culturally distinct groups by the core”, while the latter is “the settlement of previously unoccupied territories within state borders”. Other derivations of the concept equate internal colonialism with the way in which a group exercises power over another, and sometimes the unequal socioeconomic development among segments of society.

For the situation in present-day Malaysia, it is perhaps appropriate to portray its indigenous peoples as being subject to internal colonialism and colonisation by the

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70 Hind, “The Internal Colonial Concept”, 552.
Malay-centric government. An abundance of evidence can be marshalled to show the presence of the oppression and inequality mentioned above: the attempts to culturally assimilate indigenous people into Malay culture, the proselytisation among indigenous peoples to voluntarily or forcibly convert them to Islam, the displacement of indigenous people from their land at the whim of government agencies wanting to deforest the area and sell the timber, or to develop the land as housing estates or plantations.\(^1\) However apt the concept might be today, there are key differences between the contemporary Malaysian polity, and the polities that existed at the time of the British colonisation of Peninsular Malaya from the eighteenth century onwards. Firstly, the construction of separate Malay and Orang Asli identities cannot be assumed to operate now as they have in the past, and thus a ‘clash of civilisations/cultures’ critique that would support an internal colonial argument may not be tenable. In general, there were different groups of non-forest dwelling peoples, whether up-river in villages or downstream where centres of government and administration were located and where the area was more developed with settlements and agriculture. In the up-river or interior areas, it was difficult to make the distinction between inland Malays and forest people. Nicholas Dodge, using the early twentieth-century anthropological reports of Annandale, Robinson and Skeat, writes that “it is clear from these maps [by the authors] that both societies [Malays and Aborigines] blended spatially at the edges … This blending of societies led some 19th century observers to divide the Aborigine population into what they called ‘tame’ and the

\(^{71}\) See Nicholas, *The Orang Asli and the Contest for Resources*, particularly Chapters 5 and 6; Nobuta Toshihiro, *Living on the Periphery: Development and the Islamization of the Orang Asli* (Subang Jaya: Center for Orang Asli Concerns, 2008), 281-304; and Dentan, Endicott, Gomes and Hooker, *Malaysia and the “Original People”*, 67-83.
'wild races'... or those Aborigines that interacted and traded with the Malays and those that avoided contact". While Dodge sees indigeneity as something that had gradations and was changeable, much the same could also be said of Malayness. Skeat, in his report on Sakai in Selangor, noted as much when he talked about "jungle Malays" who were familiar with the forest but not as familiar, he said, as the Sakais who were still the better trackers. Many could have a familiarity with the forest but still lived in villages, hence mixed designations by their peers or the British such as "jungle Malays" or "tame/wild Sakai".

Secondly, the control over territory, particularly forested areas, is a situation that came about during and after the British colonial period, and it is unlikely that sultanates prior to that time had any real control over the forest and the people who lived there. A monograph by F. L. Dunn, drawing on a variety of studies on Malaya's history and pre-history, notes that the Peninsula was covered in forest for most of the fifth to the fifteenth centuries. Agriculture further inland from the coasts appeared to be practised only in what are today the areas of Kelantan and Kedah, and only on a small scale. The population was concentrated in coastal towns. Even the southern parts of Malaya, which in the early twentieth century was known to be heavily developed, remained covered in forest, as well as the region surrounding Melaka. Only in the late nineteenth century were there settlements inland due primarily to the immigration of

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73 F. L. Dunn, "Rain-Forest Collectors and Traders: A Study of Resource Utilization in Ancient and Modern Malaya", in Monographs of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society No. 5 (Kuala Lumpur: Art Printing Works, 1982), 107. As recent as the period of Emergency in Malaya during the 1950s, the British Military Administration was thwarted in its attempts to capture armed members of the communist party who took cover in the jungle with the help of aborigines. Sir Gerald Templer, "Foreword", in Dennis Holman, Noone of the Ulu (London: Heinemann, 1958), ix-x.
people from the islands of Sumatra and Java, and from China. Migrants ventured away from the coasts to establish agricultural settlements, mine for precious metals, cut timber, and collect forest produce.

In a situation where forest cover was so great, people with knowledge of the forest were at a distinct advantage. Their knowledge was harnessed by sultanates that wanted the lucrative supply of forest products to be traded within Southeast Asia and beyond. Dunn surmised from the volume of ancient maritime trade in forest produce, which required a specialised knowledge of the forest in order to exploit its resources for trade, that the collection of such produce from the Malay Peninsula played a considerable role in the economic activity of the Peninsula as a whole.\(^7^4\) Kirk Endicott, based on reports of anthropologists from the late nineteenth to twentieth centuries, stated that in some areas there was a system of exchange of goods and labour between Semang and Malays. Other anthropologists reported existing relationships between those who bought jungle produce and those who collected the produce, or those who required labour and those who laboured for some form of payment.\(^7^5\) This economic relationship was not separate from the political and social relationships between the groups. Those who provided jungle produce and labour were often reported to be the slaves, debt-slaves or subjects of Malay masters or patrons. As Kathleen Morrison observes, unequal relationships with forest collectors were instituted by state economies and polities in order to guarantee a steady flow of supply and harness the

\(^7^4\) Dunn, "Rain-Forest Collectors and Traders", 108.
knowledge of those familiar with the forest.\textsuperscript{76} However, Endicott cautions that the perception of dominance of the latter over the former could have been illusory since those forest-dwellers had the option to escape from those who were confined to the non-forested areas. Furthermore, Morrison asserts that though "connections between foragers and others were (and are) often marked by deep ambivalence, even exploitation, non-foragers, from colonial governments to local elites, were not always bent on assimilating hunter-gatherers. On the contrary, the products of Asian forests often constituted critical state resources and their exploitation often required local expertise."\textsuperscript{77}

Indeed, it was due to the growing development of the land and plantation agriculture, and perhaps the decrease in demand as well as supply of forest produce, with the advent of British colonialism in the Malay Peninsula, that control came to be exercised increasingly over inland communities. Endicott points to a strong correlation between migration into, and development of land in, the interior and slave-raiding activities that served the double purpose of providing labour and allowing land to be appropriated for those aforementioned migrants and tin-developers. Such dominance would have been specific to areas that were comparatively more heavily developed, for instance in Perak, where there was heavy internal migration and immigration into the interior, and where there was a booming tin-mining industry.\textsuperscript{78} Horrific accounts of slave-raiding, for instance by the Rawas on aborigines of the Perak area, took place


\textsuperscript{77} Morrison, “Historicizing Foraging in South Asia”, 287.

\textsuperscript{78} Endicott, “The Effects of Slave Raiding on the Aborigines of the Malay Peninsula”, 231-232.
during this time of migration, and the accounts highlight the new relationships, or lack thereof, between the migrants and aborigines that resulted in bloodshed.\textsuperscript{79} Gazetteing land for forest reserves (timber reserves to supply the economy with an adequate supply), Malay reservations, and plantation agriculture all reversed the equation between land and labour said to exist before the British colonised Malaya. Scholars have argued that for sultanates on the Malay Peninsula, and indeed for most polities of Southeast Asia, land was abundant while labour was not. The shortage of labour relative to land has been advanced as a reason for certain practices of the sultanates on the Peninsula such as the various forms of enslavement of people living on the coast, in the forests and on other islands in the Archipelago to add to a leader’s power and prestige, to fight wars and to serve in the court and households of nobility.\textsuperscript{80} This shortage could also be the reason for the cooperation, cooptation and in some cases, protection of people who dwelt in, or had knowledge of, the forest.\textsuperscript{81} The shortage of labour has also been credited with the loose and rather dispersed hold on territory exercised by sultanates. Boundaries were not prominent, spheres of influence were.\textsuperscript{82} In British colonial Malaya, however, the resource of land, once so freely available to forest-dwellers, was appropriated, a pattern that continues until the present day.

\textsuperscript{80} Peter Boomgaard, “Labour, Land, and Capital Markets in Early Modern Southeast Asia from the Fifteenth to the Nineteenth Century”, \textit{Continuity and Change} 24 (2009): 60.
\textsuperscript{82} See the journals of the first resident of Perak, J. W. W. Birch, where he was directed by his superiors to set boundaries where none were fixed before to such an extent as desire by the British. J. W. W. Birch, \textit{The Journals of J. W. W. Birch, First British Resident to Perak, 1874-1875} (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1976), 300.
Efforts to assimilate forest peoples into settled populations akin to Malays were also a feature of the earliest British accounts of aborigines. The British viewed the forests as theirs and attempted to concentrate the trade in forest produce in the hands of the newly established British residents stationed in various Malay states. Again, such a narrowing of ways of life and options could only be effected in an environment where the forest was being developed and where there was sufficient bureaucratic will to produce such change. Arguably, the consequences of development were more effective in bringing about the desired changes rather than the express workings of the colonial authorities.  

Lastly, there is also the question of the ideological impact on aborigines of negative stereotypes of them by the ruling sultanates and populations of the coast. Ideas of difference that were expressed in terms of the inferiority of inland peoples were noted by early scholars who were interested in distinguishing aborigines from their Malay informants. The negative stereotypes continued throughout the colonial period and into the Malaysian present. The British often reported these negative stereotypes and placed themselves in a higher moral position versus the ‘prejudiced Malays’ despite positioning aborigines as equally inferior. It could be argued that the Malay views on aborigines were decisive in shaping British scholars’ own conceptions of aborigines within the racial schemes I discuss in this thesis. Yet other aspects of Malay

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83 See Chapters 3 and 4 for a longer discussion on the bureaucratic dealings of the government with aborigines.
85 Ballard, “Strange Alliance”, 144.
conceptions of aborigines, such as the fear and reverence shown to many aborigines, were dismissed as superstition and pushed into the background of British accounts of Malay-aborigine interaction. To sum up, an investigation into the applicability of the internal colonial concept of sultanates on the Peninsula and Malays on inland peoples and aborigines, though in the negative, elucidates several aspects of the relationship between the British colonial government in Malaya and the changes affected by the development of the economy. The emphasis today of the Malaysian government’s Malay-centric policies on the position of indigenous peoples of Malaysia is a continuation of the development and liquidation of natural resources begun in earnest during the British colonial period and not necessarily of prior sultanates. This dissertation focuses precisely on the colonial government’s position in influencing ideas of aborigines because of the integral role it played in affecting change throughout the Peninsula. As the British moved further inland, gathered information and created new knowledge on the borders of states, population figures, and ownership of land, surveillance also increased and the relationship between groups along these margins was scrutinised and defined, however inconsistently.

If governance was not uniform throughout Malaya, the discourses surrounding the governing of Malaya were perhaps more easily identified and more evenly disseminated internally throughout its bureaucracy and externally to Britain and

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international observers at the time. The most prominent of these discourses was that of
Malays as the natives of Malaya. Malays were positioned as the subjects of British
rule and the population that was supposed to be given utmost consideration for their
‘traditional’ way of life, and on whose behalf the economy of Malaya was
developed. The prominence of this ideology for study about the history of
anthropological research of Malaya’s indigenous people cannot be overstated. It is
approached as an ideology because the cohesiveness of the category Malays has been
shown to be a product of colonial imaginings and convenience, as well as the
politically written of an emerging Malay intelligentsia in the early twentieth century
that sought to rally people together under one banner for societal and economic
improvement or political power. It is identified as an ideological tool and rhetorical
device deployed in arguments for the ‘protection’ of Malays. Many scholars have
written about the construction of Malay identities and noted the amorphous character
of the term Malay, whereby individuals from a variety of backgrounds become
included under this category and where the definitions of Malay fluctuate from one
place in the Peninsula to another. More recently, this field of study has become
known by the term Malayness, as characterised by the volume edited by Timothy P.

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and Javanese from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century and its Function in the Ideology of Colonial

88 Timothy P. Barnard, ed., Contesting Malayness: Malay Identity Across Boundaries (Singapore:
Singapore University Press, 2004); Sandra Khor Manickam, “Common Ground: Race and the Colonial

89 See, for instance, Judith A. Nagata, “What Is a Malay? Situational Selection of Ethnic Identity in a
Plural Society”, American Ethnologist 1, 2 (1974): 331-350; Anthony Reid, Imperial Alchemy:
Nationalism and Political Identity in Southeast Asia (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010),
81-114; Anthony Milner, The Malays (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell Pub., 2008), 1-17; and William R.
Barnard entitled *Contesting Malayness: Malay Identity across Boundaries*. Most studies on Malayness, however, feature it as a strategy of identity and do not link it to European anthropological concepts of race. My study attempts to draw a historical connection between ideas of race within anthropology and government, and Malay racial boundaries and subsequent racial identities, while at the same time noting the overlaps and disjunctions between European race science and the ways in which it was understood to apply to Malaya.

Research on Malayness is an important situating device in order to interrogate how indigenous peoples of Malaya were constructed within anthropological research. The ideology surrounding Malays permeated colonial Malaya, entering into discussions about colonial land policy, rearing its head in anthropological assumptions about the differences between Malays and aborigines, and cropping up in jokes about the expectations of colonial British officials when meeting ‘natives’ and ‘savages’. The image of a uniform Malay racial group from the nineteenth century onwards, the use of those identified as Malays as guides, mediators and translators, and the medium of the Malay language as the first entry point into indigenous communities and the necessity of translating Malay into English for anthropological studies, exerted considerable influence on the resulting categorisations of indigenous people. The thinking surrounding aboriginal races by professional anthropologists, who were to come to Malaya in the remainder of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was thus developed within a wider field of knowledge on Malays and aborigines in Malaya.

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90 Barnard, *Contesting Malayness*. 
The agency and complicities of the people with whom British anthropologists and officials dealt form an important and complex issue, and one that links to my second assertion that the relational identities of the subjects determined anthropological ideas. As mediators, guides and translators, the Malays and aborigines mentioned by British sources were (textually) silent agents of knowledge production on aboriginal peoples. At most, authors would attribute negative stereotypes to their Malay guides or indigenous informants who no longer lived in the forest. The trope of Malays and their lifestyle was the most prominent feature of British writing through and against which anthropologists and government officials formed their assumptions about indigenous peoples. Contributing to the scholarship on indigenous agency in anthropological texts and ideas and colonial situations, I argue that the ideas put forth by the subjects studied left their indelible imprint on the conception of races in Malaya.91 This argument might appear obvious, given that anthropologists were there to study indigenous people and presumably could not escape being influenced by the ideas of their subjects. However, we must not simply assume that there was an influence but must look at the interactions on the ground between various spheres and see whether or not evidence of these interactions emerge in the texts. The material discussed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 will show that while details of lifeway and location were recorded and reproduced, assigning racial categories entailed a process of theorisation derived from the details collected, with recalcitrant facts often over-ridden in order to make larger claims. Many anthropologists who came to Malaya to answer questions about

racial divisions brought with them ideas of racial types associated with physical
descriptors, cultural traits and material implements that often took priority over the
situations they experienced on the ground. It is, therefore, important to note the
instances where the “excess of experience that confounds anticipation”, as Chris
Ballard writes, was actually incorporated in racial identification.\(^{92}\) In Chapters 4 and 5
particularly, the excess that I focus on is the concept of ‘tame Sakai’ that entered
anthropological discourse as a presence in racial categorising or, more often than not,
as a glaring absence that can be identified because of its ubiquity in the general
colonial sphere. Tame Sakai in anthropological and governmental writings was an
articulation of relational identities that ran counter to the racial categories based on a
notion of bodies as fixed. Instead it appeared that subjects frequently moved between
the two supposedly concrete categories, ‘Malays’ and ‘aborigines’, within their
lifetime and between generations. The appearance of tame Sakai in anthropological
studies, and its incidence in colonial society and government in general, is an
illustration of agency by Malays and aborigines in the realm of ideas, and one that
should not be ignored. Conventional historical research, with its emphasis on and
requirement of usually written sources, is still ill equipped to compensate for the lack
of local and non-European viewpoints on racial categorisation. Nonetheless, I hope
that my attempts at drawing out local agency and complicities where they occur in the
texts will show that these alternative perspectives and agents constitute a vital aspect
of this thesis.

My main focus for most of the thesis is on the continuities and discontinuities between colonial government and local anthropological theorization on aboriginal races arising from how both spheres incorporated or dismissed certain knowledge in the colonial sphere. Chapter 3 details the varied threads of common colonial knowledge, governmental working practices and anthropological ideas which filtered into the colonial milieu of Peninsula Malaya, while Chapters 4 and 5 consider to what extent the specific workings and needs of colonial government and anthropological scholarship respectively altered ideas of race present in the colonial sphere. I conclude this dissertation by delving into the scholarship of one prominent anthropologist, Evans, who spent most of his professional life in Malaya in the service of the colonial government. After Skeat, Evans was the main producer of scholarly works on the indigenous people of Malaya from 1913 onwards and became known for his ethnography of Negritos. I consider the case of Evans as a local anthropologist influenced by colonial governmental concerns and contrast his work with that of the Austrian-trained Silesian anthropologist Paul Schebesta, who became better known than Evans. The reasons for the difference in reception of these two authors will be explored in order to illustrate the divergent concerns of the authors and their intended audiences, and how ultimately, colonial governmental issues prevailed as the most significant backdrop for Evans' work, limiting his impact on a wider anthropological audience. I approach Evans' scholarship as deeply contextualised by the colonial

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93 Schebesta was born in Groß-Peterwitz, Silesia of Moravian parents. While at that time, the area was part of the German Federation, today, it is located in Poland. P. Dr. Anton Vorbich, "Vorwort", in Festschrift Paul Schebesta zum 75. Geburstag. Gewidmet von Mitbrüdern, Freunden, und Schülern (Wien: St. Gabriel-Verlag, 1963), vii-xi. For information on the present-day location of the area, see Groß-Peterwitz, Geschichte: http://www.grosspeterwitz.de/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=63%3Adie-geschichte-von-gross-peterwitz-in-der-kurzfassung&catid=34%3Ageschichte&Itemid=62&lang=de. Accessed on 18 October 2010.
milieu, as I do all the formative texts on aboriginal races from the eighteenth century onwards. Through interrogating the writings of Marsden on “original races” to Evans’ ethnographies of Negritos, I hope to expose the construction of aboriginal races as part of a history of anthropology, knowledge and colonial ways of understanding the people of Malaya.
CHAPTER 1:
From “Original” to “Aboriginal” Races in the Malay Peninsula

This chapter analyses early texts written in English on concepts of race in the Malay Archipelago in order to illuminate the colonial conditions that influenced the development of racial concepts and the changes that those concepts underwent. From the late eighteenth until the mid-nineteenth century, British authors interacted with and wrote about peoples in the region and classified them with reference to a limited suite of tropes. Through these groupings and regroupings over a period of approximately 60 years from 1783 to 1839, an aboriginal subject very much like that conceived today in Malaysia gradually took shape. This chapter will trace the formation of the aboriginal subject in English texts and identify some of the principal influences on its conceptualisation. By historicising the aboriginal subject, I hope to lay bare the influences on the boundaries of what it meant to be aboriginal, and to destabilise the naturalisation of the aboriginal subject today and in the historical texts.

This chapter comprises three sections, each section analysing the racialised concepts of human difference as expressed by a different pair of authors. Reflecting their differences in situation, the concerns of each of the authors were quite dissimilar, and a variety of tropes was used to classify people into distinct groups that came to be called “races”. Colonial conditions were an important platform for all the texts analysed and for the development of concepts of race and are thus a major theme highlighted in the analysis. Emphasising these conditions serves the purpose of answering more fully questions that scholars such as George Stocking, Jr., have
touched on only in passing: namely, how specific events and situations in British colonialism impacted on the theorisation on race.¹

Stocking’s comments on the colonial situations that might have affected ideas of race are worth reproducing in part, if only to illustrate the wealth of connections that can be established between the development of concepts of race and colonial authority:

Within the broader social and colonial context conditioning these Anglo-Saxon racial attitudes, the mid-century years have special significance. There were a number of events that sharpened the sense of separation of Europeans from dark-skinned colonial peoples. The controversy surrounding Rajah Brooke’s suppression of the “pirates” of Sarawak in 1849 led others besides Charles Kingsley to question the humanity of the Dyaks and the Malays. Within a few short years, the “Indian Mutiny” led a larger number of Britons to reject the notion of common Aryan brotherhood with Hindus, who thenceforth were increasingly to be assimilated within a generalized dark-skinned racial fraternity stigmatized by the epithet “nigger”.²

Colonial connections only constitute a paragraph in Stocking’s work. This is interesting considering that the very material that was used to answer questions about origins and differences came most often from the colonies, places that either were prospective colonial acquisitions or were already colonial territories. This gap in Stocking’s work is only alluded to in the paragraph above and when he mentioned in passing the influence on ethnologist James Cowles Prichard of William Jones, the British orientalist in India.³ The import of these connections is that colonial situations, as Thomas R. Trautmann writes with particular reference to India, were “for the

¹ Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, 63.
² Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, 63.
³ Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, 50.
development of ethnology in Britain, not merely a source for British ethnological discourse which the accidents of history had put in its way, but the very centre of its debates. Trautmann was referring to the notion of the Indo-European language family being promoted by British scholars stationed in India and the impact of this notion on the way British scholars saw connections between themselves and people in colonised places, a connection that Stocking argues broke down after the Indian Mutiny of 1857.

Malaya, however, did not loom as large as India in the British imagination, even though it came to have considerable economic value. Due to the deposits of tin found in Malaya, that fed the industrial revolution, and the cultivation of rubber, that fuelled the motor industry, the components that made up British Malaya (the Straits Settlements, the Federated and Unfederated Malay States) became extremely profitable for Britain. As Nicholas J. White observed, “[w]ith the exponential growth in Western consumption of canned food from the Boer War onwards, Malaya emerged as the world’s largest tin producer ... By the 1930s Malaya was producing over half the world’s rubber.” In the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, however, Malaya held the possibility of profits from trade and the richness of its mines were not yet fully realised.

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It is useful to trace the initial colonial connections between India and Malaya because many of the features of the colonial government in Malaya came first through India. The initially close governmental connection and exchange of personnel between India and Malaya strongly influenced the construction of race in Malaya, as I will show in this chapter. Certain concepts that were developed to make sense of India and its peoples, as well as some government structures that were developed to govern India, were initially applied to Malaya and were tailored with India in mind and by scholars familiar with India. As with government structures, however, the specific application of ideas to Malaya entailed a change in thinking due to the different circumstances found in the new colony relative to India.  

The government established in Penang in 1786 by Francis Light was “typical of British India in all its essentials”, suggested Robert Heussler. “Its purpose was the fostering and military protection of trade. The leaders, from Light on down, were merchants or the agents of merchant companies.” As John H. Drabble argues, “British hegemony in Malaysia required well over a century (from 1786 to 1919) to evolve fully, and took a variety of forms.” The first areas to come under British power, Penang, Singapore and Melaka, were also the only territories that were colonies proper of Britain throughout its period of influence in Malaya. These were administered jointly as the Straits Settlements from 1826, and constituted an Indian Presidency. The settlements were placed under the control first of the Government of Bengal and then

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of the Supreme Government of India. The break from the Indian government came into effect in 1867 when the settlements were transferred to the Colonial Office in London.\textsuperscript{8} Personnel came via India, mainly from the Indian Army, businesses and the clerical staff.\textsuperscript{9}

Officers and scholars stationed in the Straits Settlements sent articles to intellectual centres in India that were flourishing from the late eighteenth century. According to Peter Pels, “twentieth-century Indian anthropologists trace the origins of their discipline to a point long before ethnology was established in Britain: to the orientalist William Jones and his founding of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in Calcutta in 1784”.\textsuperscript{10} Many of the leading authors on the Malaya Peninsula in the nineteenth century published their work in the journal brought out by the Asiatic Society of Bengal, \textit{Asiatic Researches; or, Transactions of the Society Instituted in Bengal, for Enquiring into the History and Antiquities; the Arts, Sciences, and Literatures of Asia}. John Leyden published his paper “On the Languages and Literature of the Indo-Chinese Nations” in this journal in 1811, and Stamford Raffles, founder of Singapore, published “On the Maláyu Nation, with a translation of its Maritime Institutions” in 1818.\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{8} Drabble, \textit{An Economic History of Malaysia}, 28; Colonial Office, Great Britain, \textit{The Colonial Office List} (London: Harrison and Sons, 1867), 96.

\textsuperscript{9} Heussler, \textit{British Rule in Malaya}, 25.


\textsuperscript{11} John Leyden, “On the Languages and Literature of the Indo-Chinese Nations”, \textit{Asiatic Researches; or, Transactions of the Society, Instituted in Bengal, for Enquiring into the History and Antiquities, the Arts, Sciences, and Literature, of Asia} 10 (1811): 158-289; Thomas Stamford Raffles, “On the Maláyu Nation, with a translation of Its Maritime Institutions”, \textit{Asiatic Researches} 12 (1818): 102-128.
In many ways, the early scientific endeavours in the Peninsula were tied to research that had already begun in India. But Malaya, indeed the whole of the Malay Archipelago, constituted a different field of study from India. This could be attributed to the historical, cultural and intellectual separation of one colony from the other even though both were under British rule. Linguistically, India was part of the Indo-European language group, first identified by Jones, and racially was designated Aryan. In contrast, the Malay Archipelago gave its name to what was later called the Malayo-Polynesian language group and race, as identified by William Marsden in 1782.12 Dutch scholar Adriaan Reelant, and the primary naturalist on Captain James Cook’s first Pacific voyage of 1768 to 1771 and President of the Royal Society from 1778, Joseph Banks remarked on the linguistic affinities of the group with Madagascar in the west and the Pacific Islands in the east in the eighteenth century.13 Trautmann notes that the Malay Archipelago was initially included in the Indo-European grouping due to the discovery of Sanskrit words in languages of the Archipelago, but this was revised when more information became available.14

In order to show how the construction of race emerged in the context of Malaya, this chapter draws out the social, political and economic conditions that were present in the Malay Archipelago at the time of the authors’ writing, and the manner in which these conditions were reinterpreted in terms of race. Both racial theory and colonialism

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14 Trautmann, Aryans and British India, 49.
impacted the classification of people who are specifically the subject of this study, namely, people who would eventually be called aborigines. The fact that the language of interaction was usually Malay, and that the authors identified many of their informants as Malay, is also important to keep in mind as ideas of race were imbued with the inflection of other meanings through these interactions. The translation and reinterpretation of Malay into English was yet another layer informing concepts of race in English and its implications for the making of the aboriginal subject will be considered further in the following chapter.

"Originality" and Early Anthropology of the Malay Archipelago: William Marsden and John Leyden

The careers of two authors on the Malay Archipelago, William Marsden (1754-1836) and John Leyden (1775-1810) will be charted against the activities of the British in the Malay Archipelago in the late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries so as to show the influence of colonial conditions on their thinking. Various colonial conditions influenced the formation of their ideas, including, most obviously, the primacy of India as the base of the British East India Company (EIC) and the British desire to tap into the lucrative trade with China. There was considerable movement back and forth between the EIC government in Bengal and the activities of the its various employees and independent traders in the Malay Archipelago. This communication revolved around the search for a suitable base in the Archipelago that would facilitate trade with China, but with certain conditions. In 1784, the India Act was passed in England and one of its clauses related specifically to affairs in the Malay Archipelago. As K. C.
Tregonning writes, the clause "insisted that the Company should not become involved in its neighbours, that it should keep free of entangling alliances, that it should not enter into any political treaty that might embroil the Company in war and the annexation of more costly territory". The stipulations of this act, and the desire of the British not to antagonise the Dutch in the region, were considerations in the selection and setting up of a base.

Marsden's first association with the Malay Archipelago was through his posting to Benkulen. On the west coast of Sumatra, the British had hoped to make Benkulen a centre for trading pepper in the eighteenth century. However, the post ran almost continually at a loss and was not strategically advantageous. Marsden was sent to Benkulen under a civil service appointment with the EIC in 1771. He returned to Britain in 1779 and wrote his well-known History of Sumatra, which was published in 1783. Marsden merged research with his duties in the EIC, as he did later during his position as First Secretary of the Admiralty. Prior to the professionalisation at universities of research in linguistics and anthropology, such a practice was not uncommon among amateur British scholars.

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16 Tregonning, The British in Malaya, 38.
17 Tregonning, The British in Malaya, 10-11.
Marsden and Leyden did not overlap in time in the Archipelago: Leyden arrived as an assistant surgeon in India in 1802, after Marsden had left the region. Subsequently, Leyden left India for Penang on the west coast of the Malay Peninsula in 1805, the same year that he was to meet a new arrival to Penang, Thomas Stamford Raffles (1781-1826). An EIC base had been established in Penang by Francis Light in 1786 and was the first of the British colonies on the Malay Peninsula. Leyden returned to Calcutta and in 1811 he joined the Governor-General of India, Lord Minto, along with Raffles and John Crawfurd (1783-1868) in the naval expedition to Java in which the British took the island.

While Marsden and Leyden were never at the same place at the same time, they sparred with each other intellectually. Marsden continued to write on the Malay language while in England, and both he and Leyden published articles in the *Asiatic Researches* founded by Jones.  

Both were connected to the prominent intellectual circles of their time: Marsden became a friend of naturalist Banks. Banks helped to further studies into languages of the Pacific and Africa that were becoming accessible due to increased exploration. Marsden corresponded with Banks on his observations on languages in Sumatra and in Africa. Leyden started out as a minor poet before

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20 For more information on Jones, see Trautmann, *Aryans and British India*, 28-61.
concentrating on the study of languages. He became Chair of Hindustani at Fort William College in 1807 and was a fellow of Jones’ Asiatic Society of Bengal.\textsuperscript{23}

Marsden’s and Leyden’s writings on the Malay Archipelago are some of the earliest used by later scholars as evidence for the division of people into races and the presence of “Negritos” in the region.\textsuperscript{24} Negritos featured prominently in scholarly writings on race in the Malay Archipelago. Leyden wrote that the term Negrito dated back to at least early Spanish missionaries who described people they called \textit{negritos del monté} (small negroes of the mountains) in what is now the Philippines. In his article, he used it to include Andaman Islanders and the “race of blacks” in the Malay Peninsula.\textsuperscript{25} In 1820, Crawfur used Negrito to describe what he called the second aboriginal race of the Malay Peninsula, after the first, which was Malays. It later became associated only with one group of indigenous people in colonial Malaya and in Malaysia today. Chris Ballard writes that Negrito has often been associated as “a branch of the global Pygmy ‘stratum’” and includes Negrito in his analysis of Pygmy mythology. This mythology was and is long-lasting in Western imagination and science, where peoples are argued to be Pygmies based on being identified as smaller than other peoples found around them, lacking in civilisation and being remnants of an earlier migration of people.\textsuperscript{26} In Southeast Asia, the three Negrito groups identified by Leyden, in the Malay Peninsula, Andaman Islands, and the Philippines, are still

\textsuperscript{24} Henceforth, Negrito will be used without quotation marks.
\textsuperscript{26} Ballard, “Strange Alliance”, 133-151.
mentioned as a ‘trinity’ and biological and cultural relationships are posited between
them even though, as anthropologist of Semang Negritos Alberto Gomes writes, they
have little in common.\textsuperscript{27}

Marsden and Leyden are grouped together in this section in recognition of the
similarities in their approaches to language, bearing clearly the marks of early British
ethnology, and the influence of India as a centre for scholarship. Though Marsden’s
first publication of note was the \textit{History of Sumatra}, his later writings focused more on
language as a means to ascertain the origins of various groups while still relying on the
experiences that informed his earlier history. The emphasis on language is seen in his
early article on the languages of Sumatra; in another “On the traces of the Hindu
language and literature extant amongst the Malays” (1798); and in the later \textit{A
Grammar of the Malayan Language} (1812).\textsuperscript{28} Leyden’s “On the Languages and
Literature of the Indo-Chinese Nations”, published in 1811, was his only article which
engaged with Marsden’s work. He, too, relied on language as evidence for divisions
among peoples. “In the paucity of existing monuments, relative to the \textit{Indo-Chinese}
nations,” he argued, “no better method presented itself, either for classing their tribes,
or laying a foundation for historical researches, than by examining the mutual relation
of the several languages which are current among them.”\textsuperscript{29}

\textsuperscript{27} Gomes, \textit{Modernity and Malaysia}, 19.
\textsuperscript{28} William Marsden, \textit{A Grammar of the Malayan Language, with an Introduction and Praxis} (London: Cox and Baylis, 1812); Marsden, “Remarks on the Sumatran Languages”; William Marsden, “On the
Traces of the Hindu Language and Literature Extant Amongst the Malays”, \textit{Asiatic Researches} 4
(1798): 226-234.
\textsuperscript{29} Leyden, “On the Languages and Literature of the Indo-Chinese Nations”, 162.
It was Marsden’s intention that his book would serve as data for “the investigation of the history of Man”. As John Gascoigne writes, “it was commonly felt that theorising about human society had outstripped the properly attested body of data on which such a science should be based and that the firm empirical foundation for the study of human society had yet to match that established by naturalists concerned with the animal and vegetable worlds”. Like Banks, one of Marsden’s goals was to use available linguistic data to show the links between Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands. He was assisted in this endeavour with material from Banks, Jones, and also from the German anthropologist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach.

The common concern of both authors was the desire to classify the peoples, languages and cultures of the Malay Archipelago according to their perceived ‘originality’ or ‘purity’. In calling groups of people original, both authors used the term in the sense of “existing from the beginning; first or earliest” and also in the word’s other meaning of “novel” by way of crediting a group for being unique, found only at the place where they were encountered and nowhere else. The purity of subsequent groups was then gauged by their distance from a putative original form and classified accordingly. This classification amounted to a ranking from most original to mixed with other influences. Yet the most original was not necessarily the best regarded. Rankings according to originality or primordiality were at odds with the concurrent civilisational rankings, as will be seen with respect to the “most original” Papuans mentioned by

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Leyden. Marsden and Leyden’s use of original with respect to people resonated with other words: ‘primordial’, in the sense that some groups “existed at or from the beginning of time” or “in the earliest stage of development”; and ‘autochthonous’, whereby the people were found in the place where they originated (they “sprung from the soil”). Thus, Marsden wrote that his study was about “the original inhabitants, in their most genuine state” by giving “a comprehensive … description of the divisions of the country into its various governments” and of the people’s “customs, opinions, arts, and industry”.

Note that originality and primordiality were terms that had neutral or slightly positive connotations, unlike, for instance, words that would be found later in many writings on people of the Malay Archipelago such aboriginal and primitive. At this juncture, aboriginal/aborigine was linked to originality/primordiality. Marsden seldom used “aborigine” and “aboriginal” to indicate people from Sumatra, for whom “natives” or “inhabitants” were the more commonly used labels. He did indicate a distinction between “natives” and “aborigines” that would place the latter as more original than the former. When a Rejang chief in Sumatra said that he was not Malayo but orang


34 Marsden, The History of Sumatra, vi. The original sentence is slightly confusing: that the aim of History of Sumatra was to give “a comprehensive … description of the divisions of the country into its various governments; aiming at a more particular detail, in what respects the customs, opinions, arts, and industry of the original inhabitants, in their most genuine state”.
ulu, which would literally mean person of the upriver or interior, Marsden translated the phrase as “No Malay, sir; I am a genuine, aboriginal countryman”. Elsewhere, however, “natives” and “aborigines” appeared to be connected without any indication of a difference in originality. Marsden had inquired “amongst the natives” of Sumatra about their knowledge of “the aborigines of the island”, signalling either that “natives” were altogether different from “aborigines”, though both were original inhabitants of the island, or that “aborigines” were a subsection of “natives”. Leyden also scarcely employed the word “aborigine” in his writing. Where the word did occur, its meaning coincided with “original”, such as when “Papuas” were named the second race of “aborigines”, the first being Haraforas or Alfoërs, who were also called “the most original race of all the eastern islands”. “Primitive” did not appear in Marsden’s History of Sumatra, whereas it appeared at least twice in Leyden’s article in reference to Papuas who were in an “original state” of nakedness and barbarism, with decidedly negative connotations.

The concern with originality/primordiality was tied to another critical question about the origins of Malays. This issue had been recognised by Marsden in History of Sumatra as a point of contention among persons familiar with the Malay Archipelago. Due to the widespread use of the language and the dispersal of peoples who called themselves Malay and who spoke the Malay language, there were conflicting remarks

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35 Marsden, The History of Sumatra, 42. Emphasis added.
36 Marsden, The History of Sumatra, preface, 41. Emphasis added.
about where Malays first came from, whether from the island portion of the Archipelago or the Malay Peninsula. 39

The issue of primordiality was linked in general to the divisions of peoples discerned in the region, based on the authors’ experiences in trade and politics. Local divisions of peoples were presented by Marsden as “several species or classes”, Minangkabau, Malay, Achinese, Battas, Rejang and Lampong. He further mentioned that he was informed by “natives” about “aborigines of the island”, “two different species of peoples dispersed in the woods” who were sometimes taken as slaves. As Gregory L. Forth writes, Marsden’s use of “species” related to their classification as a different group of people rather than biological subsections of humans. 40 This was consistent with most late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century thinking about human difference in Britain that was not based on biology. As Bronwen Douglas writes, species in the eighteenth century was used interchangeably with “tribe”, “nation”, “people”, “variety”, “class”, “kind” and “race”. 41 Their language and diet was very different, said Marsden’s informants, and they had more hair, though the children of intermarriage with one of these aborigines were not distinguishable from others of the more “common race”.

41 Douglas, “Climate to Crania”, 35.
42 Marsden appeared to distinguish between “natives” and “aborigines”. He frequently employed the terms “natives” and “native inhabitants” to refer to the people of Sumatra, but in one instance, he inquired amongst the natives of Sumatra about their knowledge of “the aborigines of the island” (emphasis added), signalling either that “natives” were altogether different from “aborigines”, or that “aborigines” were a subsection of “natives”. Marsden, The History of Sumatra, preface, 41.
Similar local divisions were called “races” in Leyden’s article in the section on “the most original race of all the eastern islands”, Haraforas or Alfoërs and “the second race of aborigines”, Papuas. Leyden said these “most original races” were found in the “eastern isles … in all of which they seem to have originally existed”. He went on to say:

[T]he greater part of them, even with the example of more civilized races before their eyes, have betrayed no symptoms, either of a taste or capacity for improvement, and continue in their primitive state of nakedness, sleeping on trees, devoid of houses or clothing, and subsisting on the spontaneous products of the forest, or the precarious success of their hunting and fishing. The natives of the Andaman isles seem to be of this race, as also the black mountaineer tribes of the Malay peninsula, termed at Kiddeh, Samang; at Perak, and in the Malay countries to the N.W. of Kiddeh, Bila; while to the southward of Perak and through the straits of Malacca, to the eastward, they are termed Dayak.\footnote{Leyden, “On the Languages and Literature of the Indo-Chinese Nations”, 217-218.}

Both Marsden’s and Leyden’s accounts are similar in that they built on the distinction between the people on the coast, whom they called Malay, and those inland whom they had not met but heard about from their informants on the coast. The names used for these inland peoples, as described in Malay, were Orang Gugu, Orang Kubu or Orang Utan in Marsden’s book, and Samang, Bila and Dayak in Leyden’s. The differences in lifestyle, in what they ate and how they lived in the forest without cultivation were detailed in these narratives. The differences in language were also noted, as Marsden reported that “they have a language quite peculiar to themselves” and Leyden that “The Malays of the peninsula, consider the language of the blacks of the hills as a mere jargon, which can only be compared to the chattering of large birds;
and the *Papua* dialects, in many of the eastern isles, are generally viewed in the same light*. Marsden maintained that “even at this day the inhabitants of the interior parts of the peninsula are a race entirely distinct from those of the two coasts”. These recorded differences all bore on the question of the relative antiquity of peoples in the Malay Archipelago. As mentioned previously, degrees of autochthony were often inversely related to the levels of civilisation attributed to people. Thus, in discussing the “Malayan states”, Marsden emphasised that these were “distinguished from those of the people termed *orang ulu* or countrymen, and *orang dusun* or villagers, who, not being generally converted to the Mahometan religion, have thereby preserved a more original character”. This statement of non-autochthony attributed to people living on the coast and to Muslims generally was echoed by Leyden, as Islam was taking on the role of a late influence on an original layer of languages and customs in the Archipelago.

Malays, in relation to this scheme of thought, were a conundrum. On the one hand, they were considered to be mostly Muslims and thus less original than people who were not Muslims. On the other hand, there was no doubt that they were the “original or native inhabitants” of the Archipelago as a whole. This resulted in interesting layers of arguments about Malays. In 1811, Marsden stated that Malays were not the “indigenous and proper inhabitants” of the Malay Peninsula, and that the “original

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45 Marsden, *The History of Sumatra*, 42.
country inhabited by the Malayan race” was Palembang in Sumatra. In the preface to his Grammar published in 1812, he reiterated that “we are justified in considering the main portion of the Malayan [language] as original or indigenous”. Leyden, on the other hand, took a different direction and claimed that Malay, though one of the “more original languages of the eastern isles”, did not exist prior to “the era of Mahummed” and that it was mostly shaped by Sanskrit and Arabic. He thus questioned its antiquity and disagreed with Marsden.

Leyden’s objections to Marsden’s earlier writings were more broadly due to his reluctance to accept Marsden’s argument for a language base throughout the Malay Archipelago of which Malay was part. Marsden wrote in 1798,

The Malayan is a branch or dialect of the widely extended language, prevailing throughout the islands of the Archipelago, to which it gives name ... and those of the South-sea; comprehending between Madagascar on the one side, and Easter island on the other, both inclusive, the space of full two hundred degrees of longitude [sic]. This consideration alone is sufficient to give it claim to the highest degree of antiquity, and to originality, as far as that term can be applied.

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48 Marsden, The History of Sumatra, 326-327. Marsden had in fact changed his mind about the Malay’s place of origin. He stated in the 1811 version of History of Sumatra that “in the former editions of this work I spoke of the natives of Menangkabau as having acquired their religion, language, manners, and other national characteristics, from the settling among them of genuine Malays from the neighbouring continent [the Malay Peninsula]. It will however appear from the authorities I shall produce, amounting as nearly to positive evidence as the nature of the subject will admit, that the present possessors of the coasts of the peninsula were on the contrary in the first instance adventurers from Sumatra.” I am grateful to Bronwen Douglas for referring me to this point.

49 Marsden, A Grammar of the Malayan Language, xx.


51 Marsden, “On the Traces of the Hindu Language and Literature Extant Amongst the Malays”, 227. Note here that Marsden himself evidently had qualms about the appropriateness of the term “originality”.

In his *Grammar* of 1812, Marsden later called the region in which the language base applied "Hither Polynesia". But he split this language group altogether from the "inhabitants of the inland country", stating that "it does not include those spoken by the description of people termed *Papua* and *Samang* by the Malays and *Negritos* by the Spaniards of Manilla, whose crisp or frizzled (rather than woolly) hair and dark skins, point them out as a race totally distinct from the yellow complexioned, long haired natives of whom we are speaking".52

Other metropolitan scholars had earlier come to similar conclusions. Germans Johann Reinhold Forster (1729-1798) and his son, Georg (1754-1794) produced the first classification of the people of Oceania. The two Fosters sailed with Cook on his second voyage to the Pacific of 1772 to 1775, and in 1778 Reinhold Forster suggested the twofold division of people in the Pacific, one "more fair" and the other "blacker". This system of classification of Oceanic peoples had implications for the Malay Archipelago. Concepts of the Pacific at this juncture often included what is today considered the Malay Archipelago. Forster theorised that the more civilised "ancient Malays" had overrun "the aboriginal black race" to the east. As noted by Bronwen Douglas, "Forster's dual classification of South Sea Islanders was ... firmly inscribed in metropolitan scholarly awareness [by Blumenbach] within three years of its publication. By 1793, ... Blumenbach naturalized Forster's 'two Tribes' as 'the two principal Races which constitute this remarkable variety in the 5th. part of the world': the 'black race' and the 'brown one'".53 Later, in 1795, Blumenbach named five

human varieties: Caucasian, Mongolian, Ethiopian, American and, notably for this thesis, Malay. Speculation continued on the relationship between Malay and the languages of Marsden’s “inland country”, with some scholars arguing that the latter were a degeneration of the former, and others arguing that both had different origins.54

The relative autochthony of different groups of people in the Malay Archipelago, whether less original Malay coastal Muslims or more original inland Samang, was used to classify those groups into separate categories. It can already be seen that both categories were defined in relation to one another. The identification of the inland people as more original was based in part on their relationship or connection to another group, the coastal Malays, and British perceptions of the latter’s suspect antiquity. Both Marsden and Leyden at this juncture tended to use the term “aborigine/aboriginal” to describe the supposedly more original peoples and to distinguish them from Malays. When a Rejang chief in Sumatra said that he was not Malayo but orang ulu, which would literally mean person of the upriver or interior, Marsden translated the phrase as “No Malay, sir; I am a genuine, aboriginal countryman”.55 In another example, Marsden translated as aborigine a term used by Raffles even though Raffles himself did not translate the term in the same manner. Orang benua was one of the many terms in Malay Raffles said was used to describe the more “original inhabitants” of the Malay Peninsula, and he translated it as “people belonging to the country”.56 Marsden, despite being aware of these meanings, equated

54 Gascoigne, Joseph Banks and the English Enlightenment, 165; Douglas, “‘Novus Orbis Australis’” 107.
55 Marsden, The History of Sumatra, 42. Emphasis added.
orang benua with “aborigines” in order to make a point about the secondary and less original status of Malays in the Malay Peninsula. He noted in his Grammar of 1812 that “in the peninsula itself the MALAYS were only settlers, and that the interior districts, like those of the islands in general, are inhabited by distinct races of men. Among these are the orang benua or aborigines noticed by Mr. Raffles”. He went on to explain that “orang benua signifies literally and strictly ‘the people of the land’, as distinguished from foreign settlers or invaders; and this phrase alone affords no weak proof (if others were wanting) that the Malays do not regard themselves as the original inhabitants, but as the occupiers only, of the country”.57

Leyden also distinguished Malays from aborigines. He wrote on the Malay language that it was able to branch out over so wide an area “by mixing in different proportions with the native languages of the aboriginal races”. He did not specify who those aboriginal races were as throughout the article he spoke in terms of degrees of autochthony. But later in the text, he referred to Pauans as “the second race of aborigines, in the eastern isles”, following the section in which he talked about Haraforas as “the most original race of all the eastern isles”.58 This suggests that aboriginality was linked to primordiality, thus disqualifying Malays from inclusion. Leyden used “indigenous” when speaking of people or language from a specific locality such that he could say that Marsden believed “the Malay language was

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57 Marsden, A Grammar of the Malayan Language, vi.
indigenous in the Malay peninsula” and that Haraforas were “indigenous in almost all the eastern isles”.  

Slavery and Scholarship: Stamford Raffles and John Crawfurd

The intellectual conversation between Leyden and Marsden was broken by Leyden’s sudden death in Java in 1811, the same year that he, Lord Minto, Raffles and Crawfurd all participated in the naval expedition to Java. Nonetheless, thinking about the people of the Malay Archipelago as ‘original inhabitants’ and in terms of ‘races’ continued through the work of Raffles and Crawfurd. Raffles went to Penang under the EIC in 1805. In the same year, Leyden also visited Penang and struck up a friendship with Raffles, Raffles and his wife eventually burying Leyden after he succumbed to illness. Raffles was also part of Banks’ global network of scholars. The two exchanged letters on the natural history and ethnology of the region, and Raffles sent Banks material on the natural history of Java. The fortunes of Raffles and Crawfurd were closely linked by time and place. Crawfurd was first in India in 1803 and then posted to Penang as a medical officer in 1808. After the successful expedition to Java, Raffles was installed as Lieutenant-Governor of Java and Crawfurd served under him from 1815 to 1818 as British Resident in the court of the Sultan of Jogjakarta. When Java was returned to the Dutch in 1818, Raffles then became Lieutenant-Governor of Benkulen, where Marsden had been posted previously, while

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60 John Gascoigne, Science in the Service of Empire: Joseph Banks, the British State and the Uses of Science in the Age of Revolution (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 176; Gascoigne, Joseph Banks and the English Enlightenment, 182.
Crawfurd returned to England. Raffles published *A History of Java* in 1817 while Crawfurd published his *History of the Indian Archipelago* three years later in 1820.\(^{61}\)

The years that Raffles and Crawfurd were present in the Malay Archipelago were characterised by the uncertain presence of the British in the region and British competition with the Dutch. Java was under Dutch rule until 1811, when it was taken by the British, only to be handed back a few years later. Melaka was also captured from the Dutch by the British in 1795, to be handed back in 1818 as well. Eventually, the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824 defined the spheres of influence of both powers in the region and Benkulen was given to the Dutch in exchange for the British maintaining control over Melaka and the newly established EIC base in Singapore.\(^{62}\) During this period, Raffles was a strong proponent of establishing ports in the Archipelago at a time when the Supreme Government at Bengal was not in favour of extending British power past the few ports that had already been established in Penang and Benkulen. He established a base in Singapore in 1819 and secured rights to build a factory there. Not content with Singapore, he also attempted to obtain a treaty with the Minangkabau in Sumatra in 1821, though this move drew strong censure from the British authorities in Bengal.\(^{63}\)

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The idea of autochthony was not used by these authors as a basis from which to build racial concepts. Raffles only commented on it obliquely in his writings. In a well-known article, “On the Maláyu Nation” (1818), he discussed the laws and customs of Malays in much the same way that Marsden and Leyden had discussed language, in terms of purity, borrowing and mixing. Some laws were “borrowed from the more ancient inhabitants of the islands”, Malay customs in Sumatra had “blended with those of the more original inhabitants of the island”, and the laws of the Malay states in the Peninsula were used because they were “the least adulterated in their character, usages, and manners”.  

64 He also subscribed to a Marsden-like idea of origins with respect to laws in claiming that Malay laws could be traced back to India and to other larger islands of the South Seas.  

65 From the few remarks scattered throughout the paper, it can already be gathered that Raffles did not regard Malays as original, or at least not the most original, inhabitants of the Malay Archipelago. He agreed with Leyden that Malays did not exist “as a separate and distinct nation until the arrival of the Arabians in the Eastern Seas” and that they were of “modern origin”. Other people instead were called “original”, such as those in the interior of the Moluccas and the inland populations of Borneo.  

66 The application of the ‘most original’ designation was not applied by Raffles to “the various tribes” in the Malay Peninsula. This is interesting in light of later scholarly writings on the same “tribes” that positioned them as the earliest arrivals to the Peninsula. Raffles merely said that Malays could have been derived from those tribes,

stating that “[w]hatever may have been the origin of the Malayu nation, the primary population of these various and extensive islands could never, according to any natural inference, have proceeded from the Malays, though the reverse may probably have been the case”. The article provides information on local names of the tribes, Samang, Caffries and Orang Udai located on the hills, and another group called Orang Benua located on the plains, under which category was listed a specific tribe called Jokong in Melaka. Their differences from the Malay Muslim population were underlined (the men were uncircumcised and they had only one wife) but so too were the links (the people of the Jokong tribe spoke Malay and had connections to those in the villages).

Origins and autochthony were also not Crawfurd’s principal concerns. In his History, he mentioned the “original and innate distinction of the inhabitants into two separate races”, which he identified as “an aboriginal fair or brown complexioned race, and an aboriginal negro race”. He addressed the “question of the first origin of both the negro and brown-complexioned races” for a few pages before dismissing it as “buried in unfathomable obscurity”. Relationships, rather than origins, were emphasised. Hence Crawfurd speculated on the relationship between different groups of what he saw as “negro” and “brown” people. He linked the “negro” people in the Archipelago to Madagascar, and the “brown” people to mainland Asia. A focus on relationships based on the physicality of the people concerned, the similarities observed by the eye,

is a strategy that became extremely popular and important in the anthropological studies of aboriginal peoples of Malaya in the late nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{71}

While origins and autochthony did not feature prominently, the trope that most influenced the classifications of people by these two authors was that of slavery. Raffles’ insistence on expanding British influence in the region and his desire to paint the Dutch as inferior colonisers and administrators centred on the cause of eradication of slavery. Raffles’ \textit{History of Java} was published after the decision was made to return the island to the Dutch. Throughout the book, Raffles was explicit in noting the inefficiencies and inhumanities perpetrated by the Dutch, and the good governance and humane treatment offered by the British that were beneficial to the attainment of civilisation by the locals. Nowhere was this more obvious than in Raffles’ treatment of the subject of slavery. It was here that he connected slavery to inland and interior peoples and emphasised the “negro” aspect of slaves from New Guinea. This theme would be taken up by Crawfurd in his \textit{History}, which essentialised the association between slavery and blackness.

Slavery as practised in the Malay Archipelago was dissimilar from slavery as it was practised in the trans-Atlantic slave trade from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries. Resulting from the huge volume of the latter trade and its particular practices, slavery in the nineteenth century was understood to mean chattel slavery whereby a slave was property that could be owned, sold or purchased wholly by a master. In the Malay Archipelago, the terms ‘slave’ and ‘slavery’ as used by Europeans to describe the

\textsuperscript{71} See Chapter 5 for a discussion on physical characteristics in anthropological studies on Malaya.
various forms of servitude they encountered may have encompassed such a definition but did not do so necessarily.\textsuperscript{72} There were other forms of institutionalised servitude in which slaves were not regarded as property. Slaves sometimes retained certain rights and could even purchase their freedom after a period of time, depending on the societies in which they were found. In the context of the Malay Archipelago, some scholars have opted for the terms debt-servitude/debt-slavery/debt-bondage rather than, or in addition to, slavery.\textsuperscript{73}

Raffles was aware of these differences in his numerous discussions of slavery. “[T]he condition of slaves on Java,” he wrote, “where they were employed principally in domestic offices, formed a complete contrast to the state of those employed in the West-India plantations.”\textsuperscript{74} Though the kind of labour performed by slaves in Java was judged by Raffles to be less harsh than in the West Indies, he nonetheless blamed the Dutch for “the great promotion of civil servitude”, “the Roman law regarding slavery in all its extent and rigour” whereby people were property. He said that it was put in place in order to obtain domestic services, and that Arabs and Chinese carried out the trade to supply slaves. He detailed the excesses of slavery in the islands of Bali and Celebes, where people were kidnapped and sold into servitude. Not surprisingly, he credited the British presence in the Archipelago after Java was taken over from the


\textsuperscript{74} Raffles, \textit{The History of Java}, Vol. 1, 76.
Dutch for the improved livelihood of the people since the British prohibited the slave trade. The emancipation of slaves was ordered in India in 1805, and then in Melaka and Java in 1811. Raffles knew the connotations of "slave" and "slavery" and the feelings that these words would evoke in a British parliament and public that had, in the late eighteenth century, begun to outlaw slavery in its possessions. Using "slavery" in *History of Java* was thus strategic on Raffles' part. He wanted to draw comparisons between the trans-Atlantic slave trade of Africans to the Americas, and what he depicted as a similar trade transpiring in Southeast Asia, and to highlight his role in abolishing slavery. The effect of making such a connection, however, was that the victims of slavery in the Malay Archipelago were 'Africanised', with the negative stereotypes attributed to African slaves linked to some of the slaves in the Archipelago.

The Africanisation of local slaves was most obvious in a discussion concerning a slave from Papua, even though Papuan slaves were not necessarily representative of people who were enslaved. According to Raffles and writers of other texts, various groups were brought into servitude. Francois Valentijn (1666-1727), who was in the Spice Islands while the Dutch East India Company was ascendant in the East Indies, wrote about the slave trade and conditions of debt-servitude in Bali. He provided an engraving of a Balinese slave woman and mentioned Makassar slaves. Owen Rutter,

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75 Raffles, *The History of Java*, Vol. 1, 76, 233. Even so, the importation of slaves continued under the British as did the attempts to stymie the trade and practice in India, as is evident from the numerous anti-slavery treaties signed between the British and Portuguese in the first half of the nineteenth century. See Timothy Walker, "Abolishing the Slave Trade in Portuguese India: Documentary Evidence of Popular and Official Resistance to Crown Policy, 1842-60", *Slavery and Abolition* 25, 2 (2004): 63-79.
76 Valentijn, "The Slave Trade and Relations with the Dutch", 78-88.
publishing in 1930 but referring to the mid-nineteenth century, highlighted a slave trade on the island of Nias off Sumatra, and slavery in Borneo and Sarangani off Mindanao. Papuan (or Papua, according to Raffles), Spanish and Filipino slaves were apparently commonplace. Raffles mentioned that “the pagan tribes in the vicinity of the Mahometans, such as those on Bali and some of the tribes of Celebes, the Harafuras, the black Papuas or oriental negros, the original inhabitants of Halamahira, Goram, and other easterly nations are in a great measure victims of the kidnapping system, and being infidels are considered fair booty”.  

Despite the varied groups that were known to be enslaved, Raffles’ discussion of slavery relied heavily on his encounter with an individual from New Guinea. While discussing the background of slave-raiding practices in Bali, he included an extended footnote on how a young boy named Dick came to be in his service after having been kidnapped from New Guinea and brought to Bali. Michael Smithies hypothesised that Raffles might have purchased Dick in a slave market in Bali and taken him into service. Raffles introduced him and his “woolly haired race of Eastern Asia” as follows:

It is known, that on the Malayan Peninsula, in Luconia, Borneo, and most of the larger islands of the Eastern Seas, there are occasionally found in the mountainous tracts a scattered race of blacks entirely distinct from the rest of the population. Some have conceived them to be the aborigines of these countries; others considering them as of the African races, adduce them in proof of an early and extensive

intercourse between Africa and these islands. I shall content myself with observing, that they appear at the present day to form the bulk of the population of Papua or New Guinea. 80

Dick was brought to England and examined by the medical officer Sir Everard Home, who compared him to an African. 81 That Dick should and could be compared to someone from Africa seemed natural even though Raffles did not engage in questions of origin. Dick was compared on the basis of the colour of his skin, his hair type, the angle of his forehead, the shape of his lips and his buttocks among other things. Based on Home’s initial examination, however, Dick, and “the Papuan” in general, were deemed different from “the African negro”. 82

Though other groups were also enslaved, the “race of blacks” mentioned by Raffles was linked most closely to slavery. Dick was illustrated in the page following the footnote and brief section on slavery in Bali even though he was not the most common of slaves. 83 The drawing typified slaves as black Papuans, even though the text mentions more diversity among the population of slaves. Dick had no accompanying objects and the caption merely read “A Papuan or native of New Guinea. 10 years old”.

In his History, Crawfurd extended the theorisation of races in the Malay Archipelago beyond Raffles by disconnecting the specific instances of enslavement of certain people in the Archipelago to making enslavement a characteristic of the “negro races”

81 The reader is not told the standard for an African “negro” used in this comparison.
of the Archipelago. The image of Dick was reproduced at the beginning of Crawfurd’s first chapter entitled “Physical Form of the Inhabitants of the Archipelago” but with the addition of another figure. Dick was from the “negro race” with the caption “A Papua or Negro of the Indian Islands”, and the other was a type of the “brown race”, as the caption “Katut A Native of Bali, one of the Brown complexioned Race” indicates. The contrast operates on a number of different levels. Katut wears a sarong or dhoti that covers most of the region from his waist down, while Dick is still in a scanty loincloth. The difference in skin tone, or the darkness of Dick’s skin, is brought out by positioning him next to a lighter-skinned person. Hair types were distinguished in the drawing, from Katut’s “lank” hair to Dick’s “woolly” hair. These aspects of the drawing equated Dick with all “woolly-haired races” and to other groups considered darker and different from the “brown race”.

Crawfurd was sweeping in his assumptions of the relationship between the “fairer”, lank-haired or “brown-complexioned” race and the Papuan, woolly-haired, “dwarf African negro” race. He said that “whenever the lank and the woolly-haired races meet, there is a marked and wonderful inferiority in the latter”. Furthermore, “Whenever they [the ‘East Insular negro’] are encountered by the fairer races, they are hunted down like the wild animals of the forest, and driven to the mountains or fastnesses incapable of resistance”, suggesting that “woolly-haired races” were frequently brought into a condition of servitude by “brown” races. His confidence in

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stating such a relationship drew on his observation of this truism in the Western world as well:

The *brown* and *negro* races of the Archipelago may be considered to present, in their physical and moral character, a complete parallel with the white and negro races of the western world. The first have always displayed as eminent a relative superiority over the second as the race of white men have done over the negroes of the west.⁸⁶

In a later article, Crawfurd reiterated that Africans were always known as slaves to Egyptians, Jews, Arabs and Persians.⁸⁷ Thus, while Raffles only alluded to the relationship between “the race of blacks” and servitude, Crawfurd brought the connection into sharper relief and made it into the stereotypical role of “negroes” in general, and specifically, “negritos”, the group Crawfurd regarded as the closest people to “negroes” in the Malay Archipelago. Interestingly, of the many reinterpretations of Dick in Crawfurd’s *History* to which Raffles took exception in his long, scathing, anonymous review in 1822, this connection was not mentioned at all, suggesting perhaps that Raffles thought the point a valid one.⁸⁸

Another aspect added to Crawfurd’s description was that of the purportedly diminutive stature of the Asian “negro races”. Though not mentioned by Raffles, Crawfurd said that “[t]he Papua, or woolly-haired race, of the Indian islands, is a dwarf African negro”. This is evidenced by a “specimen” of a “full grown male” brought from Kedah in the Malay Peninsula, and slaves from New Guinea and neighbouring islands that he

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said he saw firsthand, who were not taller than five feet. Dick was brought into this assertion of smallness when Crawfurd included testimony of Home’s examination as part of the description of a dwarf negro and when the same drawing of Dick that appeared in Raffle’s History was included in Crawfurd’s book with a few additions and deletions. What was initially a specific drawing of a ten-year-old Papuan boy was therefore expanded and generalised into a typical specimen of a puny Asian “negro”. The original engraving of Dick was combined with another engraving in the same frame, highlighting the contrast in height. The fact that the original drawing was of a child who might still grow in height was omitted in the caption and in the description of the examination by Home. The drawings were presented as examples of two adult members of their respective racialised groups, reinforcing Crawfurd’s interpretation of minuteness.

Crawfurd’s stark association between slavery and blackness could have been based on a different experience of slavery in the Archipelago from that of Raffles. In a letter to the Secretary to the Government in Bengal while in Calcutta in 1823, Crawfurd wrote about “the circumstances attending the abduction from our possessions of certain slaves by a ship belonging to the King of Siam”. He went on to say that

They appear to be lads of twelve or fourteen years of age and African negroes. I spoke to them hoping to get some part of their history from themselves, but they did not seem to understand any Indian language, a fact that certainly showed that they had not lived long in our possessions.

Three were bought from Calcutta and two from Penang and they arrived in Siam in a ship belonging to the King where three of them were destined for the King of Siam’s palace.\textsuperscript{90} The preference in the palace for particular slaves was popularised in later writings by King Chulalongkorn (1855-1909) about a boy named Khanang who was taken to the King and about whom the King wrote a play entitled \textit{Ngo Pa} (translated in 2002 under the English title \textit{Romance of the Sakai}). The ideological position of indigenous peoples of Southern Thailand will be dealt with more fully in coming chapters. For now, it is telling that these local conceptions and structures were also known to the British, and to Crawfurd in particular, and possibly fed into race-based concepts of human difference.\textsuperscript{91}

Over time, the writings of Raffles and Crawfurd show certain effects of increased interaction with people and social systems in the Archipelago on their formulations of difference. Those formulations took on the opinions of persons more familiar with the area. In a report written for Raffles on the slave trade in Nias in 1820, the authors mentioned the political relationship between chiefs of the interior and those of the coast whom they supplied with slaves. The writers even claimed that the chief of the interior would not be partial to stopping the trade in slaves.\textsuperscript{92}


\textsuperscript{91} Rama V, King Chulalongkorn, \textit{Ngo Pa (Romance of the Sakai)}, trans. Malithat Promathatavedi (Bangkok, Thailand: Book Translation Institute, Department of Curriculum and Instruction Development, Ministry of Education, 2002).

\textsuperscript{92} J. H. Moor, \textit{Notices of the Indian Archipelago and Adjacent Countries: Being a Collection of Papers Relating to Borneo, Celebes, Bali, Java, Sumatra, Nias, the Philippine Islands, Sulus, Siam, Cochin China, Malayan Peninsula, Etc.} (Singapore: n. p., 1837), 185-188.
Crawfurd mentioned a “full grown male brought from the mountains of Queda [Kedah]” in his History, noting the location from which the person originated. In his later publication, Journal of an Embassy from the Governor-general of India to the Courts of Siam and Cochin China (1830), he again referred to Kedah, which is located in the territory adjacent to Penang and where the British were getting more involved in the affairs of government. In this account as well, local names for the peoples were given, as well as the factors that distinguished them from other populations:

The Samang are the same Negro race found from the Andamans to New Guinea. They are here distinguished into two races, the Samang and Bila; the latter holding no intercourse whatever with the inhabitants of the plains, but the former frequenting the villages, and carrying on some traffic with the more civilized inhabitants. Neither have any fixed habitation, and roaming through the woods, exist chiefly on the produce of their hunting, feeding indiscriminately upon every description of animal, whether quadruped or reptile. They appear to be a timid and harmless race.\(^93\)

This account is similar to that of Raffles in 1818, reproduced earlier, on the tribes of the Malay Peninsula and of Melaka in particular. Both noted that the people’s lifestyle, location and foraging activities were different from those of Malays and Muslims. Notably, this greater interaction with the affairs of the Peninsula introduced further variation in the tribes that Raffles and Crawfurd recorded. Both authors now mentioned two different inland populations, Samang located in the hills and Bila or Orang Benua in the plains, and not just one inland group as was believed earlier by Leyden.

\(^93\) Crawfurd, Journal of an Embassy, 29.
Crawfurd continued writing well after he left the Malay Archipelago in 1828 and used his impressions and experiences there in order to assert far-reaching theoretical arguments about races. He wrote numerous articles on the subject of ethnology and led scientific efforts as is evident in his roles as Vice-President of the British Association’s Geography and Ethnology Section in 1859 and President of the Ethnological Society of London in 1860.\(^4\) As a scholar and president of the society, he was at the forefront of the production of ethnographic knowledge.

In the meantime, other events were unfolding in the Malay Peninsula between the Sultanate of Kedah, the British in Penang, and the Siamese. Kedah’s initial reason for ceding Penang to the British was the threat from the Sultanate of Selangor further south. However, in later years, the main threat to Kedah’s independence was Siam’s growing strength and intention to expand control over the Peninsula. Kedah was caught in Siam’s sphere of influence and was forced to attack another Sultanate in Perak in 1817 when ordered to do so by Siam. In 1821, Kedah was conquered by Siam and the Sultan fled to Penang.\(^5\) Crawfurd was asked to lead an official mission to Siam where one of the minor objectives was to secure the restoration of the exiled Sultan of Kedah, now in Penang, to his throne. The British government in Bengal was not altogether convinced of the wisdom of lending its weight to help the Sultan of Kedah, and arguments for or against this course of action focused on whether Siam had a ‘right’ to Kedah, and whether Kedah was ever a formal tributary of Siam.\(^6\)

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\(^5\) Tregonning, *The British in Malaya*, 87.

was during this political drama that John Anderson wrote his book and combined several previously unconnected groups under the heading of "aboriginal inhabitants".

**Of Aborigines and Malays: John Anderson and T. J. Newbold**

Throughout his career in Malaya, Anderson was employed by the EIC. He spent 16 years in the region and held a number of posts within the government of Penang. He was first appointed as Writer in Penang in 1813. He was also Malay Translator to the government and undertook diplomatic missions to neighbouring sultanates on the Malay Peninsula. Anderson’s 1824 report on the Malay Peninsula dedicated a section in the Appendix to “Aboriginal Inhabitants of the Malayan Peninsula, and particularly of the Negroes called Semang”. 97 It was the first time that a few different categories of people were placed under the general heading of “aboriginal inhabitants”. In Crawfurd’s *History*, both “negroes” and “Malays” were “aboriginal”: “In the Indian Archipelago there are—an aboriginal *fair* or *brown* complexioned race—and an aboriginal *negro* race; and, the southern promontory of Africa excepted, it is the only country of the globe which exhibits this singular phenomenon.” He also applied the term “indigenous” to the civilisation present in the Archipelago. 98 In Anderson’s book, however, Malays were excluded from the designation of “aboriginal inhabitants” used by Crawfurd but were not deprived of the rights of people considered indigenous to the Peninsula. This rhetorical modification was effected in order to argue for rightful Malay presence on the Malay Peninsula under the threat of usurping Siamese forces.

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John Bastin’s introduction to the modern edition of Anderson’s work gives an instructive overview of the conditions under which the book was written. Anderson’s aim was to persuade the British government in Penang and India to engage in the affairs of Kedah. Anderson was concerned about the significance and legality of the Kedah Sultanate offering *bunga mas*, a gift of golden flowers, to the Siamese and whether this meant that they were tributaries of the Siamese.\(^9\) Anderson argued that this was in fact not the case, that Kedah was an independent state and that Britain was within its rights to assist it in defending itself against the Siamese.\(^1\) The main objective of the rhetoric of the book was thus the displacement of Siam from the role of conqueror of Kedah. Inadvertently, however, the argument also had implications for conceiving relationships amongst the inhabitants of the Peninsula itself.

The language of legality pervaded Anderson’s characterisation of peoples on the Peninsula, namely the position of Malays and aborigines. He wrote:

> In the history of the first Malayan Settlement at Singapura, we find that the Emigrants from Sumatra found no Inhabitants, and met with no opposition … nor do we read in the whole annals of Malayan History, of their Colonies on the Peninsula, of one single instance in which a Country was wrested by force, from aboriginal Inhabitants … It follows from this argument, that the Emigrants who founded the Malayan Colonies, had an undoubted right to possess themselves of the desert Countries which they found on the Peninsula.\(^1\)


This hypothesis of Malays migrating into the Malay Peninsula had been known since the early 1800s from Marsden's *Grammar*. Moreover, Anderson himself quoted Raffles' 1818 paper, which claimed that the Malays came to an "unappropriated" country, previously occupied only by "an inconsiderable race of Caffries, who are occasionally found near the mountains, and a few tribes of the Orang benúa". This position was subsequently stated more clearly by P. J. Begbie: "That the aborigines never existed in sufficient numbers to entitle them to be considered the legal proprietors of the whole extent of the peninsula may be inferred from the fact of their not having settled down into any form of municipal government, being broken into small states, or rather wandering villages, acknowledging no common head."

Though a history of migration from the neighbouring islands into the Peninsula is present in court writings in Malay, the argument that the "natives", in this case Malays, were actually migrants themselves found resonance among Europeans in other colonial encounters around the world in the nineteenth century. Henrika Kuklick argued that the British occupation of Southern Rhodesia in the late nineteenth century was justified partially by a reading of the Great Zimbabwe monuments that positioned the contemporary African polity as established by migrants who displaced an

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104 See, for instance, the migration of the royal line from Palembang, Sumatra to Melaka detailed in *Sejarah Melayu or Sulat al-Salatin* (Genealogy of the Sultans). G. L. Koster, *Roaming through Seductive Gardens: Readings in Malay Narrative* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1997), 23.
aboriginal population.\textsuperscript{105} For the case of Malaya, the main implications of the reasoning that Malays were unopposed migrants were that Malays were “rightful possessors” of the Malay Peninsula and were not dependents of Siam.\textsuperscript{106}

Though comprising only a small part of Anderson’s text, this argument is notable for having changed the terms of discussion on Malays and Negritos and having constructed an aboriginal subject of study that would be influential in studies of race in Malaya. Anderson discarded the thesis of diminutive stature associated with the “negro races” previously described by Crawfurd, and expanded the formerly Negro or Negrito group, earlier believed to be the only aboriginal group other than Malays, by introducing a different category of aborigine that had not entered the literature before in reference to the Malay Peninsula, that of Sakei.

In my inquiries amongst the Malays I have not been able, however, to discover, that the term Orang Benua (which is literally Aborigines or people of the land,) is ever applied to any particular race of the Malayan Peninsula, the supposed aboriginal tribes being styled Sakei or Orang Bukit, Orang Laut and Semang.\textsuperscript{107}

Anderson then distanced Semang from Africans, not by quoting the physical examination conducted by Home that pointed out such differences, but by


\textsuperscript{106} Anderson, Political and Commercial Considerations (1824), 42.

\textsuperscript{107} Anderson, Political and Commercial Considerations (1824), xxx-xxxi.
emphasising their overwhelming similarities to Andaman Islanders, Dayak on Borneo and Pangan on the east coast of the Peninsula.\textsuperscript{108}

The multiplication of groups that could be termed "aboriginal" within the Peninsula, from Negrito and Malay, and then to Negrito and Sakei and excluding Malays, was a theoretical development that ran counter to the dual-race theory put forth strongly by Crawfurd in 1820. Crawfurd had posited two races indigenous to the region: the "negro" and the "brown", represented respectively by groups such as Papuans and Malays.\textsuperscript{109} By 1824, Anderson did not include Malays as part of the "aborigines" category and thus only the Negrito element was considered aboriginal. He then introduced Sakei as part of the indigenous race that was not Negrito like Semang, nor civilised to the degree that Malays were. He thus created more conceptual space for aboriginal categories to be introduced outside of Negritos. The category Sakei or Sakai would come to dominate writing on indigenous peoples during the subsequent years of British influence in Malaya, surpassing the interest in Negritos to a large degree before interest was reignited in the latter category in the 1920s. In 1824, however, the indigenous subject was not Malay, not necessarily small, and not necessarily Negrito.

Anderson’s book demonstrates the continued reliance of British intellectuals on what Malays said or did, and their conventions for naming aborigines in Malay. It was published only four years after Crawfurd’s book, but Anderson was able to furnish more details about sources and ways of life than Crawfurd. Anderson was explicit

\textsuperscript{108} Anderson, \textit{Political and Commercial Considerations} (1824), xxxvii-xxxviii.
about the sources of his information, drawing on practices of accountability. Investigations were made specifically among “Malays” who were invariably the first point of entry into the subject. Anderson looked at “Malayan Legends” and questioned people from specific states in the Peninsula on such matters as the designation of a “race of wild people” by “Salangorians”. Naming conventions were taken first and foremost from those current among Malays (“The Semangs are designated by the Malays Semang Paya, Bukit, Bakow and Bila”), as well as divisions among aboriginal languages such as when Anderson was informed by Malays about differences between languages of the tribes of Kedah and those of Terengganu Semang.

British reliance on Malay knowledge stemmed from their increasing involvement in the affairs of the Malay Peninsula and interaction with its people and politics. This produced varied concepts of aborigines depending on which parts of the Peninsula the author was most familiar with. In such cases, the ways in which Malays conceived of their relationship to people seen by the British as aborigines fed into British concepts of race. T. J. Newbold’s book *Political and Statistical Account of the British Settlements in the Straits of Malacca (1839)* aptly illustrates the impact of locality on the theorising of races.

Newbold was involved in the Naning War of 1831 to 1832 that was fought between the EIC based in Melaka, and the ruler of Naning. Naning and other territories were

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located next to Melaka and when the British took over Melaka from the Dutch in 1824, the EIC insisted that Naning was under the suzerainty of the EIC and won the ensuing war.\textsuperscript{113} Newbold’s book, written after he had already left the Malay Peninsula and was in India, shows the imprint of this region of the Peninsula with which he was most familiar, showing a subtle understanding of the competing political organisations and groups in the area.

Newbold was more familiar than Anderson with the metropolitan scholarship on race and divisions among people and he discussed issues surrounding the people of Malaya using the terminology gathered from such writings. When he wrote the book, he was a member of the Asiatic societies of both Bengal and Madras. He published works on deforestation, the natural sciences in India and Malaya, and on Indian hill tribes.\textsuperscript{114} His orientation towards India is also evident in his comparisons of Malays to Indians.

Newbold’s last chapter, entitled “On the Wild Tribes of the Malay Peninsula”, addressed the larger debates on the origins of Malays and the “aboriginal tribes” and their connection to established branches of mankind.

Despite his British Indian academic pedigree, Newbold still took into consideration the situation on the ground. Contrary to Anderson, Newbold reclaimed “Orang Benua” as the proper general term for all indigenous peoples of the Peninsula, citing the authority of Malays whom he said used this very phrase.\textsuperscript{115} He went on to deny that


\textsuperscript{115} Newbold, \textit{Political and Statistical Account}, 369-370.
"Orang Benua" were a "negro race", claimed that Malays were descended from aboriginal inhabitants and that they were all of "Tartar origin".\textsuperscript{116} His experiences in the Naning region and its politics shaped his classification of "aboriginal" people. Unlike other authors on the subject, Newbold was familiar with the different "tribes" in the area, all of which had some claim to independence. The Benuas were divided into groups who could influence the selection of a candidate for Penghulu or headman. These people also had origin accounts that traced their lineage back to inter-marriage between Minangkabau migrants and Orang Benua; hence Newbold's tendency to regard them as part and parcel of a larger, interconnected racial group.\textsuperscript{117} In his formulation, Malays came from Orang Benua, in the region of Naning, whereas Anderson saw Malays as migrants with no connection to the aborigines. In such ways, local conditions influenced constructions of race in English through which British observers tried to account for relationships between the various people they encountered.

Some clarification is needed on Newbold's use of "tribe" and how it relates to prior usages. "Tribe" features regularly in the sources consulted for this thesis. In 1820, Crawfurd used "tribe" interchangeably with "race": he was just as likely to refer to the "brown tribes" of the Archipelago as to the "brown races" and mean the same group of people. In colonial usage from the late 1830s, however, tribe with reference to the Malay Peninsula almost exclusively meant non-Malay indigenous people, despite the

\textsuperscript{116} Newbold, \textit{Political and Statistical Account}, 420, 370, 433.
\textsuperscript{117} Newbold, \textit{Political and Statistical Account}, 370, 92, 411.
fact that groups labelled tribes were not necessarily living in ‘tribal’ conditions. The assumption, however, that they had ‘originally’ lived as tribes was taken as a given. It should be kept in mind that references to people as tribes or tribal were not necessarily an indication of a particular way of life, but rather placed them in affiliation to the aboriginal category. Indeed, the states Newbold talked about were unique in that the indigenous element in the people’s history was very much present, and they were still regarded as partially tribal and aboriginal even though they were involved in political governance, usually a marker of civilisation and departure from tribalism for European observers.

Thus far I have detailed the ways in which the aboriginal subject was formulated by Western authors during the first half of the nineteenth century. Issues discussed include origins, slavery and the separation of Malays from the aboriginal race(s), although the connections between the two and how one might have come from the other would still be debated further. British interactions with local political, social and economic systems in the Malay Archipelago continued to influence their conceptualisations of race. A major component of British interpretations was their identification of who was Malay and what those Malays said in Malay about the relationships and divisions among people. The next chapter will interrogate what this identification and interaction with Malays and the Malay language meant for understanding aborigines and how ideas from these interactions within a colonial situation informed ideas of the aborigine.

118 See Chapters 3 and 4.
CHAPTER 2:
Jakun, Orang Asal and Aborigines

"Through the medium of a Malay"

In his book on the Malay Peninsula, Newbold, a former Indian army officer, wrote about meeting “two individuals of different tribes, the Belandas and Besisik”. He said that “I had an opportunity of conversing through the medium of a Malay who understood the language” of the two individuals.\(^1\) In this instance, Newbold highlighted a largely neglected aspect of interaction between British writers and the subject of their inquiries, those whom they styled aborigines of the Malay Peninsula: the use of Malay intermediaries and the Malay language in almost every aspect of the interaction. The reliance of British scholars on the Malay language and the viewpoints of people from the cities and the coasts is a sign of the ongoing silent translations and transactions that shaped the resulting text in English.\(^2\) It is important to highlight this process in order to draw attention to the various influences on the English text that would otherwise go unnoticed. Newbold’s account of aboriginal peoples was based on a mix of sources stretching back to Marsden, but he also referred to Malays as the source of his information, noting the views of “some modern Malays”, his “enquiries among intelligent Malays” and the “idle tales among Malays”.\(^3\)

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\(^1\) Newbold, *Political and Statistical Account*, 418.
\(^2\) Victor T. King drew attention to this aspect of anthropological writing for a later scholar whom I will consider in Chapter 5. Ivor H. N. Evans (1886-1957) was a notable early twentieth-century anthropologist of the Malay Peninsula and Borneo. King judged this aspect of Evans’ work on Borneo as one of its most problematic, since fieldwork was conducted almost solely in Malay and not in the Dusun language of his informants. Victor T. King, “Foreword”, in *Bornean Diaries 1938-1942*, I. H. N. Evans, ed. A. V. M. Horton (Minnesota: Borneo Research Council, 2002), xviii.
\(^3\) Newbold, *Political and Statistical Account*, 18, 377, 416.
Most of these intermediaries and sources of information did not leave written records of their thoughts about the subjects the British were writing about. British authors did not, in any case, document their comments at length. There were, however, a few instances of texts written in Malay about indigenous people by members of local elites, people whom Newbold would have referred to as “intelligent” or “modern Malays”. Writing on indigenous peoples in Malay was monopolised by the well-known scholar, writer, translator and teacher Munshi Abdullah. In this chapter, I turn to two of his writings, *Hikayat Abdullah* and *Hikayat Dunia*, for some understanding of how a Malay speaker described the differences seen between coastal/city and inland inhabitants. This is crucial in order to point out that there were several ways of perceiving difference and that these various systems of differentiation influenced later governmental and anthropological texts about aboriginal races.

It should not be assumed that such texts would differ immensely from British texts in the ways that they conceived of human difference. This is due to the intellectual atmosphere in which the writings were produced. British involvement in the region intensified during the nineteenth century. This impact was seen in Malay writings, often commissioned by the British, and in changes in the subject matter of those writings. In such a situation, at least a two-way flow of ideas should be assumed, from the British to writings in Malay, and from situations in the Malay Peninsula to British writings on people in the Peninsula. Overlapping power structures and views are apparent when comparing English texts and Abdullah’s writings, yet there were still
differences in the expressions of difference. There was a notable expansion of
meaning of some Malay words, signifying the attempt to translate ideas from English
to Malay, and/or the introduction of such ideas to Malay expression. At the same time,
the local ideas of difference mentioned in the previous chapter were apparent in
Abdullah’s work as well. The way he used the terms Jakun⁴ and orang asal (original
people) were similar to the meaning of aboriginal races in British writing on the Malay
Peninsula at the same time. Jakun, however, incorporated the possibility of movement
in and out of that category, while orang asal was delimited in ways unfamiliar to
conceptions discussed in Chapter 1. The uses of both these terms would further inflect
discussions of aboriginal races in Malaya in the late nineteenth century with the advent
of more serious anthropological works by introducing other modes of differentiation
into aboriginal racial schemes that supposedly depended only on bodily differences for
their definition.

Reading Munshi Abdullah

Munshi Abdullah (1796-1854) was a well-known language teacher and writer who
lived in the Malay Peninsula in the first half of the nineteenth century. He worked for
European and American colonial administrators, businessmen and missionaries in

⁴ Jakun: purportedly of Minangkabau origin (as stated in the Kamus Dewan, compiled by T. Iskandar
(Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1970), 405) or Indo-Chinese origin (as per R. J.
1959), 437). Jakun currently refers to indigenous people in the Malay Peninsula in the Pahang, Johor
and Negeri Sembilan regions who are anthropologically classified as Proto-Malay (Rambo, “Why are
the Semang?” 19). It is also used as a derogatory term in everyday conversation. To call someone Jakun
is to imply that the person is simple, stupid or untutored in the ways of the city and is easily impressed.
Jakun will henceforth be used without italics and inverted commas. As mentioned in the introduction,
Jakun, along with Sakai and Semang, are often used as proper names in English sources in colonial
Malaya. The convention followed here is to not italicise the terms unless they are reproduced in quotes
from Malay texts.
Singapore and Melaka. He wrote his own *hikayat* or tales, translated material from English to Malay and compiled dictionaries with his employers and co-authors. Though the term *hikayat* draws on a tradition of writing court chronicles in the Malay Archipelago, he used it instead for matters outside the scope of court writings. This was partly to do with the influence of the European and American patrons of his writings. Jan van der Putten suggests that though Abdullah was not converted to Christianity by his Christian patrons and remained staunchly Muslim, his ideas of the world were deeply influenced by the missionaries of the London Missionary Society (LMS) and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM).

Munshi Abdullah’s *Hikayat Abdullah* (Tales of Abdullah) was written between 1840 and 1843 and first published in 1849. The *Hikayat* is based on events in Abdullah’s life. It was aimed at “improving the minds of Malays”, on the one hand, while also directed to a general European readership that might find his story interesting. Both in this work and in *Hikayat Dunia* there are substantial sections on people readily identifiable as corresponding to aborigines in British writings on Malaya during this same period. The text was originally written in Jawi, or Malay in Arabic script. There are several published Malay transliterations of the *Hikayat Abdullah* as well as an

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5 *Hikayat*: old tales or stories, in prose form, or a tale told by a storyteller.
9 The *Hikayat Abdullah* is significant in Malay literature for many reasons. For more details on the subject, see the authoritative works of Munshi Abdullah, *Karya lengkap Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir Munysi* (*The Complete Writings of Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir Munysi*), Vol. 1 and 2, ed. Amin Sweeney (Paris: École française d’Extrême-Orient, 2005), and Van der Putten, “Abdullah Munysi and the Missionaries”, 417.
authoritative English translation by A. H. Hill published in 1970.\textsuperscript{10} Though I build on Hill's translation, I do not repeat it uncritically. I instead indicate the original Malay terms specifically used by Abdullah to refer to the indigenous people he met and in comparing those people to himself and to others. This is no critique of Hill's exemplary work. His translation was not concerned with the ways in which human differences were described in Malay. For my purposes, however, it is essential to maintain the original wording and to draw out implications of the use of wording in Malay when describing differences between groups. I will indicate the import of those words in my English translation.

The *Hikayat Dunia* (or *Dunya*)\textsuperscript{11} had many incarnations throughout the nineteenth century. There are at least three known versions of this text. Some were more clearly in the form of a book for school children where the passages are followed by questions that test the reader's comprehension of the material. However, preliminary research on these versions suggests that the differences between them are minimal.\textsuperscript{12} I use a version of the *Hikayat Dunia* published in 1855 that could also have been used as a schoolbook. There is no published transliteration of *Hikayat Dunia*, though some portions were reproduced in Anthony Milner's chapter on this work.\textsuperscript{13} Thus, all

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{11} There are two ways of transliterating the second word of the original title in jawi: "*dunya*" is the romanisation listed as the title of the work in the British Library's Oriental and India Office collections. "*Dunia*", however, is the standard Malay spelling for the same word. Along with Anthony Milner, I use the transliteration *Hikayat Dunia* in this thesis. Milner, *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya*, 59.
\textsuperscript{12} Pers. comm. Jan van der Putten.
\textsuperscript{13} See Chapter Three of Milner, *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya*.
\end{flushleft}
transliterations are my own. While the title in Malay is *Hikayat Dunia*, its English translation on the microfilm provided by the British Library states that it is *An Elementary Geography of Asia and Africa: with a Special Chapter on the Malay Peninsula*. It was published in Singapore, probably by Reverend Benjamin Keasberry’s Mission Press, since Keasberry is also credited as the author, though no publisher is mentioned. Keasberry (1811-1875) was an American Protestant missionary who came to Singapore in 1837. He joined the American Board of Missions and then subsequently the LMS in 1839. His proselytising activities revolved around publishing works in Malay, working closely with Abdullah in the process. He also conducted church services in Malay and ran a boarding school for boys in Singapore.

Written Malay was used as a tool of legitimation for the various sultanates scattered around the Malay Archipelago. Court texts and long poems were also written to provide guidance or entertainment for their listeners. The subjects treated by these written works included the royal lineage of ruling sultanates, stories of conflict between the sultanate and threatening forces, love stories and treatises on religion, to name a few. Manuscripts were often rewritten by the scribe or copyist from one sultanate to another, with changes that might shift the overall import of the manuscript in order to make it meaningful to a different audience. The foremost characteristic of

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14 The transliteration of *Hikayat Dunia* was mainly carried out by myself with additional assistance and checking from Jan van der Putten and Syahidah, research assistant at the National University of Singapore. Many thanks to Jan van der Putten for his help and advice in the process of transliteration. All mistakes are of course my own.

this kind of text, writings on religion perhaps excepted, is that it was produced in order to be performed and heard. Thus, the function and consumption of the written Malay word for most of its recorded history from the seventeenth century was not to be read individually but to be heard publicly.\(^{16}\)

This form of Malay writing existed contemporaneously with another growing area of writing exemplified by Abdullah and spurred on by the missionary presence in the Straits Settlements of Melaka, Penang and Singapore. The production of manuscripts changed with the growth of printing in the nineteenth century and with European interest in collecting important documents related to Malay literature. Abdullah and his missionary patrons wrote and published works on subjects not found in the existing corpus of Malay writing. Abdullah wrote on his individual voyages to different parts of the Malay Peninsula, and reported on things he saw and heard, including a category of people he called Jakun. In *Hikayat Abdullah*, he described meeting Jakun of Panchur Mountain who lived in the jungle, wore bark clothing, spoke a different language and were described as wild.\(^{17}\)

Prior to the appearance of Jakun in Abdullah's writing, there does not appear to be a term in written Malay to describe the people Abdullah met who, according to Newbold's account, were aborigines. Written Malay also did not have a term that approximated race in the way in which scholars in Europe were using the term to connote different branches of humankind discernible by physical characteristics. An

\(^{16}\) Koster, *Roaming through Seductive Gardens*.

awareness of these factors and the history of the translation of words in Malay to approximate English meanings renders Abdullah’s *Hikayat Dunia* exceptionally valuable for its novel use of the Malay language and for using Jakun as a close equivalent to the contemporary concept of aboriginal races.

**Translating Aborigine and Race into Malay**

Abdullah changed the meaning of terms in Malay to make possible a discourse in Malay on a subject akin to aborigines in English. The conceptual work behind this process is similar to one described in Milner’s *Invention of Politics*. Milner argues that inventing a mode of politics in Malay entailed breaking away from the convention of seeing a subject as tied to the ruler, a horizontal alignment, to enabling a new tradition of the individual unhinged from the ruler but linked to a wider political system and citizenry.\(^\text{18}\) Similarly, Abdullah revised the way of viewing a person within the logic of Malay writing.

The term aboriginal with reference to the Malay Peninsula underwent changes in the English texts. In his 1811 edition of *History of Sumatra*, William Marsden wrote that he talked to “natives” of Sumatra about the presence of “aborigines of the island”. He made a distinction between “natives” and “aborigines”, with this latter group linked with inland and wooded regions and enslavement. Elsewhere, the Malay language was considered by Marsden to be original or indigenous to the region of the Malay

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Archipelago even though there was disagreement as to whether it was original to the Peninsula or the island of Sumatra.\(^\text{19}\)

As I discussed in the previous chapter, in his 1818 article, Stamford Raffles did not use terms such as indigenous and aborigine, but fell back on the language of primordiality. He repeatedly referred to the “more original inhabitants” or the “more ancient inhabitants” of the Malay Archipelago as distinct from Malays. For the Malay Peninsula in particular, he referred to the “people” or “tribes” who were there before the arrival of Malays.\(^\text{20}\)

Anderson in 1824 and Newbold in 1839 in turn associated “aborigine” with people considered more original than Malays, who had purportedly arrived in the Malay Peninsula before the Malay migration from Sumatra. These assumptions, entangled with the idea that aborigines were lower in civilisation than Malays, were contained in the meaning of the word aborigine at this time. Newbold considered groups all over the Indian Archipelago to be aboriginal inhabitants/aboriginal races or those “of a much lower grade in the scale of civilization”. In the Malay Peninsula, the Orang Benua were such a group, in Borneo there were Dayaks and in the greater Archipelago there were Harafuras.\(^\text{21}\) Newbold’s basis for including people in the aboriginal category derived from his stereotypes of their bodies. He concentrated on physical appearances to support or refute linkages between Semang and Jakun and to determine


their relatedness to Papuans and Africans. Newbold’s basis for including people in the aboriginal category was firstly based on knowledge received from other sources. Histories from “Malays” and “Benuas” positioned the latter group as the first arrivals on the Peninsula that were then glossed by Newbold as aborigines. Furthermore, stereotypes of Benua bodies were again received knowledge from the writings of Raffles and John Anderson. Newbold also subscribed to physical appearances as a means for judging or supporting aboriginality. He was told both by “an aged Malay of Perak” and by the former Sultan of Kedah that Semang and Jakun were one and the same group. In support of those views, Newbold said that “the Semang does not differ much in personal appearance from the Jakun, having the same curly and matted though not frizzled hair, with a complexion generally a little darker”.

As the meaning and referent of aborigine in the English language was itself undergoing change and refinement when applied to peoples of the Malay Peninsula, authors writing in English were translating terms in Malay to mean aborigine. Raffles in 1818 called orang benua “people belonging to the country”, or the more “original inhabitants” of the Malay Peninsula compared to Malays. In 1812, Marsden, perhaps quoting an earlier version of Raffles’ article, paraphrased Raffles and translated örang benüa into “people of the land” and “aborigines”. Anderson translated orang benua

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22 Newbold, Political and Statistical Account, 377-378.
in the same way in 1824, while Newbold in 1839 used the phrase as the equivalent of “aboriginal people or tribes” or “wild tribes”.  

There were also various terms in Malay that were translated to mean race in English as branches of humankind, but such translations often came with several meanings. For instance, Anthony Milner and Virginia Hooker have translated bangsa as “race”.  

But, as Virginia Matheson argued earlier, bangsa was commonly used to connote royal descent. Bangsa was used in this manner primarily in Sejarah Melayu in the seventeenth century, documenting the origin of the court in Melaka. In nineteenth-century texts, such as Misa Melayu (recounting events in Perak in the eighteenth century during the reign of Sultan Iskandar) and Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa (a story about the origins of the Sultanate of Kedah), bangsa indicated groupings of people who were considered dissimilar from each other while still sometimes used in the sense of noble birth. So too was the English and French word race/race in its original genealogical sense. Bangsa described the various inhabitants of Perak such as “Klings, Malays, Bugis and Minangkabau”, yet the coupling of bangsa with group names such as Melayu or Minangkabau did not explain the ways in which they were grouped together and whether they thus constituted a ‘race’, and if so, according to what criteria.

27 Milner, The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya, 6; Virginia Hooker, Writing a New Society: Social Change through the Novel in Malay (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 2003), x.
29 Douglas, “Climate to Crania”, 34.
Despite the ambiguity in the terms that were available in Malay, they were made to refer to races and aborigines in dictionaries translating them into English. In Crawfurd’s 1852 dictionary, there were instances where Malay names were defined in terms of ‘wild tribes/races/inhabitants’: for example, “basist” (“Name of a wild tribe of the Malay peninsula”); “Sámang” (“A name given by the Malays to a diminutive race of negroes, inhabiting some of the mountains of the Malay peninsula”); “Papuwa” (“Frizzled; frizzle or woolly-headed; a negrito of the Indian islands; an African negro; v. Puwah-puwah”); and “Alifur” or Alifura (of purported Portuguese origin and applied to “all the wilder races of the eastern portion of the Archipelago”).

What the phrase *orang benua*, and other such terms translated by English speakers as aborigines, meant to a Malay speaker is difficult to determine, in part due to the scarcity of material. Marsden’s 1812 dictionary lists *benūa* as “country, region, land; inhabited and cultivated country”. When the word is linked with China (“*benūa China*”), the phrase refers to the country of China. Though the word was included in Crawfurd’s 1852 dictionary (“*bānuwa*”, with the same translation as Marsden), it did not gain the meaning of “aborigine” until its appearance in Crawfurd’s 1856 Descriptive Dictionary:

The Malays prefixing to it [*benua*] the word Orang, “men or people,” use the compound as a generic term for all the wild tribes of the peninsula speaking the same language as themselves, and of the same race, but who have not adopted the Mahommedan religion. The literal

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meaning of the phrase is “men of the land;” and it may be fairly
translated in the sense in which the Malays use it, “aborigines”.

A general search for orang benua within the searchable database of the Malay
Concordance Project (http://mcp.anu.edu.au/) reveals that the phrase was used mostly
in tandem with place names (China or Madinah) to indicate people of a particular
country or region. It is unlikely that a reference within Malay texts will be found to
people such as orang benua with a similar meaning as indicated in Crawfurd’s 1856
dictionary since such groups were not important enough to be written about in
manuscripts and their identity and characteristics were usually taken for granted.

A recent attempt to find equivalents for aborigine in Malay was undertaken by
Leonard Y. Andaya. Andaya is not alone in his interest in tracing indigenous groups
today back into Malaya’s past. Such an endeavour has been undertaken at various
stages by writers within and without academia. Scholars and activists interested in
indigenous peoples of Malaysia and their current disempowerment search for
historical materials in order to furnish details of peoples without a written culture, to
argue for prior or continuous occupancy of a given territory, or to document ill-
treatment by dominant groups.

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33 A search for the word with the spelling “banuwa” did not bring up any matches.
34 Andaya, *Leaves of the Same Tree*, 223.
Andaya looked for known names of indigenous peoples today and in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century texts on aborigines in English—such as Sakai, Biduanda and Semang. He then searched for the same terms in earlier Malay manuscripts. Sakai was a common term used by British colonial officers and writers in English to describe any indigenous person or any person from the Malay Peninsula who did not fit Malay stereotypes, such as being a village-dwelling agriculturalist. With the advent of more professional anthropological studies in the 1890s, Sakai came to denote one of three subsections of indigenous peoples of Malaya along with Semang and Jakun. These divisions were racial divisions in that they connoted different physical types coupled with different cultures and languages. Sakai referred to “wavy-haired aborigines”, Semang to “negrito” or “frizzy-haired aborigines” and Jakun “lank-haired aborigines”. Biduanda more specifically applied to a group of people (Orang Biduanda Kallang) encountered by Logan in Johor. 

The derogatory connotations of the term Sakai have been noted by both anthropologist Alberto Gomes and the founder of the Centre for Orang Asli Concerns, Colin Nicholas, in the present day, and by Skeat during the colonial period. Skeat testified that indigenous peoples did not use the term as an ethnonym and that Malays would use it as a name or an insult. Marie-Andree Couillard noted that “the term appeared in the European literature to designate the non-Muslim tribes of the Peninsula which

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38 Colin Nicholas, “Organizing Orang Asli Identity”, in Tribal Communities in the Malay World: Historical, Cultural and Social Perspectives, ed. Geoffrey Benjamin and Cynthia Chou (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2002), 120.
were the object of raids to obtain slaves”. Today, the various groups of indigenous people of the Malay Peninsula are referred to collectively as Orang Asli or ‘original peoples’, and Andaya encompassed the terms Sakai, Semang and Jakun under that recent heading.

However common use of the term Sakai was from the colonial period onwards, and however stable its meaning has been since, there is scant evidence to suggest that the same meaning operated in earlier court manuscripts. Andaya asserts that “[i]n the earliest extant recession of the Sejarah Melayu, dated 1612, the term ‘Sakai’ can be interpreted as synonymous with Orang Asli generally or as subjects of one of the principal officials in Melaka”, two widely varying groups that are separated by a span of 300 years. He even says that “[t]he ambiguity surrounding the term is removed in the Undang-Undang Melaka” (Melaka Legal Digest) where sakai, biduanda and hamba were used, but he gives no reason for asserting that the three terms referred to what is understood today as Orang Asli and as aborigines. Andaya’s justification for drawing such a link is the range of definitions of Sakai provided in R. J. Wilkinson’s dictionary of 1901, revised and republished in 1959. However, in Marsden’s 1812 dictionary, sakei was defined only as “servant, follower, dependant”.  Skeat and Couillard both noted that the term had other older meanings such as “friend”,

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40 Andaya, Leaves of the Same Tree, 223.
41 Marsden, A Dictionary of the Malayan Language, 130, 58.
“dependent” and “ally”. This was also noted by Andaya who remarked that the term “can be interpreted as … subjects of one of the principal officials in Melaka”.

From the early 1800s until the middle of the century, terms such as Sakai and Benua came to be identified as synonyms for aborigines. As with bânuâwal/benua, Crawfurd changed the meaning of sakai from the publication of his dictionary in 1852 to his Descriptive Dictionary published in 1856. Crawfurd’s 1852 dictionary contained the entry sakai with a meaning similar to Marsden’s. Four years later, his longer dictionary provided the following explanation for the word:

This is one of the most frequent names given by the civilised Malays to the rude tribes unconverted to Mahommedanism inhabiting the interior of the Malay Peninsula from Perak southward, as well as the opposite coast of Sumatra and its islands. They are of the same race and apparently of the same nation as the Malays themselves, for they speak a rude dialect of their language. Generally, they are an inoffensive and simple people, living by hunting, but occasionally practising the culture of rice, or the sago palm. The Malays, according to their localities or states of civilisation, divide them into forest or wild, and tame or docile, expressed in their language by the words utan and jinak.

The distinction brought out between “forest or wild” and “tame or docile” will be discussed at length in the coming chapters and their implications for the continuities and divergences between governmental and anthropological racial concepts of aborigines. Here, it is important to note that the linking of sakai with aborigines only appeared in the mid-nineteenth century.

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42 Andaya, *Leaves of the Same Tree*, 223.
Taking the example of *melayu* will illustrate the point that even the meanings of very common terms used today have fluctuated through time. Matheson found that *melayu* was not a concept overtly interrogated by the texts, making it difficult to know what it meant. Judging from the few instances of the term’s use, its meanings differed from nineteenth-century British concerns to identify a Malay racial group related by physical type, language and custom. Instead, *melayu* was tied to royal origins or lineage of the founders of the sultanates in *Sejarah Melayu*, linking it to *bangsa*. *Melayu* also signalled customs relating to prohibitions on dress, transportation and rules for court ceremonies. The sense of the term *melayu* was determined by a different set of criteria than that assumed by nineteenth-century British scholars and it might have been deliberately left indeterminate in order to allow for a variety of traits to be legitimised in rulers.

A more general search within the Malay Concordance Project for the term *sakai* and its use in written Malay sources proves equally inconclusive as to whether or not *sakai* could be said to refer to aborigines as understood by the English in Malaya. Among manuscripts in Malay copied and produced in the nineteenth century, *sakai* appears most frequently in the *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, a romance about the exploits of a hero banished from Melaka. There are references to *sakai* being conscripted (*dikerah*) to man *perahus* (boats or ships) and to fight; to *sakai* living on an island and hunting; or fleeing the island with wives and children; or to one-half of the relationship between a

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45 Maier, *We Are Playing Relatives*, 8.
48 *kerah*: conscription, corvee, to call people together.
headman (penghulu) and sakai. Sakai seemed to differ from officers (pegawai) and the
general classifier for people, orang, and were often conscripted. Sakai is given similar
meanings in other texts such as Misa Melayu, Syair Kerajaan Bima and Syair
Kerajaan Johor. Even in Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa, the text that supposedly
clearly refers to aborigines, sakai was used both to designate one-half of the
relationship between a headman (penghulu) and sakai (penghulu sakai) or as part of an
army (tentera sakai), in addition to proper names of groups of people.

The term semang perhaps referred more closely to a group of people or community.
But this usage cannot be identified in the manuscript that used the term most
frequently, the Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa. Marsden’s 1812 dictionary, published
before the writing of the Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa, contains the entry semang, as
meaning:

the name of a race of men inhabiting the interior or mountainous and
woody parts of the Malayan peninsula, who are of a dark colour, have
crisped hair, and approach nearly to the negroes of Africa. Kurap
semang leprous scurf (to which the people of the island of Nias are also
subject). In some places, they are named ... bila, and in others dayak
... 49

Bila is not included in the dictionary, while dayak is given as “Aboriginal inhabitants
of the Southern part of the island of BORNEO”.50 Elsewhere in English publications,
semang was not used as a general term meaning aborigine. John Anderson, who was
stationed in Penang under the EIC, noted in 1824 the Malay names Orang Bukit

49 Koster, Roaming through Seductive Gardens, 182.
50 Koster, Roaming through Seductive Gardens, 58.
(person of the hill), Orang Laut (person of the sea), as well as the name semang for indigenous people followed by specific locations such that there were Semang Paya (Semang of the swamp), Semang Bukit (Semang of the hill) and Semang Bakau (Semang of the mangrove).\textsuperscript{51} The meanings given of the terms do not directly correspond to identifiably racial designations as understood by anthropologists and point to a disconnect between Malay expressions of difference in Malay and in English.

Another strategy used to identify indigenous people in local sources is to gloss slaves as aborigines. While people living in inland areas and having a lifestyle distinct from coastal Malays had been enslaved,\textsuperscript{52} so too had other groups and assuming that slaves always or primarily referred to aborigines is misleading. In 1890, the Malay scholar and colonial officer W. E. Maxwell tried making the connection between sakei and aborigine by assuming equivalence between the two words. Knowing that people called aborigines by the British were enslaved, Maxwell looked for them in the slavery codes. Included in Maxwell’s list of people who were slaves according to the Perak laws were “infidel[s] captured by force (e.g., a Batak of Sumatra or Sakei of the Peninsula)”. Later in the article, Maxwell extended slaves to include “Habshi (Abyssinian) slaves” and the descendants of all three groups.\textsuperscript{53} Maxwell referred to

\textsuperscript{51} Anderson, Political and Commercial Considerations (1824), xxxi, xxxviii.
Batak, Sakei and Habshi as races with Batak being a subgroup of people originally from Sumatra, Sakei being aborigines and Habshi being Africans.

Maxwell derived his list of slaves from the original text in Malay that he provided. However, a look at the occurrence of Sakei in the text brings up other connotations. There were three instances where his extracts of the Perak Law relating to slavery mentioned *sakei* and *biduanda*. In Chapter Ten of the code, Maxwell gave the transliteration:

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Pada me-nyata-kan sagala orang mardahika yang mem-bawa hutang-hutang-an orang atau sakei atau biduanda orang atau hamba orang tiada tahu dengan penghulu-nya atau tuan-nya jikalau barang sa-suatu hal-nya ter-tanggung atas orang yang mem-bawa dia yani atas diri-nya atau atas sakei-nya lagi belum kembali pada penghulu-nya.
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Maxwell’s translation was as follows:

To declare the law regarding free-men who take (for any purpose) the debtors, *sakei, biduanda* or slaves of others without the knowledge of their penghulus or masters. – In such a case should anything happen the responsibility rests with him who takes the slaves, etc. (both upon him personally and upon his companions) until they have been returned to their penghulu or master.

Maxwell translated the types of slaves ("*hutang-hutang-an orang atau sakei atau biduanda orang atau hamba*") as "debtors, *sakei, biduanda or slaves of others*", retaining *sakei* and *biduanda* in italics as proper names for groups, indicating aborigines as the British at the time did, instead of the other possible meaning, which he himself used in the same paragraph, which is companion and royal page/slave
respectively. Following from the latter meaning, the initial types of slaves could be read instead as “debtor, companions and royal page/slave of people, and slaves of people”. This fluctuation of the meaning of sakei, between a name for aborigines and a general term for companion or dependent, also operated in Maxwell’s translation of the chapter on punishment for selling royal retainers.\textsuperscript{54} As Matheson later commented, “to the writer of the period it was perfectly obvious who was and who was not a slave” and the subject in question, the slave, was not identified within the text. Nonetheless, Matheson too assumed that it referred to “the Malay name for aboriginal peoples of the Peninsula” even though there were other groups of people known to be dependents and there was no further description of who sakei were that might allow them to be equated with aborigines.\textsuperscript{55}

The preceding section illustrates how difficult it is to attribute the nineteenth-century English meaning of aborigine to Malay words found either earlier or contemporaneously. The difficulty in uncovering the sense of the terms sakai/sakei, semang and orang benua in the Malay texts is precisely because category terms referring to aboriginal races from the beginning of British colonialism in Malaya until today were not used in the manuscripts. The subject matter dealt with in Malay court manuscripts did not emphasise human difference in terms of more ‘original’ and ‘wild’ aborigines as was important to some English writers in the Peninsula. Instead, in Malay court texts, human difference was conceived in supernatural terms as a way of distinguishing prominent rulers and their descendents favoured in the text from

\textsuperscript{54} Maxwell, “The Law Relating to Slavery among the Malays”, 274.
\textsuperscript{55} Matheson and Hooker, “Slavery in the Malay Texts”, 184.
those considered lesser. This entailed, for instance, claiming a direct descent from the line of Alexander the Great, a well-known leader famed for his military conquests, or writing about rulers as descending from heaven.\(^\text{56}\)

In *Hikayat Dunia*, Abdullah described groups in very similar ways as, for instance, Marsden did in his *History of Sumatra* in distinguishing the different people of Sumatra. Distinctively, there were two general classifiers for a group of people Newbold identified as “aboriginal races”: Jakun and *orang asal*. More conceptual work had to be undertaken before Jakun and *orang asal* in *Hikayat Dunia* attained their distinctive meanings that would approximate aborigines. The reworking of the meanings surrounding these two terms was largely carried out within an earlier text written by Abdullah, *Hikayat Abdullah*. The next section will show that the meanings of Jakun and *orang asal* were expanded in this text, forming the basis for other connotations of human difference in *Hikayat Dunia*.

**Hikayat Abdullah: Looking at Jakun at Panchur Mountain**

The section in *Hikayat Abdullah* that deals with identifiable indigenous people features the British author Newbold and another minor character, Birch Westerhout. In the *Hikayat Abdullah*, Abdullah tells the reader how he was hired by Newbold to teach him Malay as Newbold had heard of him by reputation. Newbold was stationed in Melaka in the early 1830s as a military representative of the British army to learn

more about the conflict then going on there. He eventually became involved in the Naning War between the British army and local Malays who fought over the independence of their territory. Abdullah recounted how Newbold had asked him to accompany him, together with Westerhout, to look at Jakun in the vicinity of Panchur Mountain, which is likely to have been in the neighbouring state of Johor. Hill’s translation of Hikayat Abdullah identifies Westerhout as Superintendent of Naning during the Dutch Occupation of Melaka from 1818 to 1824 and as of a notable Singapore and Melaka family of Dutch origin. Possibly Newbold was not yet sufficiently fluent in Malay at this point and needed Abdullah as an interpreter during his trip.

Jakun did not enter the literature in English until 1839 with the publication of Newbold’s book. There it was included among a long list of other names for aboriginal peoples and was by no means the only one. Jakun was not mentioned in Marsden’s 1812 or Crawfurd’s 1852 dictionaries. It was only mentioned later in Crawfurd’s 1856 Descriptive Dictionary as “a generic term for the wild tribes of the interior of the peninsula from Melaka southward”. Jakun had by then made at least three appearances in Malay writing by Abdullah: in Kisah Pelayaran Abdullah ke Kelantan dan ke Judah (Abdullah’s Voyage to Kelantan and to Jeddah), first published in 1838; in Hikayat Abdullah written between 1840 and 1843; and in the

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58 See Hill’s Map IV for a sketch of the area referred to by Abdullah. Munshi Abdullah, The Hikayat Abdullah, 335. Abdullah did not provide a date for his meeting with Newbold and with the Jakun. In the 1830s, he made frequent visits to Melaka and these possibly coincided with Newbold’s presence there. It is likely that the events, if they took place, occurred sometime during the 1830s. Munshi Abdullah, The Hikayat Abdullah, 16-17, 251.
59 Munshi Abdullah, The Hikayat Abdullah, 251 fn 33.
60 Crawfurd, A Descriptive Dictionary, 161.
version of *Hikayat Dunia* published in 1855. By far the largest section devoted to identifiable aboriginal people was in *Hikayat Abdullah*, surrounding the events of the trip to Panchur Mountain.

At the juncture of the narrative where Abdullah was asked to participate in the trip, there was no explanation given in the text as to whom Jakun referred. Abdullah wrote that presents of Javanese tobacco and white arsenic were prepared as gifts to Jakun, and the trip to their location up Panchur Mountain took two days. He said that along the way, they were aided by several Malays ("orang-orang Malayu") and also a Jakun child ("sa'orang anak Jakun") who knew the ways of Malays and who knew the Malay language. The presence of the child in the account points to the layers of translation that went into this meeting: Newbold hired Abdullah as his Malay-to-English translator, while Abdullah relied on the Jakun child as a Jakun-to-Malay translator.

As the party sat down to rest, the Jakun child ("budak Jakun") entered the jungle and called to Jakun ("memanggil Jakun"). Seven Jakun people ("tujoh orang Jakun") came out of the forest after a moment, comprising men and women, old and young people ("ada laki-laki, ada pērēmpuan, ada orang tua, dan budak"). When Abdullah

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61 This refers to the ingredient in poisoned darts. Munshi Abdullah, *The Hikayat Abdullah*, 251.

62 "Boleh kita pergi ke-Gunong Panchur bersama-sama dengan Tuan Birch Westerhout, boleh kita pergi melihat Jakun" (We can go to Panchur Mountain along with Mr. Birch Westerhout, we can go to see Jakun). Munshi Abdullah, *Hikayat Abdullah*, 276.

63 In the reproduction of Malay quotes, I follow the spelling as used in the 1960 transliteration of the text by Kassim Ahmad.

"... Sa'orang anak Jakun yang telah biasa dengan orang Malayu, dan tahu berbahasa Malayu, akan menjadi juru-bahasa kita" (... a Jakun child who is used to Malay people, and knows how to speak Malay, to be our language instructor/translator). Munshi Abdullah, *Hikayat Abdullah*, 274-278.
first saw Jakun coming out of the jungle from afar he was astounded. He praised the abilities of God in making many kinds of humans ("mênjadikan bêrbagai-bagai jênis manusia"), each with their own mind ("akal"), habits ("tabiat"), and appearance ("rupa"). He said that when he first set eyes on them, they looked like humans like ourselves ("manusia sêpêrti kita") but their habits were those of animals ("sêpêrti binatang"), though even animals knew how to wash themselves, he said, while they did not. Their skin and hair also did not look like the skin and hair of humans ("manusia") because they were covered in earth and tree sap. They did not wear any clothing except for a piece of bark cloth that was used to cover their loins.64 He also noted that their language was like that of birds, a comment reminiscent of an earlier text by Leyden who said in 1811 that Malays viewed the language of some "aborigines" as "the chattering of large birds".65

According to Abdullah, Newbold was present at this first meeting with the people of Panchur Mountain. The people were purportedly afraid of the red shirt he wore. Even after he took off his shirt, the people of Panchur Mountain were still not at ease and were reluctant to talk in his presence. Only when Newbold left Abdullah with the

64 "Maka satêlah ku lihat dari jauh hal mèrika'itu, maka hairan, hairan, hairan aku, sêrtâ mêmui Allah, 'Bagimana ada-nya kêbasaran-mu, ya Tuhan, yang telâh mênjadikan bêrbagai-bagai jênis manusia, masing-masing dengan akal-nya, dan tabiat-nya, dan rupa-nya bêrbagai-bagai ragam ada-nya.' Bêrmula, maka ada-kah sifat mèrika'itu pêrtama-tama ku lihat, ia 'itu manusia sêpêrti kita, akan têlapî-nya tabiat-nya sêpêrti binatang, krana binatang itu pun tuh juga ia mênyuchikan diri-nya, maka ia 'ini sakali-kali tiada tahu; maka rambut-nya sêpêrti raga, maka tiada-lah kêlihatan warna rambut manusia, mêlainkan bêrtepek-tepek dengan tanah dan gelah kayu, mênjadikan kêlihatan seperti kulit kayu adanya, êntah bêbêrapa-kah husul dan kuku dalam-nya Allah yang tuh. Maka kadaan mèrika'itu, tiada bêrkain dan bêrbaju, maka sa-urat bênah pun tiada mêlékat di-toboh-nya, mêlainkan ada kulit terap sa-bêsar tapak tangan itu-lah di-buat-nya chawat ..." Munshi Abdullah, Hikayat Abdullah, 277.

Jakun child were they more at ease. Abdullah later said that Newbold became friends with them though he did not elaborate further on this.66

Abdullah’s first order of business when Newbold departed was to take a vocabulary of the Jakun language by asking for the names of things such as the earth and sky. Based on the sound of the language while noting the vocabulary, he said it sounded half-Malay and half-Nasrani. Nasranis or Seranis were local Malays who intermarried with the Portuguese during their rule of Melaka from 1511 to 1641. Abdullah wondered about the origins ("asal-asal") of the Jakun people encountered and hypothesised that they were descendants of Nasrani people ("asal mērika 'itu barangkali orang Nasrani juga"). His justification for this hypothesis was based on the history of Melaka. He said the Portuguese took Melaka from Malay rajas and then, with the help of Holland, Malays took Melaka back. The Nasrani were killed if met with so they ran into the jungle out of fear and eventually became wild. Their churches were in upriver Melaka and their tombstones with their writing on it were in the large jungle.67 Abdullah’s identification of Jakun with Nasrani was also based on the differences of their faces from Malays and other bangsa and the similarities to Serani faces, which he said were round ("mukanya sa-kali-kali bukan-nya sēpěrti Malayu atau bangsa-bangsa lain, bulat-bulat rupa Sēran").68

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66 Munshi Abdullah, Hikayat Abdullah, 278, 83.
67 Viia 'itu tatkala asal Portuguese mēngambil Malaka dari-pada raja Malayu, kēmudian dēngan bantu Holanda maka di-ambil pula oleh Malayu Malaka itu, maka di-bunoh-nya-lah mērika 'itu lari ka-dalam hutan, oleh sēbab takut-nya itu lama-kēlamaan-nya manjadi-lah liar dēmikian; karna ada lagi sampai sēkarang ini gēreja-gēreja mērika 'itu di-hulu Malaka, nama tēmpat-nya itu Pēngkalan Tampui; dan lagi ada kubur-kubur mērika 'itu dalam hutan-hutan bēsar, yang ada bērtulis dēngan huruf-nya di-atas batu ..." Munshi Abdullah, Hikayat Abdullah, 279.
68 Munshi Abdullah, Hikayat Abdullah, 278-279.
The section on the hypothetical origins of Jakun was followed by a retelling of the questions Abdullah asked them and the answers they gave in reply. The discussion is recounted seamlessly, as though it was a conversation between Abdullah and the group with the answers written in quotation marks. These questions and answers covered a variety of subjects such as the manner in which they married, gave birth, and whether or not any Jakun had been eaten by tigers. He asked the Jakun people about the kinds or bangsa of Jakun (“Ada berapakah bangsa atau jenis-nya Jakun itu?”). They answered that there were many types of bangsa names (“Ada banyak jenis nama bangsa itu”), first Benua, second Jakun, third Sakai, fourth Udai, fifth Akek, and finally Raayat. Benua were original people of the land (“orang asal negri”), then the land was taken by other bangsa or other rajas. Due to fear, they all ran into the jungle. Eventually, they changed their custom, language and dress. Since then they had been fearful of meeting people.\(^{69}\)

The conversation ended during the late afternoon when Newbold and Westerhout returned and they all made their way back to Alor Gajah, while the Jakun returned to the jungle.\(^{70}\) Abdullah ended the section on Jakun by referring to an earlier work where he had also written on Jakun.\(^{71}\) He said that he had mentioned Jakun in his *Voyage of Abdullah* as being found in upriver Pahang. Their occupation was bringing

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\(^{71}\) “Shahadat ada pun Jakun yang ku sebutkan dalam hikayat pelayaran-ku yang bernama Pelayaran Abdullah, yang tempat-nya di hilir Pahang, maka pekarjaan mèrika itu membawa gading dan keményan dan rotan, dijual-nya atau di tukar-nya dengan barang-barang ka-pada orang-orang dalam negéri, maka mèrika itu telah biasa dengan orang-orang Malayu, dan telah ia mengétahui bahasa Malayu, dan ia memakai sèpi or pakaian Malayu, maka sebab itu berlainan sakali ia ‘itu dengan Jakun yang di Bukit Panchur yang telah ku sebutkan di atas itu’”. Munshi Abdullah, *Hikayat Abdullah*, 283-284.
elephant tusks, *kēmēnyan* (a tree that yields gum benzoin)\(^{72}\) and rattan for sale or exchange for other goods. He said that they were used to Malay people, knew the Malay language and dressed like Malays, completely unlike the Jakun of Panchur Mountain that he had just encountered.

Comparing this section with the original section in *Voyage of Abdulllah to Kelantan* shows how these differences within the category Jakun were elements he noted later. The *Voyage* was published ten years earlier in 1839, recounting Abdullah’s journey from Singapore to Kelantan and the places where he and his crew members had stopped while travelling up the east coast of the Malay Peninsula.\(^{73}\) His first mention of Jakun in the earlier text was when his ship docked at Tanjung Kelisa, on the east coast of Johor, because they were short of water. They saw three wild hogs at the side of the beach. The travellers from the ship went down to get water. When they went into the jungle, they met Jakun. When Jakun saw people coming they ran into the jungle, making a commotion. The people then ran back to the ship.\(^{74}\) The next mention of Jakun was in the context of the economy of Pahang and where the gold was produced within the state. Abdullah was told that the place where gold came from was five days’ journey upriver, in Jelai. Many Chinese and Malays worked there and there was much commerce. He was told as well that there were many Jakun in upriver Pahang. It was the occupation of Jakun to produce trade goods from the jungle such as

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\(^{72}\) Dennys, *A Descriptive Dictionary of British Malaya*, 421.


gaharu (eaglewood), kēmēnyan, damar (resin)\textsuperscript{75} and rattan. Jakun also panned for gold together with Malays. They cultivated crops and brought many types of fruit from the jungle to sell or exchange for tobacco and salt with everyone who did business.\textsuperscript{76}

In the later work, Jakun were considered largely in terms of their humanity and difference, and only superficially in terms of occupation. Abdullah wrote that when he first saw Jakun, he praised the abilities of God in bringing into existence many kinds of humans, including Jakun as manusia. Manusia connotes humankind in general (for instance, as in the phrase the ‘human race’), and not specific groups within this category that would warrant the use of bangsa or orang. Manusia appeared frequently in the last section of Hikayat Abdullah, where Abdullah highlighted the plight of all sections of society under the supposed cruelty of Malay rulers.\textsuperscript{77} He also used it when talking about a situation or condition that affected all people, such as the dangers of sailing in the Singapore sea, which he said would scare away even spirits and the devil.\textsuperscript{78} In the section on Jakun, Abdullah identified differences between what he assumed was a general commonality shared by himself and his readers (“manusia

\textsuperscript{75} J. Kathirithamby-Wells, Nature and Nation: Forests and Development in Peninsular Malaysia (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2005), xvii, xv.


\textsuperscript{77} “kēbanyakan anak-anak raja dan hamba-raja tiada tērtahan oleh manusia amiaya-nya dan dhalim-nya” (Most children of the raja and their followers/retainers cannot be tolerated by the people/humans because of their torture and cruelty). Munshi Abdullah, Hikayat Abdullah, 346.

\textsuperscript{78} “Shahadan ada pun pada masa itu jangankan manusia hēndak lalu lalong di-laut singapura itu, jin shaitan pun takut” (Now at that time people/humans did not sail to and fro in the Singapore sea, as jinns and the devil also feared it). Munshi Abdullah, Hikayat Abdullah, 346, 141, 54.
sêpêrti kita” [humans like us]) and another limited commonality shared with Jakun people whom he met. While noting that there were differences, Abdullah still referred to them as “orang” and “manusia”, thus not distinguishing them from himself and Newbold.

In the section calling Jakun manusia, he also said that when he first set eyes on them, they looked like humans just like us (“manusia sêpêrti kita”) but their habits were those of animals (“sêpêrti binatang”). In Hikayat Abdullah, binatang was evoked when describing animals specifically, or when comparing manusia (humans) to binatang (animals) and sometimes jin (spirits) and syaitan (the devil). The differentiation indicated the types of beings in this world rather than a hierarchy of species. Binatang was also used in reference to behaviour that was not appropriate in Abdullah’s eyes, such as the actions of a person who owned slaves, and the children of rulers whom he said did not learn proper habits from their parents. Animals were compared to humans when they seemed to approximate the characteristics of humans, in which case the term manusia was used rather than orang, to describe the being’s closeness to humans. For instance, Abdullah recounted how he first saw two mawas, or beings “which the white people call ‘Orang Hutan’ [man of the jungle]”. The mawas was reportedly very tame (“têrlalu sakali jinak”) and his manner was like that

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79 Munshi Abdullah, Hikayat Abdullah, 277.
80 “Bermula orang yang émpunya hamba-hamba itu këlakuan-nya sêpêrti binatang yang tiada bermalu dan tiada takut ka-pada Allah” (The person who owned the slaves behaved like an animal, with no shame and no fear of God); “Ada pun dari-hal Orang-orang Laut... laku-nya sêpêrti binatang yang buas” (The Sea People behaved like wild animals); “Dan lagi ada yang héranak sa-puloh, dua-puloh, maka anak yang térsébut itu pun kêchuali-nya yang baik, ada sêpêrti tabiat shaitan, dan këlakuan binatang” (Some [rulers] have ten or twenty children, ... A few of them are good, the rest have the habits of the Devil and the manner of animals). Munshi Abdullah, Hikayat Abdullah, 190, 142-144, 299.
of humans ("tabiat-nya sêpêrti akan-akan manusia"). These kinds of usages had parallels in European scholarly discourses on man before the mid-eighteenth century and endure in common English usages even into the present. Yet Abdullah’s use of binatang in relation to Jakun is distinct from the way anthropologists that came to Malaya in the late nineteenth century approached some aborigines as possibly ape and not human, as will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Another notable term used to describe Jakun was bangsa. They were compared to other bangsa, and Abdullah asked how many kinds or bangsa of Jakun there were ("Ada bêrâpa-kah bangsa atau jênis-nya Jakun itu?"), indicating further subdivisions within the general bangsa of Jakun. Abdullah used bangsa differently from its use in traditional court literature. As seen previously, bangsa commonly connoted royal descent. The use of bangsa in Hikayat Abdullah was more closely aligned to the variety of meanings offered by Marsden, who translated bangsa into “race, family, tribe, caste”, and did not denote the meaning of royal or heavenly descent. Bangsa was mostly used to describe groups of residents in the Straits Settlements, such as Malays, Chinese, Indians and Serenis. Abdullah also used bangsa at the end of Hikayat Abdullah where he discussed the shortcomings of Malays and compared them to other groups of people in the world, ("bangsa-bangsa lain pun yang ada dalam dunia" [other bangsa that exist in the world]), making a global comparison of all the bangsa worldwide. Other than these meanings that resemble ideas about different

81 Munshi Abdullah, Hikayat Abdullah, 61-62.
82 Marsden, A Dictionary of the Malayan Language, 41.
83 "sêrêba bangsa" (many kinds of bangsa); "masing-masing bangsa dêngan Kapitan-nya" (each bangsa with their own Headman). Munshi Abdullah, Hikayat Abdullah, 6, 22, 135, 61.
84 Munshi Abdullah, Hikayat Abdullah, 302, 51-52.
races of people, bangsa also described people whose religion was different, who were from a different caste system as in the case of Hindus and the varied eating habits of different bangsa within bangsa Hindu,\textsuperscript{85} besides the division of Arab families.\textsuperscript{86}

For most of Hikayat Abdullah, bangsa connoted different groups of people or different religions, while manusia was the overarching term encompassing both bangsa and orang. But there was a subtle change in the meaning of these terms in one particular section that dealt with Raffles and the discovery of an archaeological find in Singapore. Here, the words did approximate a discourse of races, migration of people and branches of the human race unlike most of the hikayat. An ancient stone was found in Singapore and Abdullah recounted how several people had been called to identify the etched writing on the stone. Abdullah then wrote that Raffles said

that the script was the Hindu script because that bangsa is the oldest bangsa of those who came to the lands below the wind, the first to reach Java and Bali and Siam, the inhabitants of which were originally descended from the Hindu bangsa.\textsuperscript{87}

The reference to the whole bangsa as old, the emphasis on the importance of being the first to arrive and the conclusion drawn that the people in the Archipelago descended from bangsa Hindu all show a preoccupation less common to Abdullah’s work than to

\textsuperscript{85} "bōrji'nis-jēnis bangsa, Hindu dan Islam" (several kinds of bangsa such as Hindu and Muslim). Munshi Abdullah, Hikayat Abdullah, 71.

\textsuperscript{86} "Orang Arab, bangsa-nya Shaikh, dan négēri-nya Yaman" (an Arab person, of Sheik bangsa, from Yemen); "orang Arab Sayyid yang bērnama Habib Abdullah, bangsa Haddad" (an Arab Sayyid person by the name of Habib Abdullah, of the Haddad bangsa); "pēranakan Arab, dari-pada bangsa Sayyid" (an Arab person born in Malaya of the Sayyid bangsa). Munshi Abdullah, Hikayat Abdullah, 34, 9, 74.

\textsuperscript{87} "Kémudian maka muafakat-lah Tuan Raffles mengatakan bahwasanya surat ini suratan Hindu, karna bangsa itu-lah bangsa yang tua dari-pada bangsa-bangsa yang tēlah datang ka-bawah angin ini, yang pērtama sampai ka-tanah Jawa dan Bali dan Siam itu, sakalian-nya kēturunan-nya daripada bangsa Hindu juga asalnya". Munshi Abdullah, Hikayat Abdullah, 168.
that of Europeans seeking to make sense of the collective origins and linkages of present-day peoples in the Malay Archipelago. Raffles, he said, was very interested in "researching the origins of the states and the customs of old". This collective emphasis was in contrast to other parts of Hikayat Abdullah where the words "asal" (origin) and "keturunan" (descent) referred to individuals and where they came from in their family tree, not in the flow of human history.

It is telling that the expansion of meaning of the Malay terms occurred in the section where Raffles played the key role and where his words were paraphrased. The novel uses of words came about through Abdullah’s interaction with Raffles’ ideas on race and origins, if not through the event of finding the ancient stone, then at least through conversations that took place between the two men. The inflections of meaning found in this section later assumed a more prominent position in Hikayat Dunia.

Hikayat Dunia: Jakun History on the Malay Peninsula and Orang Asal

As seen in Hikayat Abdullah, some words had been expanded in meaning to take into account what may be termed European ideas of racial human difference, especially in the section where Abdullah discussed the migration of people in Malaya from India. On the whole, however, their meanings did not approximate the concept of race emergent in Europe from the late eighteenth century. In Hikayat Dunia, however, there was an attempt to talk about race in Malay in a European sense with a change of

88 "térlatu suka ia mêmereksa asal-asal nêgéri dan adat-adat yang dahulu kala". Munshi Abdullah, Hikayat Abdullah, 62.
meaning of Malay words to approximate English ideas. Even so, there were key differences between the representation of Jakun and orang asal in Malay, and that of other peoples considered lower in popular Western racial schemes.

The second text that I will discuss is one in which specific parts of Abdullah’s writing on Jakun in Hikayat Abdullah were extracted and inserted word-for-word or sometimes paraphrased into a general Malay Peninsula-wide description of Jakun. The author is stated as Keasberry but the text was written in Malay and it is known that Abdullah translated portions originally in English into Malay, or wrote or rewrote sections in Malay. Authorship of texts produced under such circumstances is frequently called into doubt, whether involving translation, authorship or cooperation.89 For the purposes of this chapter, it is not necessary to determine whether either Keasberry or Abdullah or both were the authors. What is important is that it was written in Malay with at least ideas from Keasberry and using the language abilities of Abdullah. This is because it should not be assumed that the interests of Abdullah and the missionaries were different. Keasberry and Abdullah may be considered to have been in overlapping power structures in the Malay Peninsula vis-à-vis their subject, Jakun. Abdullah was a city-dweller, more familiar with Singapore, Melaka and the coast of the Peninsula than inland, putting him in a markedly different social sphere from Jakun who led very dissimilar lives.90

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90 Hendrik M. J. Maier, In the Center of Authority: The Malay Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa (Ithaca, NY: Southeast Asia Program Cornell University, 1988), 16.
The introductory section of *Hikayat Dunia* stated that it was concerned firstly with human beings (*manusia*).\(^{91}\) It described peoples and their characteristics, and then moved on to history and political events of note, particularly those that involved Europeans. There are parallels to European-style histories in the focus on a group of people as a cohesive entity and their characteristics. In the “Special Chapter on the Malay Peninsula”\(^{92}\) that discusses peoples of the Malay Archipelago, phrases are used such as “asal usul bangsa” (origins of *bangsa*); “orang asal” (original people); “asal keturunan” (origins of ancestry); “suku” (divisions of people, tribes); “suku bangsa” (divisions of *bangsa*); “sedaging darah dengan orang Melayu” (same flesh and blood as Malay people); and “orang tanah jawa ... suatu cabang daripada bangsa Melayu” (People of Java ... are one branch of the Malay *bangsa*) are used.

The marrying of some words with others shows diversions in meaning from *Hikayat Abdullah*. Whereas *asal* had been more personal in its application to a person’s provenance, now it was applied to a *bangsa* as a whole. The same is implied in “asal keturunan” (origins of ancestry) when applied to a group of people assumed to have common ancestry and not to a particular person. The relatedness of a few groups of people is implied as well in the phrase “sedaging darah dengan orang2 Melayu”

\(^{91}\) “*Pertama2 hikayat ini menyatakan darihal manusia serta segala perkara semenjak dunia ini telah jadi dan kedua hikayat ini menyatakan darihal sifat negeri2 dan sungai2 dan gunung2 dan sebagainya*. Keasberry, *Hikayat Dunia*, 6. Page numbers were not provided in the text thus I provide my own numbering. The page numbers cited here were counted from the beginning of the introductory section, or from the beginning of the “Special Chapter” where it is discussed, starting with the right-hand page first.

\(^{92}\) The English translation, whatever its origins, is not an accurate translation (assuming that accuracy was intended) of the original title in Jawi which reads “*Darihal tokong2 pulau di Tanah Melayu*” (Concerning the islands of the Malay lands). Although *Tanah Melayu* is often translated as the Malay Peninsula, in this context, and judging from the contents of the chapter, the whole phrase suggests that the chapter is about the area of the present-day Malay Archipelago or the place where Malays are found. In other circumstances, such as where Jakun are mentioned, *Tanah Melayu* does appear to refer to the Malay Peninsula. Matheson, “*Concepts of Malay Ethos in Indigenous Malay Writings*”, 369.
(same flesh and blood as Malay people), and “orang tanah jawa ... suatu cabang
daripada bangsa Melayu” (People of Java ... are one branch of the Malay bangsa).

In another section, Malay bangsa in Java were described “like the coconut husk that
contained the other bangsa2 mentioned before”. The passage implied either that
Malays were the general group found on the island and there were more specific
groups there, or that Malays encircled those bangsa since they were usually found on
the coasts. It illustrates the idea that there were relationships between general branches
of humankind, a relationship not previously brought out in Hikayat Abdullah.

Writing about people as races in Hikayat Dunia, as Marsden did in his History of
Sumatra, and disseminating these ideas in Malay, was a form of Christian
proselytisation and was hence implicated in the legitimisation of colonial power.

While it may seem that the discourse of race and the proselytisation of Christianity
were strange bedfellows, the combination was increasingly common by the mid-
nineteenth century. The Hikayat Dunia was one in a series of texts published by
missionaries and intended for a Malay audience. Van der Putten says that “one of the
necessary preparations for the proselytisation of the natives was the establishment of a
school system, in which Western arts and sciences were taught”. Schooling was also

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93 Keasberry, Hikayat Dunia, 37, 45, 1, 3, 5, 30, 15.
94 “Maka adalah masing2 bangsa ini ada dengan hurufnya dan bahasanya berasing2 adanya suatu
dengan suatu. Adapun bangsa Melayu yang diuduk dalam pulau itu seperti umpsama kulit kepala adanya
tetapi isinya bangsa2 orang yang tersebut ...” Keasberry, Hikayat Dunia, 22.
95 For an example of the interaction between ideas of race and Christianity in Oceania, see Helen
Gardner, “The ‘Faculty of Faith’: Evangelical Missionaries, Social Anthropologists, and the Claim for
Human Unity in the Nineteenth Century”, in Foreign Bodies: Oceania and the Science of Race 1750-
intended to prepare the audience for the technological innovations that would be brought to them by Western powers.\textsuperscript{96}

Mythical tales in Malay court texts and outdated and archaic practices of Malay culture were seen as standing in the way of conversion and earned the disapproval of Abdullah and the missionaries. For instance, of the story that the founder of Malays, Sang Saporba, descended from the skies onto a mountain that turned golden in colour, the *Hikayat Dunia* says that "it is not believed by those of intelligence and knowledge, and by the estimations of white people truly the Malay bangsa originated from Sumatra". The author displaced the earlier explanation of the origins of Malays with a new explanation given by "white people" that was supposed to be more accurate.\textsuperscript{97}

Replacing ideas regarded as silly, unscientific and mythical was more important in this context than arguments about whether human races originated together or separately; such questions were not explored.\textsuperscript{98}

There are three main references to Jakun in the final chapter of the *Hikayat Dunia* concerning the Malay Archipelago. The first is as follows:

\textsuperscript{96} Van der Putten, "Abdullah Munyi and the Missionaries", 410, 419.
\textsuperscript{97} "Akan tetapi segala perkara yang bukan2 itu sekali2 tiadalah diterima dan dipercayai oleh orang yang berakal dan berilmu dan berpengetahuan akan tetapi pada sangka orang putih sungguhlah juga bangsa Melayu itu terbitnya daripada tanah Pulau Percha". Keasberry, *Hikayat Dunia*, 2.
\textsuperscript{98} Most nineteenth-century naturalists and anthropologists were Christians and the single, common origin of mankind would most likely be taken for granted in a mission-sponsored text like *Hikayat Dunia*. In any case, by the mid-nineteenth century, belief in the reality of races did not mean that a scholar could not be thoroughly Christian. The scholar J. R. Logan, who wrote about aborigines in Johor, is an example of this marriage between staunch Christianity and the assertion of different races with different intellects. However, Logan supported the existence of races that could be branches of the same humankind. See Chapter 5 more a fuller discussion of Logan’s thought. J. R. Logan, "Miscellaneous: To Our Readers", *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia* 3 (1849): 449; J. R. Logan, "The Languages of the Indian Archipelago II", *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia* 3 (1849): 642, 671.
Malay people and white people live in those places. However, the upriver area is populated by Dayak people with different kinds of bangsa such as Kayan, Dusun, Murut and Tatu. They are all similar to Jakun and Batak however they are of much finer appearance than Jakun. Dayak people very much like to behead people not of their bangsa ... Their weapons are ipoh\(^99\) and blowpipes such as are normally used by Jakun in upriver Johor.\(^{100}\)

At the end of the section on Brunei, it was said that

If it be God’s will it will not be long before the whole of Brunei will be brought into subjection by bangsa white people so that the land will not be jungle forever and God’s servants will also not be Jakun forever and will not be destroyed.\(^{101}\)

The second mention of Jakun in *Hikayat Dunia* referred specifically to people in the Malay Peninsula. It talked about the state of Johor at that time.

If we go to Johor now we will surely only see a large jungle there other than remaining fruit orchards tended by Jakun and Bugis people catching fish at the edge of the sea. However in the hills, upstream the Johor river, there are many Chinese people panning for tin.\(^{102}\)

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99 ipoh: refers to the juice of the *Ipoh* tree that is used for poisoning the arrows of darts. Dennys, *A Descriptive Dictionary of British Malaya*, 164.


The section that elaborated on Jakun further placed them specifically in Johor. Johor, incidentally, was the Malay state most familiar to those living in Singapore and the main area of exploration for the Singapore-based ethnologist J. R. Logan, who was editing and publishing articles on indigenous people in the *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia* at the time. This section was most clearly taken from *Hikayat Abdullah* with some sentences paraphrased and rewritten into a more general form. The basis of this third section on Jakun of Malaya was the three questions Abdullah asked of the Jakun of Gunong Panchur: “Ada běrapakah bangsa atau jēnis-nya Jakun itu?” (How many bangsa or kinds of Jakun are there?), “Bagaimana hal tēmpat kēdiaman kamu sakalian?” (What is your place of living like?), and “Tiada-kah kamu sakalian mandi, dan mēmbuang daki yang sa-banyak-banyak itu?” (Do not you even bath and remove the dirt [from your bodies]?)\(^\text{103}\)

The answers to the three questions were slightly changed but in many parts they were inserted verbatim from *Hikayat Abdullah*. This was done to such an extent that even the original pronoun “*kami*” (us, exclusive) used in the answers given by the Jakun of Panchur Mountain was retained. Keeping this pronoun brought about a change in meaning when inserted into *Hikayat Dunia*. Where before Jakun made a personal comparison between themselves and others, it now appeared that the all-knowing author of *Hikayat Dunia* was making a comparison between himself and his readers (*kami*) and all Jakun in general. The effect in writing that “*Adapun Jakun itu seperti kami inilah adanya*” (Jakun are like us) was to put Jakun in the same category as “*kami*” (writer/reader), further narrowing the gap between the author and reader and

the subject. Interestingly, the effect of keeping the pronoun was to enclose Jakun in a similar humanity as the writer and reader of the text, thereby eliminating any idea that Jakun might be of a fundamentally different nature from other people.

The full passage runs as follows:

However, from the upriver of Johor to the centre of the Malay peninsula there are various bangsa of humans such as Jakun, Benua, Sakai, Udae, Akik, Rakyat and so on. Some live in mountains and hills, some live in the jungle, some on river banks. The origin of these bangsa mentioned above, and where they came/arose from, is not exactly known by people other than in conjecture. Munisyi Abdullah, who has written his hikayat, said that the Benua people are the original people of the state/land (orang asal negeri). Then the state/land was taken over by other bangsa and rajas. Because they were scared, they all fled into the jungle. Eventually, the customs of the people, and their language and clothing, changed. Since then they have been afraid of meeting people. Jakun are like us. The condition of the Sakai is like our own as well but they habitually live on tree branches. When they see humans they run like animals. Udae are human too, but since we have never seen them therefore we cannot comment on their condition. Who knows how their condition is but even so they live in the deep jungle so that they do not have to meet humans.

Where the Jakun lives, he (originally ia: unspecified gender) has no house, belongings or permanent dwelling. The original Jakun live in all the roots of the trees in the jungle. In the place where he wishes to spend the night, at that moment he collects leaves and branches to cover it. There he spends the night until the next day when he goes looking for food. If a place has too many wild animals then at night he goes up on the tree branches because many times those Jakun have been caught by tigers when sleeping in the space between tree roots. Nowadays, most Jakun know how to make huts to live in but these are Jakun on the outside and not the original Jakun. They put dirt all over their bodies. Jakun have never bathed with water other than when rains wets their bodies. If they were to truly bathe and get rid of the dirt, they would surely become sick because that is their custom. Jakun are originally in this way.104

104 "Akan tetapi di hulu tanah Johor sampai ke tengah2 tanah Melayu itu adalah berbagai2 bangsa mamusia seperti Jakun dan Benua dan Sakai dan Udae dan Akik dan Rakyat dan sebagainya. Ada yang duduk di gunung2 dan bukit, ada yang duduk dalam hutan rimba, ada yang ditepi2 sungai. Adapun asal
Jakun again appeared, but as a term of comparison, at the beginning and the end of a passage on Australia. Abdullah had used Jakun to designate other peoples he had met in a previous work. In Abdullah’s Kisah Pelayaran Abdullah Ka-Kelantan Dan Ka-Judah (The Tale of Abdullah’s Voyage to Kelantan and to Jeddah), he equated Bedouin people he met en-route from the Malay Peninsula to the Arab Peninsula with Jakun: “Many Bedouin people live there. Their behaviour is like the Jakun people of the Malay Peninsula.”

In Hikayat Dunia, a passage on the history of the colonisation of Australia formed the ending to the chapter on the Malay lands.

Australia’s position south of all the islands mentioned thus far was followed by the observation that there were not that many orang asal (original people) left there except at the edges of that land. This designation as orang asal was followed directly with the

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sentence: “There are Jakun people who live there and look for food from jungle fruits and tubers like monkeys and macaques”, indicating that orang asal and Jakun referred to the same people. The author went on to say that

The condition of the people is very poor and lazy, some are unclothed, go stark naked and wander hither and thither. Some look for fish in the rivers and lakes. Their manner is ferocious and wild like animals in the jungle ... Originally, the people of Australia island and Bendiman [Tasmania] island are black and have curly hair. Their status/situation (kedudukan) is like Jakun in the Malay Peninsula. White people have tried for a while to improve/correct them and to make them into humans with intelligence. But they did not desire that and only wanted to return to their original state (asalnya). They are in this condition even until now. They are lazy and heathens, and very bad/evil (jahat) and ferocious in their manner.

Though in this case, orang asal and Jakun shared the same referent, this was not always the case throughout the text, indicating that there were subtle differences between the two terms and that they did not both mean aborigines. The next section explores the conceptual distance between orang asal and Jakun as used in Hikayat Dunia, and aboriginal races/inhabitants as used in Newbold’s writing.

Jakun and Orang Asal in Hikayat Dunia and “Aboriginal races/inhabitants” in Newbold’s Writing

The chapter by Newbold and the section in Hikayat Dunia show two different ways of translating an encounter. This difference in translation is relevant to my argument on the construction of race because it demonstrates how difference in people can be understood in a variety of ways and possibly result in different racial concepts. In his own book, Newbold covered the encounter at Panchur Mountain in a chapter on ‘wild tribes’. The meeting, if compared to the meeting narrated by Abdullah, was translated into eternalised, objective descriptions of a race or tribe. The personal and idiosyncratic elements of the meeting between members of different societies were erased in favour of a narrative that placed Jakun within a larger explanatory framework. Newbold wrote about many of the wild tribes of the Malay Peninsula, not only those whom he had met at Panchur Mountain but also those about whom he had heard from other people. He drew his material from accounts by colonial scholar-administrators from the early 1800s onwards, by Malay elites, by anonymous Malays, and by one chief of a “wild tribe”. Newbold’s account was generalised and eternalised in the ethnographic present tense whereas Abdullah’s was a much more personalised historical narrative of a particular event, phrased in the past tense. Newbold situated Jakun within the framework of aboriginal races and Abdullah equated the specific Jakun of Panchur Mountain with various groups around the Malay Archipelago.

Newbold’s writing contained elements of a popular form of racial thinking. In his book, he wrote about “aboriginal inhabitants” of Malaya and how they fit into “the
great family of mankind”, their purported Tartar origins and physical characteristics. Newbold was not a specialist or a trained scholar. Thus, he used phrases and came to conclusions that more serious anthropologists would have been reluctant to use or hold. Nonetheless, he reproduced popular notions of race in their inexactitude. Newbold’s emphasis was on the origins of those inhabitants and on distinguishing them on the basis of their physical appearance and language. In thinking about which branch of mankind the aboriginal people of the Malay Peninsula originated from, he concluded that “their general physical appearance, their lineaments, their impatience of control, their nomadic habits … all point to a Tartar extraction”. Details of the names of the different tribes under the general heading of “aboriginal inhabitants” whom he said were all under the Malay heading of “Orang Benua”, descriptions of their living habits and their famed medicines were mentioned by both Newbold and Abdullah.

While there were overlapping concerns with origins and primordiality between the texts in English discussed in Chapter 1, including Newbold’s and the Malay texts discussed here, the basis for organising people and differentiating between groups between the two groups of texts were dissimilar. In Hikayat Abdullah, Jakun was a name applied to a specific group of people in the state of Johor, Pahang and the region around Melaka. It was based on the identification of particular lifestyle traits such as forest collection, not wearing Malay clothes and location of living. In Hikayat Dunia, Jakun was expanded as a general category encompassing people from the Malay Peninsula to Australia. This application of the term as a general category makes it akin

to aboriginal/aborigine as it had already begun to be used by Anderson in 1824 and as used by Newbold in 1839. But there were key differences between Jakun and aboriginal races. Whereas Anderson’s and Newbold’s writings on aborigines of Malaya were concerned with identification and placement within a scheme of different branches of humankind, Abdullah’s writing touched on the movement in and out of Jakun status and the term’s identity in relation to other local groups in the Malay Archipelago. The identity of Jakun is never really explained in the *Hikayat Dunia* and yet other peoples in the Malay Archipelago were compared to them. It was assumed that the reader was familiar first and foremost with the meaning of Jakun without having been told. For instance, when discussing Sumatra, the author wrote that the peoples there were different from Malays, and their customs and religion were similar to those of the Jakun of Tanah Melayu. Jakun was mentioned also in relation to the island of Borneo, as previously cited. *Jakun Tanah Melayu* thus functioned more as a category of comparison and not a race of aboriginal inhabitants as posited by Newbold and Logan.

In the *Hikayat Dunia*, the basis for distinguishing people as Jakun was their “kelakuan” (behaviour/manner) or “kedudukan” (place, in society) and not their

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perceived status as first peoples or their antiquity. Groups were considered “seperti Jakun” (like Jakun) when they lived in the jungle and used blowpipes, as the Dayak of Borneo were said to do, or if their manner (kelakuan) or status (kedudukan) in society seemed similar to that of Jakun in Tanah Melayu. The emphasis on behaviour applied to other people such as the Bedouin. When the people of Australia and Tasmania were identified as Jakun, the basis for such a categorisation was their “kedudukan”, which was similar to that of Jakun of Tanah Melayu. The concept of Jakun also implied a developmental phase that could be left behind if only the people referred to as Jakun were willing to ‘improve’. At the end of the section on Brunei, Abdullah prophesied that Brunei would be taken over by “white people”. The implication here was that the inhabitants of Borneo would not be Jakun forever if they were under the rule of white people who would improve them and develop the land. The possibility of movement outside the category Jakun was also evident in reference to Australia and Tasmania.

The physical characteristics of groups were not addressed in Hikayat Dunia as Newbold did. The one section in which physical characteristics were listed was when the people of Flores were discussed. They were described as having black skin and curly hair, like Papuans and Caffres. However, the text made no further equation of

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111 Newbold had queried whether the aboriginal people of Malaya were related to Papuans based on his assumption that all aboriginal peoples were part of the same race, an assumption of commonality not present in Hikayat Dunia. Newbold, Political and Statistical Account, 370-371.
112 “Maka banyaklah orang-orang Badui yang diam di situ. Adalah kelakuan mereka itu seperti orang-orang Jakun dalam Tanah Melayu, adanya”. Munshi Abdullah, Hikayat Abdullah, 104.
113 Keasberry, Hikayat Dunia, 59, 66-68.
114 Keasberry, Hikayat Dunia, 40-41, 46.
115 “Maka kata orang pula ada pun orang2 dihulu pulau Flores itu kulitnya hitam dan rambutnya kerinting seperti orang Papua atau Kapri. Maka tabiatnya terlalulah garang dan buas adanya. Arakian
a common identity shared by the people of Flores, Papuans and Caffres, nor did it assume that similar physical characters meant common origin.

Crucially, inhabitants who were first peoples and inhabitants who were lower in civilisation were separated in *Hikayat Dunia*, while these two elements were joined in the meaning of aborigine in English by the time of Newbold’s writing. The use of the phrase *orang asal* and of variations of the word *asal* is significant in this conceptual separation. Marsden in 1812 and Wilkinson in 1959 both attributed Arabic origins to the Malay word. Marsden translated *asal* as “root, origin, source”, and furthermore as “race, lineage, descent, family”. Wilkinson provided another aspect to the word when he translated *asali* (the adjective of *asal*) as “of ancient origin; well-born”. It can already be seen that there are numerous possibilities for overlap with words and concepts in English discussed previously, such as origins, originality, primordiality and autochthony. Before considering the possibilities of translation from *asal* in Malay to one of the concepts available in English, the context of the word within Malay must first be elucidated.

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*maka banyaklah pulau2 yang lain yang bernama Timur, Kupang, Buru, Ambon, Ceram, Banda dan sebagainya yang tiadalah dapat kuceritakan dalam hikayat ini sebab terlalulah lanjut kelak jadinya dan lagi kebanyakkan pulau2 itu tiadalah apa2 yang indah atau guna الهندak sebutkan melainkan halnya dan orang isinya pun seakan2 dengan pulau yang telah diceritakan diatas ini*. Keasberry, *Hikayat Dunia*, 58.

116 Alifuras (the same group of people Newbold referred to as Harafuras) were *orang asal*, but were not called Jakun presumably because it was said of them that they were willing to be improved. “Adapun maka pada sangka orang putih asal orang2 di tanah Bugis itu yang bernama Alpuras terlebih mudah dibaike serta diberi pengetahuan daripada orang2 Bugis yang duduk di tepi tanahnya sebab bangsa Bugis terlalulah malas dan lagi bengis”. Keasberry, *Hikayat Dunia*, 50.

In the group of texts analysed by Matheson, *asal* frequently referred to persons of royal origin. Matheson’s analysis revealed that

[in SM [Sejarah Melayu or Genealogy of Kings], *asal-berasal* is used to describe members of the Malacca court who claimed descent from Sumatran-Malay forbears. In HHT [Hikayat Hang Tuah or Tale of Hang Tuah], *asal* or *berasal* has two connotations: referring to royalty it means heavenly origin; and referring to non-royals it means people of good (noble) birth.]

The two texts above were written in the seventeenth century, as estimated by Matheson. In *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa*, written in the first half of the nineteenth century, *berasal* was used to describe a ruler of supernatural descent. Asal, then, had parallels to *bangsa*, signalling royal descent from Alexander the Great, and to race, in its application to royalty such as when describing ‘a race of kings’.

Abdullah, however, applied *asal* and its related forms (*asalnya, asal2, asal-usul*) to a much wider variety of meanings, and even extended it to refer to things and situations.

In texts written before *Hikayat Dunia*, he described the initial phase of an undertaking using *asal* ("Maka asal pēkērjaan itu mula-mula-nya tiga-puloh-ēnam orang banyak-nya" [Initially, the original job/arrangement involved 36 people]) as well as the original clothing of Malays ("tiada mērika’itu mau mēngubahkan padaian asal

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121 This analysis is based on the appearance of *asal* and its related forms in instances where they were not used in the sense of a “proviso or foundation for a statement” or “provided that”. Wilkinson, A Malay-English Dictionary, Part I, 48.
Malayu sampai mati-nya” [they do not want to change the original clothing of Malays until they die]). Situations, customs and habits of old were referred to as being ‘from the beginning/original’ in such a way: “karēna dari asal-nya nēgēri ini dēmikian-lah bēlanja-nya” (because since the beginning the state’s currency was organised in this way). When applied to language, asal encapsulated the idea that words, phrases and languages derived from situations, places and people: “bērtanyakan ērti-nya pērkataan itu, dan guna-nya dan asal tumboh pērkataan itu” ([I] enquired after the meaning of that word, its use and origin, from whence it grew), “asal-nya bahasa-nya itu tumboh-nya dari Johor” (their language originally emanated/came from Johor).

Abdullah deviated from the use of asal in court-focused texts by applying it mostly to people of non-royal and non-noble birth. There were two main ways of applying asal. The first related to individuals. For instance, asal appeared when the origin of a person was considered on an individual level and not necessarily in relation to a group. Descriptions of a particular person in the Hikayat Abdullah followed a formula in listing what bangsa he was, what orang he was and which negeri (state/land) he was from, if such information on the person’s origin was available. For instance, at the start of the text Abdullah talked about “asal-usulku”, his own personal origins, and described his mother’s origin thus: “[H]er grandmother was of the Hindu people, and her negeri Kedah” (“Ada pun asal ibu-ku itu, nenek-nya orang Hindu, dan nēgērinya

123 Munshi Abdullah, Hikayat Abdullah, 33.
124 Munshi Abdullah, Kisah Pēlayaran Abdullah, 35.
125 Munshi Abdullah, Hikayat Abdullah, 33.
126 Munshi Abdullah, Kisah Pēlayaran Abdullah, 36.
Kedah”). Another person he met in Melaka was described as originating/coming from Kedah (“maka asal-nya ia orang Kedah”).\textsuperscript{127} When talking about the Penghulu of Naning, Abdullah thought it would be of interest to people to know about “the origins of the Naning penghulu … who he was, what were the reasons for the war” (“asal-usul pěnghulu Naning itu… siapa-kah dia, dan apakah sěbab menjadi pěrang itu”).\textsuperscript{128}

The second instance of using asal in relation to people was when it was applied to groups of people of a certain geographic location. In some cases, asal was coupled with negeri (state/land) to indicate this use: “Běrmula ada pun Běnua itu, ia’itu orang asal něgěrī” (Benua were the original people of the land);\textsuperscript{129} “Shahdan, maka aku pun běrtanyakan-lah hal něgěrī itu. Maka kata orang2 yang asal něgěrī itu …” (I asked about the conditions in the state/land. Then the original people of that land replied …).\textsuperscript{130}

In Hikayat Dunia, “orang asal/orang asal negeri” connoted ‘original people of the land’ with implications of primordiality and autochthony. Occasionally, the phrase was a neutral designation, more of a statement of fact that every negeri or state/land had its orang asal or original people. The phrase did not, however, indicate uniqueness or novelty. One orang asal could be similar to another, in another negeri (“Adapun maka orang asal tanah Bugis itu seakan2 dengan orang dayak” [The

\textsuperscript{127} Munshi Abdullah, Hikayat Abdullah, 5, 47.

\textsuperscript{128} Munshi Abdullah, Hikayat Abdullah, 286.

\textsuperscript{129} Munshi Abdullah, Hikayat Abdullah, 282.

\textsuperscript{130} Munshi Abdullah, Kisah Pělayaran Abdullah, 146.
original people of the Bugis land are similar to Dayak people). The phrase in Malay did carry implications of positive aboriginality or primordiality since not all groups of people were referred to as orang asal. This is evidenced by the fact that groups such as Malays and the Bugis were described as having a history and an ancestry, but they were not consistently referred to as orang asal of a particular place, unlike the “orang asal negeri” of Australia and Bendiman (Tasmania). Returning to the example of the people of the Bugis land, a distinction was made between the “orang asal tanah Bugis” (original people of the Bugis land) who were named Alfuras and the Bugis people themselves, suggesting that Bugis were not orang asal of the land from which they nonetheless derived their name.

As has been shown with texts in English, there was a shift in meaning when designating groups as original or aboriginal from a neutral or positive point of view to a more negative one as employed by writers such as Newbold. These negative aspects of aboriginality were encapsulated by the marriage of orang asal and Jakun in Hikayat Dunia. Not all occurrences of orang asal and Jakun indicated a negative aboriginality: the passage on orang asal/Jakun in the Malay Peninsula is one such instance. Yet, when the combined grouping terms were used for Dayak people in Borneo, whose Jakun status could be overcome by improvement under Europeans, and for the inhabitants of Australia and Tasmania, who did not seek improvement from Jakun status, the implications of that pairing were clearly negative aboriginality.

131 Keasberry, Hikayat Dunia, 47.
132 Keasberry, Hikayat Dunia, 47.
133 Keasberry, Hikayat Dunia, 47.
The conceptual development of Jakun and *orang asal*, as general terms for the indigenous races of Malaya, was truncated. Neither gained wide currency in British colonial writing of Malaya even though the two terms were used by Abdullah to mean something like indigenous races. The second half of the nineteenth century and the subsequent period of British colonial influence saw the term Sakai instead become the generic term for aborigines. Nevertheless, the associations of Jakun and *orang asal*, with presumed movement between those categories and their contingency in relation to stereotypes of neighbouring people such as Malays, continued in the operation of Sakai.

There was less interest in writing about aborigines in Malay in ways that would be comparable to the subsequent anthropological writings in English even though there were aborigines featured in histories of the Malay Peninsula written in Malay. I maintain my focus on anthropological writing, however, because of its status as scientific knowledge of its day and the respect such published views commanded within scholarly and governmental circles, and even among the Malay intelligentsia of the early twentieth century.

While there were no published writings in Malay in an anthropological vein, other elements of local situations and knowledge fed into the scientific writings in English. The points of distinction between aborigines and Malays, present since Marsden’s writing at the end of the eighteenth century, became more prominent in Anderson’s

134 The use of *Orang Asal* to refer to indigenous peoples has had a resurgence in Malaysia since the mid-twentieth century. Nicholas, *The Orang Asli and the Contest for Resources*, 6-7.
and Newbold’s writings and were used as a method of identification. Logan also used differences from a normative view of Malay as a way of identifying aboriginal tribes. When writing for the *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia* in 1847, he identified the Orang Mintira, forest dwellers, and Orang Biduanda Kallang, people who lived in the estuaries of Singapore, as “aboriginal tribes”.

Comparisons to Malays were used to identify aborigines within Newbold’s and Anderson’s work. However, both authors described events and incidents that indicated that there was no clear-cut separation between the two. In the beginning of Newbold’s chapter on “wild tribes”, he maintained that they were totally apart from Malays in their present habits and religion. Yet, later in the chapter, he noted the occurrence of intermarriage between Jakun and Malays, conversion of Jakun to Islam, and the common origins of supposedly different tribes of “Rayet Laut” and “Jakuns”. The relatedness of aborigines to Malays, and the situatedness of such groups vis-à-vis Malays, was apparent even while aborigines were produced as a category distinct from other groups and identified in terms of physical characteristics. The conceptual connection between Malays and Sakai, and its implications for governmental and anthropological understandings of the latter group, will be the focus of the remaining chapters. The following chapters will also explore the different understandings of aboriginal races and link the source of this multiplicity to discourses of aborigines and human difference within common colonial usage such as the concepts of Jakun and *orang asal*, as demonstrated in *Hikayat Dunia* and the gradations in difference proposed between Sakai and Malays.

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CHAPTER 3:
Sakai and the Colonial Sphere

In this chapter, I assemble a collection of relevant strands in thinking about Sakai drawn from scholarly journals, government documents, and other information on Sakai published for a general colonial audience. From this collection, I hope to sketch the contours of a colonial discourse on Sakai. My illustration of the discourse on Sakai in this section calls to mind Ann Stoler’s description of how discourses operate. Stoler attempts to recover discourse’s earlier uses in the writings of Michel Foucault in the sense of dispersion, and of mobile, unintended and unforeseen effects of knowledge (scientific or otherwise) that are related and that branch off into seemingly unconnected ideas.¹ As a broad set of utterances generated through the colonial situation, colonial discourse encompassed the logics of government and the more formal and scientific knowledge produced in scientific research on subjects in Malaya. The colonial discourse on Sakai in Malaya lent itself to dispersion precisely because it was connected to discourses surrounding Malays. As I shall demonstrate, a recurring theme in colonial descriptions of Sakai was the assumption of links between Sakai and Malays from which lay observers posited a gradation of types from Sakai to Malay. In subsequent chapters, it will become evident that government documents on aborigines and anthropological studies of aborigines had to take into consideration the method of differentiating aborigines within the colonial sphere. While both government and anthropology themselves were constitutive of the colonial scene, the mixture of

governmental concerns and anthropological theories, as well as other socialising elements of colonial Malaya, combined to produce a collection of understandings on Sakai that, unlike government and anthropological documents, was more generalised. The understanding of Sakai in the colonial sphere was a collection of ideas and logics that could be used as arsenal to back up other ideas and logics, as justifications for policies, and as building blocks for stereotypes. Though I employ the terms ‘government’ and ‘anthropology’ as useful shorthand labels, they nonetheless conjure up monolithic impressions that hide the unevenness within these categories when it came to thinking about race. The remaining chapters will hopefully tease out the idiosyncracies in thought and personnel within each of these categories and in the variety of approaches to aborigines within each realm.

The colonial contexts highlighted in this chapter include the pattern and process of colonial engagements in Malaya broadly and with Sakai specifically, the nuances of knowledge production on aborigines from the 1850s to the early twentieth century, the practicalities of the government’s handling of Sakai, and the wider field of knowledge on aborigines in Malaya. It is necessary to detail the constitutive elements of a colonial discourse on Sakai before considering its influence on government documents and anthropological studies. The next section delineates the production of knowledge on aborigines within scholarly journals published in Malaya that were contributed to by, and were a source for, government officials and scholars alike.
Production of Knowledge on Aborigines

As described in Chapters 1 and 2, from the late eighteenth until the first half of the nineteenth century, a handful of texts written by scholars such as Marsden and Anderson were published on "original peoples" of the Malay Archipelago and then "aborigines" on the Malay Peninsula specifically. The aboriginal subject constructed during these early studies excluded elements that were considered part of a Malay subject such as unspecified ideas about level of civilisation, dressing and religion. These texts were a product of early anthropological endeavours centring on the Peninsula. Metropolitan scholars depended on these texts as sources for further theorisation on the number of peoples, their connectedness, and the status of their humanity. Yet texts written about aborigines often merely repeated a similar set of anecdotes, such as the encounter of Raffles with Dick from New Guinea, and there was little new information on people on the Malay Peninsula other than Malays. From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, however, knowledge on aborigines was produced more regularly with increasing interaction between the British, Malays and aborigines arising from British involvement on the Peninsula. By mid-century, there were three British colonies on the Malay Peninsula. Penang was ceded to the British from the Sultan of Kedah in 1786 in the hopes of gaining the protection of the British from the Bugis-dominated Sultanate of Selangor.\(^2\) The Temenggung of Johor ceded Singapore to the British in 1819 and Melaka was returned to the British from the Dutch in 1824. Together they were formed into a crown colony in 1867.\(^3\) This group of colonies was

\(^2\) Tregonning, *The British in Malaya*, 75.
\(^3\) Tregonning, *The British in Malaya*, 75.
composed of islands off the coast of the Malay Peninsula or settlements on the coast itself. Hence, the British sphere of influence and exploration spread from these settlements into neighbouring areas that lay directly on the Peninsula. From Singapore, Johor became the area where trade was developed and from there influence came. From Melaka, the British became involved in the pacification of neighbouring states inland from Melaka, such that the writer Abdullah was able to study Jakun of Panchor Mountain, an area near Melaka.

The establishment of these colonies drew people to the region who were involved in trade and government service, and who contributed to the growth of scholarship on people and places in the Malay Peninsula. The activity arising out of trade, migration of people into Malaya, and British attempts at greater control of sultanates on the Peninsula was the scaffolding around which knowledge on aborigines was produced. This knowledge cannot be characterised solely as either for governmental or scholarly purposes since both of these elements and more were intertwined in nineteenth-century British involvement in Malaya. The establishment of the two major journals in the Malay Peninsula, *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia (JIAEA)* and *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (JSBRAS)*, exemplified the intersections between colonialism and knowledge production, with new material being published following new colonial acquisitions and influence. *JIAEA* was established in 1847 by Logan, who initially came to Penang from Britain in the 1830s and was a practising lawyer and member of the Straits Bar.  

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4 J. Turnbull Thomson, “A Sketch of the Career of the Late James Richardson Logan, of Penang and Singapore”, *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 7 (1881): 78.
journal stated that it was established with the approval of the governor of the Straits Settlements and the Bengal government. The two principal objectives of the journal were "to present as many papers as possible that are either original or new to the English reader". The second objective was to make the journal "a work of reference on all subjects connected with the Archipelago".5

Rivalry with the Dutch, the other major colonial power in the Malay Archipelago, economic interests and present and possible future government involvement in the region were all factors in Logan's desire to establish a journal centred on the Malay Peninsula. Logan noted that the Dutch had eclipsed the English in the scientific study of the Malay Archipelago and the journal was intended to close this gap by making it the focal point for contributions from English and Americans in the region and "by translations, compilations and notices from Dutch writings, to make English readers acquainted with their researches". Logan wanted attention to be paid in particular to the Malay Peninsula, "forming as it did one, perhaps the principal, channel by which the stream of human migration spread from the great Table Land of Asia to the Archipelago and the remotest islands of Polynesia", and since, in economic terms, he believed that "in a few years many of its plains ... and its mountain and hill ranges, which are amongst the richest magazines of tin ore in the world, will be occupied and explored by British enterprize".6 The scholarly thirst for knowledge about undiscovered parts and peoples of the Malay Peninsula was easily quenched in the midst of fulfilling other colonial duties. For instance, on an expedition in Johor in

search of coal deposits, Logan also attempted to meet aborigines. Besides publishing articles of ethnographic interest, *JIAEA* also included articles that would be relevant to business such as the development of gutta percha as a trade commodity and information on the types of minerals found on the Peninsula.

Instances of British men from Singapore meeting indigenous peoples in Johor became more frequent through the increase in the trade in gutta percha. Temenggung Ibrahim harnessed the trade in gutta percha and encouraged the development of agriculture in neighbouring Johor. He dispatched gutta percha collectors to harvest the produce in Johor and monopolised the trade of the commodity into Singapore. Certain groups of people involved in the collection of gutta percha came to be studied by Logan as “aborigines”. These were the *Orang Binua*, whom he said Malays called *Orang Utan* (forest people), *Orang Darat Liar* (wild land people) or *Orang Ulu* (interior/upriver people). Other groups were also called aborigines: the aborigines of Singapore, river nomads *Bduanda Kallang* and *Orang Seletar*.

In the early years of the nineteenth century, a British person would meet aborigines more frequently in circumstances similar to those reported by John Anderson in 1826:

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9 Temenggung Ibrahim was a member of a prominent family in the Riau-Johor area. Though Sultan Ali was Sultan of Johor in name, Temenggung Ibrahim held almost all power over Johor with the support of the British in Singapore. Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, 124.
Some years ago, the Bindahara, or General of Quedah, sent two of these people [Semangs] for the inspection of some of his English Friends at Pinang …
The Semangs are found also at Tringano on the Eastern side of the Peninsula, and a Gentleman of this Island [Prince of Wales Island/Penang] has had one, who was sent to him by the King of that Country, in his Service, many years. He was procured when a Child, and has no recollection of his own language. 11

This scenario was duplicated in Perak at the same time. Former Indian Army officer James Low’s meeting with indigenous peoples in Perak was similarly mediated by royalty. Low came to Malaya in the 1820s as an Indian Army officer and stayed until 1850. He took part in British government dealings with Kedah, Perak and Siam at a time when the British in Penang and Province Wellesley (the strip of land on the Malay Peninsula across from Penang) were trying to contain Siamese influence on the Malay states. He was in Perak in 1826 on such a mission and in 1850 he published an article about his experiences that appeared in JIAEA. 12 “While residing in Perak”, said Low, there were “opportunities offered for conversing with many persons of the Sakai tribe, who at my request were brought from the interior districts by order of the Raja.” 13

Contrary to these meetings in the early nineteenth century, with more concerted British activity on the Peninsula there was a multiplication of instances where the British could meet directly with indigenous peoples without the mediation of elites.

Non-royal connections were able to directly furnish the curious Logan with examples

11 Anderson, Political and Commercial Considerations (1824), xxxv, xli-xlili.
of aborigines. In the 1847 issue of *JIAEA*, Logan wrote about how his “Malay writer, Inche Mahamad bin Haji Abdul Fatha” was sent by Logan from Singapore to Melaka to obtain material on the language of “aboriginal tribes”. Inche Mahamad brought back a group of Mintira to Singapore who stayed in Logan’s kampong. Logan brought the group sightseeing throughout Singapore, but “they declared that Malacca was a much finer place”. Of the six who went to Singapore, three drowned when the boat that took them back to the Peninsula encountered stormy weather.

The missionary Reverend P. Favre of the Apostolic Missionary of Melaka was similarly assisted in his search for aborigines by a combination of royal and non-royal connections. In a 1848 article commissioned in part by Colonel Butterworth, the Governor of Penang, Melaka and Singapore, Favre wrote about aborigines called “Jakuns”, whom he categorised as the third class of “Binuas” in the southern part of the Peninsula. “Two months after my arrival here [Melaka],” said Favre, “an inhabitant of Malacca, in order to satisfy my curiosity, brought to me two of these Jakuns, as a specimen of the race.” Favre also wrote of his visit to Sungei Ujong in the neighbouring regions of Melaka. There was a wedding celebration for the chief of the state in which many “Jakun” were invited to attend. During the occasion, “the Jakun” took the opportunity to communicate to Favre that they intended to go over to Company territory in order to escape the Malays.

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The missionary presence in Malaya was notable for its involvement in the study of, and publication on, Malay as well as indigenous subjects. Favre and another missionary, Father Borie, were well known for their proselytising efforts among the indigenous people of Melaka in particular.\textsuperscript{17} Favre also had connections with scientists:

When Dr. Ivan physician to the French Embassy to China passed by Malacca in 1845 I intended to show to him the skulls of some dead Jakuns, as I know his peculiar knowledge in natural history; and as he has collected skulls of very numerous civilised nations and wild tribes, I doubted not that the inspection of the Jakun’s skull would have enabled him to say from what branch of mankind they spring, or at least to give satisfactory probabilities (sic) on that subject; but the difficulty of procuring such a specimen prevented me from a means of information...\textsuperscript{18}

The blend of scholarly, economic and governmental interests so prominent in \textit{JIAEA} continued to some extent in the next major journal to concentrate on the Malay Peninsula. After \textit{JIAEA} ceased publication in 1862, the next scholarly journal to focus attention on aborigines was \textit{Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (JSBRAS)}, which began publication in 1878. The first issue of \textit{JSBRAS} was published four years after the Pangkor Agreement of 1874, the year that Perak, Selangor and Sungei Ujong accepted British residents. Logan’s work was seen as the journal’s precursor and he was often mentioned in the early years of the journal’s publication. An article on tribes in Penang and Province Wellesley written by Logan was published

\textsuperscript{17} D. F. A. Hervey, “A Trip to Gunong Blumut”, \textit{Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society} 3 (1879): 101.

\textsuperscript{18} Favre, “An Account of the Wild Tribes”, 245.
posthumously in *JSBRAS* in 1881, and the journal also published a summary of his career and an index of all the articles in *JLAEA* in 1886.¹⁹

The production of knowledge on aborigines went hand in hand with development and settlement pressing into the hills and interior of Malaya, and the corresponding desire to map this ‘blank’ expanse. Fittingly, it seemed, the interior of Malaya was compared to that of Africa. The president of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, Archdeacon Hose, in his inaugural speech of the founding of the society, commented on the most current map of the Malay Peninsula at the time, “Does it not remind some of us of what the map of Africa used to look like in our school days, before the discoveries of Livingstone and his successors?”²⁰ In the same inaugural address, Hose said that the purpose of the society was to add knowledge to the “common stock”.²¹ Accordingly, there were regular articles on “wild tribes” or aborigines until the early 1900s. Articles appeared by Russian ethnographer N. Miklouho-Maclay on the “dialects” of “Melanesian Tribes” in the Malay Peninsula, and by colonial administrators W. E. Maxwell and Hugh Clifford on aborigines.²² While aborigines

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²¹ Hose, “Inaugural Address by the President”, 5.

featured frequently until the early 1900s, there were relatively few articles on the major populations of Malays, Chinese and Indians, though several articles appeared on Malay literature, customs and histories.\(^{23}\)

Aborigines also featured in accounts of exploration that were published regularly in the pages of *JSBRAS*. Semang and Sakai guides were hired by British explorers who wanted to navigate an interior that they would not have been able to access otherwise. There was no distinction made between the benefit of a published paper to the knowledge of newly discovered resources, such as soil for cultivation and minerals, or newly discovered or little known peoples. In some of the articles, Sakais were porters and guides on the journey and were mentioned in passing, such as in D. D. Davy’s article on "Caves at Sungei Batu in Selangor", where "Sakeis (wild men)" accompanied the party on their journey.\(^{24}\) These trips provided the subject material for articles on several expeditions around Malaya, to what were then the largely unknown areas of Perak, Pahang and North Borneo.\(^{25}\) In other articles, Sakai began as background characters in the journey but would then become the main focus sporadically when the author segued into an exposition about them before returning to the journey itself. Such was the case in H. W. C. Leech’s articles "About Kinta" and

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\(^{24}\) D. D. Daly, "Caves at Sungei Batu in Selangor", *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 3 (1879): 116. The translations of "Sakei" as "wild men" was provided in the text by Daly.

"About Slim and Bernam" in Perak. He talked about the suitability of the country for coffee plantations and of the deposits of tin that were likely to be found. The area, he said, was mostly unexplored "by any one but Malay gutta-cutters and the aboriginal inhabitants of the hills, the Sakeis". Sakeis were a major feature of the article, with Leech devoting some paragraphs to anthropological details that he thought would be informative, before they returned to being unspecified "guides or coolies".\textsuperscript{26}

More specific anthropological conceptions of aboriginal races also entered the colonial realm. Anthropologist Skeat and linguist C. O. Blagden published a well-known book on aborigines in 1906, \textit{Pagan Races of the Malay Peninsula}, based on the Cambridge Expedition to the Malay States from 1899 to 1900. While the specificities of the expedition and \textit{Pagan Races} will be dealt with in Chapter 5, it is necessary to note that its findings were not separate from the general knowledge of aborigines and indeed formed part of it. As we shall see in the census reports addressed in the next chapter, government officials were aware of anthropological racial categories such as Negrito or Semang, Sakai, and Jakun or Savage Malay, even though these categories were not always used or referred to.\textsuperscript{27}

The ability of anthropologists to classify aborigines entailed the establishment of a normative idea of what it meant to be Malay. Within anthropological scholarship, there was a set of understandings about Malays against which Sakai could be


compared. The construction of a standard view of Malay was undertaken by Skeat and other scholars. Before embarking on the Cambridge Expedition, Skeat published a book called *Malay Magic: Being an Introduction to the Folklore and Popular Religion of the Malay Peninsula* in 1900. The Malay subject was clearly delimited as a composite of Hindu and Islamic Arabic influences. Skeat positioned Malay magic as part of their Hindu past that had not yet been eradicated by Islamic Arabic influences. Malays were conceived of as having layers: an Islamic “veneer” as it was called, on top of the Hindu, Buddhist and “original Malay notions” that came before.  

Despite holding on to concepts of separate Malay and aboriginal subjects, scholars could not neatly separate straggly facts that veered into both categories. In many of these “original Malay notions”, there were “Sakai” elements. W. E. Maxwell’s article “Shamanism in Perak” written in 1883, talks about the pawang, or medicine man, using Sakai words. He wrote that “as long as the séance lasted, he [the pawang] spoke in a feigned voice, pronouncing Malay words with the particular intonation of the Sakai aborigine and introducing frequently Sakai words and phrases unintelligible to most of the Malays present”.  

Skeat referenced numerous Sakai and aboriginal elements in what he considered Malay magical practices. For example, creation accounts that were told both by “Malays” and “Sakai” were included as part of Malay culture. Some informants traced

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their origin to "Sakai" ancestors. Malays, Skeat said, took on the names of demons and vampires used by "wild jungle tribes" or "Sakais". Other beliefs, such as the belief that the tiger was a man or demon in animal form, were shared elements that were identified as Malay for the book.\textsuperscript{30}

Anthropologically, Malays were separated from Sakai and this intellectual compartmentalisation enabled other conclusions to be drawn about Sakai and their relationship to Malays. This scholarly separation of Malays from aborigines mirrored the separation between a Malay and an aboriginal populace, and indeed any other people within Malaya, that operated in government understandings. The stereotype of Malays was far-reaching. In 1878, Major Fred McNair, when writing about Perak and "the Malays", started from the assumption that Malays were a different group from others such as Bugis and Rawa. He treated each of these groups as having separate physical and cultural characteristics.\textsuperscript{31} By 1906, when Frank Swettenham published his triumphal account of the British colonisation of Malaya, Malays was treated as a homogenous group, and no mention was made about the variety of peoples from the Malay Archipelago that were commonly understood to be included under the heading.\textsuperscript{32} "The Malay" had a particular physical type ("short of stature ... his nose is inclined to be rather flat and wide at the nostrils")\textsuperscript{33}, a particular work ethic ("The leading characteristic of the Malay of every class is a disinclination to work")\textsuperscript{34} and a

\textsuperscript{30} Skeat, Malay Magic, 5, 17-18, 54, 57, 100.
\textsuperscript{31} Major Fred McNair, Perak and the Malays: "Sārōng" and "Krīs" (London: Tinsley Bros, 1878), 130-135.
\textsuperscript{33} Swettenham, British Malaya, 134.
\textsuperscript{34} Swettenham, British Malaya, 136; Syed Hussein Alatas, The Myth of the Lazy Native, 43-51.
specific religion, Islam. Though Swettenham admitted that the Malay was historically a mix of people coming from the Malay Archipelago, the fact that there continued to be movement and migration during the British period was ignored.\(^{35}\) As the next two chapters will show, the convenient homogenisation of Malays served to define aboriginal racial categories and formed a basis for the construction of those very categories.

**Sakai within the Government Record**

Despite the variety of interests apparent in the pages of *JSBRAS*, from the beginning of the twentieth century the journal became more scholarly as further British activity on the Malay Peninsula produced a range of government documents specifically on aborigines. Governmental overtones were omitted from anthropological accounts of aborigines, suggesting a growth of more mainstream anthropological study on indigenous peoples that sought to present itself as conducting autonomous intellectual activity. Nonetheless, governmental concerns were ever-present and formed the basis of interaction for future professional scholarship on indigenous peoples. While the specific character of the anthropological reports will be dealt with in detail in Chapter 5, the nature of government writing on aborigines and the issues surrounding aborigines that were deemed important will be dealt with here.

Due to the increase in territory under British control and influence, and the ways in which colonial governance was conducted, people identified as aborigines entered the

\(^{35}\) Swettenham, *British Malaya*, 144.
colonial records more frequently. This can be seen in the records pertaining to Perak, the first Malay state to come under British protection in 1874. This state is located on the west coast of the Malay Peninsula and included forested areas that covered the main mountain range running through the middle of the Peninsula. Prior British involvement in Perak consisted of agreements over the supply of tin from Perak at terms of trade favourable to the British, to prevent a Dutch monopoly over the purchase of tin from Perak.  

The British later played a role in determining who would succeed to the throne in Perak. The Pangkor Agreement was signed between Raja Abdullah and his party and a representative of the British government in 1874, with the result that many areas of government were placed under the influence of a British adviser in exchange for British support. Selangor, another state neighbouring Perak on the west coast of Malaya and Sungei Ujong, the district next to Melaka, also came under British control in that year.

J. W. W. Birch was the first resident to be appointed to Perak. Birch kept a journal during his tenure in the state up until a few weeks before he was assassinated in 1875. Much of the journal detailed Birch’s observations of Perak, its landscape, the nobility he came into contact with and the political goings-on. There was talk of developing roads, trade and plantations. On the whole, there was hardly any mention of aborigines except on a few occasions where they entered the record in their capacity as representatives or leaders of a particular community and through their involvement in

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economic development. At the end of the year, in December 1874, he mentioned in passing “the Sak Kais or wild people who live in all the hills here”. A few days later, he recorded that “the head of the Sakkais came to see me”. He mentioned their dress of bark and bangles, and brief ethnographic notes on their beliefs and language. 39 “Sakkais”, he noted elsewhere, were involved in cutting rattan and prospecting for gold.

Sakai frequently appeared in reports on the economic development of the state of Pahang. Pahang encompassed most of the main mountain range of the Malay Peninsula and was the least developed state on the Peninsula. In the 1880s there was economic expansion originating from the Straits Settlements and British officials deemed it in their interests to install a resident in that state to facilitate and protect British interests. A treaty between Pahang and Britain was signed in 1887, with a resident installed two years later. There was resistance to the encroachment of British power over the state by chiefs within the state from 1891 until 1895 when resistance was quelled. Also in 1895, the four states of Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and Pahang were formed into a federation called the Federated Malay States. 40

The development of Pahang proceeded at full pace in the form of logging, mining and plantations under British ‘protection’. Sakai appeared often in the pages of The Straits Times before 1900 in brief notices on Pahang, where their role in developing or sometimes hindering industry there was highlighted. Sakai were engaged by mining

companies to clear forest in order to mine, build new roads, and collect forest produce. It was reported in 1896 that “at a place called Rantau Panjang, near the Pahang Corporation’s mines at Jeram Batang, a new Sakai settlement has been formed, the men principally working for the company as woodcutters, &c., though they also engage in the collection of jungle produce”.  

There were some instances where Sakai came into conflict with the new developments by corporations, the increasing presence of Malays inland and the new laws put into effect by the colonial government. Elephants owned by the Malayan Pahang Concession company were killed by Sakai in 1895 because they were destroying crops in Sakai clearings. There was news of Sakai killing Malays or Chinese in the early 1900s (some of which proved to be untrue), and also news of Sakai breaking the newly implemented laws on Tioman Island concerning the right to collect bird’s nests in 1897.  

Besides reports on their involvement in the economy of Malaya, aboriginal peoples also featured prominently in the issue of debt-slavery or slavery, a practice the British sought to phase out and outlaw in order to provide a more ‘beneficial’ mode of government. In the 1870s and 1880s, aboriginal people came under the purview of colonial officials who were keen to abolish what they considered to be barbarous.

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42 “Pahang News: Bird’s Nests”, *The Straits Times*, 11 Sept, 1897, 3; “Pahang News”, *The Straits Times*, 25 June 1895, 3; *The Straits Times*, 12 March 1901, 3; *The Straits Times*, 2 April 1901, 2; *The Straits Times*, 14 Sept. 1906, 7.
practices among Malays. Debt-slavery or slavery was high on the list. Though for the most part, instances of slavery and debt-slavery were noted to occur in general among the population, there were specific references to aboriginal peoples being targets of slavery, Slaves or debt-slaves who happened to be Sakkais appeared to be in a type of enslavement that was different from other types. Birch described the practice "by which men and women of the country of the Sakkais or wild people of the interior are captured after being hunted down, and are then sold, and made slaves. These poor people, from what I have seen, are worse treated than any other slaves." This, Birch said, was a particular "species of debt slavery". Another "species" of slave trade was the enslavement of Bataks from Sumatra who were traded over to Perak.43

In *Correspondence Respecting Slavery in the Protected Malay States*, compiled for presentation to the British Houses of Parliament in July 1882, the Resident of Selangor, Swettenham reported the same practice in Ulu Selangor. He stated that "the Headmen there [Ulu Selangor] complained that a Chief from Slim had a fortnight before captured 14 Jacoons [Jakun] and one Malay in Ulu Selangor, had chained them and driven them off to Slim".44 In this instance, it is possible that the use of Jakun is a general reference to aborigines, and not necessarily to just one section of that group. In 1881, 1885 and 1895 there were reports in the Selangor Secretariat files that Malays had been mistreating Sakkais. The 1885 case reported ill treatment of "Sakeis" by one Pak Lekas and testimonies were documented from Sakkais as well as a Malay from

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44 Frank Swettenham, Letter to Governor Sir W. C. F. Robinson, "Enclosure 7 in No. 2 (30 June 1875)", *C 3285 Correspondence Respecting Slavery in the Protected Malay States* (London: HMSO, 1882), 12.
whom Pak Lekas had stolen jungle produce or asked to pay for fictional debts. The 1881 case was handled by officials given the authority by the government to arrest anyone found oppressing Sakais. Aboriginal peoples were one of the many parties that became a trope in colonial records of an element of the colonial population that needed protection, especially from Malays.

While Sakai entered the colonial registers as a different community from Malays and people to be saved, they continued in colonial eyes as objects of regulation and colonisation on a highly localised level. Tensions arose over the use of land and governmental attempts to control the resource. The attempts by District Officers in Selangor to track the movements of Sakai communities demonstrate the tension between the new government and Sakei. In 1885, “Sakei” asked permission to settle in a different area of Selangor under Enche Omar instead of another headman. In 1895, it was noted that five families that were once in Rantau Panjang had moved to a different district due to a death having occurred among them. That such minute movements were even noted shows that the bureaucracy was keen to pin down populations to certain places. The colonial officers were committed to the idea of personal ownership of specific plots of land for cultivation and to permanent settlement. In 1885, Sakai were advised to increase the area already under cultivation and to “improve their huts and general mode of living”.

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45 “Reporting that Malays have been Illtreating Sakeis at Ulu Selangor”. Selangor Secretariat Files 13/1881.
46 Selangor Secretariat Files 342/85 (1885); Selangor Secretariat Files 2176/95 (1895); Selangor Secretariat Files 490/85(1885). I am indebted to Paul Kratoska for sharing his information on the contents of the Selangor Secretariat Files with me. All uses of the Selangor Secretariat Files are due to his generosity.
The conflict between the new government and Sakai stemmed from what the government wanted to do with the land, and how they wanted to proceed with ‘legally’ annexing land for cultivation and mining. Colonial officers realised that Sakai, far from being the wandering tribes and nomads so often portrayed by the British, regularly returned to places where they tended dusuns (durian and other fruit orchards). Acting Assistant District Officer of Kuala Lumpur, E. J. Roe, wrote in 1896 that “the Sakeis, however, do not confine themselves strictly to one place. They are mostly nomadic in their habits, wandering from place to place in pursuit of monkeys and other animals. A return to the principal encampment is always made just prior to durian season. They are content to live almost wholly on their fruit while the supply lasts.”

The knowledge of this nomadic way of life proved a thorn in the colonial government’s side. Fruit orchards were located in surroundings that were considered empty land that could be annexed for large-scale mining or agricultural purposes. Colonial officers attempted to regulate Sakai movement, to demarcate areas known to be dusuns and to register them to a particular individual. A circular to this effect was issued in 1895 in Selangor entitled “Dusuns’ and Other Lands for the Benefit of Sakeis”. It stated that the government had decided “to have various Sakei ‘Dusuns’ specially reserved ‘for the use and benefit of the aboriginal inhabitants’, under Section

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5 of the Land Code, District Officers were instructed to take steps for their demarcation and survey for that purpose.”

Certificates of Title were to be issued to individuals for a fee of $1. W. W. Douglas, District Officer of Klang district wrote in 1896: “[T]he latter proposition [of every owner of the land being provided with the title] is made as much for the benefit of these people as for the District Land Officer, who often has claims made for small durian dusuns situated within the limits of large areas of land applied for and taken for agricultural purposes on a large scale and which often cause endless trouble and waste of good time simply because no system of registration of such claims exists.” Even if such claims existed, it may not have guaranteed that such land would be protected from development. In 1906, a Mr. Calloway was allowed to build a road through land reserved for Sakais located in Selangor. He was permitted temporary use of the land for a nursery and a bungalow until his own land was ready.

The registration of dusuns proved impractical. As one official wrote in his report in 1885, “I have not the staff to measure Sakai holdings which change every year, and if I did … charge them a dollar I have not the slightest doubt that they will all go to Pahang.” There were still attempts in 1900 to implement such a system of registration. Explanations had to be provided to the Resident General by the Acting

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48 Lim, Origins of a Colonial Economy, 2; Gerald Browne, “‘Dusuns’ and Other Lands for the Benefit of Sakeis”, Circular No. 13, Selangor Secretariat Files 2176/95 (1895).
50 “Sakai Reserve”, Selangor Secretariat Files 5451/06 (1906).
51 “To Ameliorate the Condition of the Sakai Tribes”, Selangor Secretariat Files 342/85 (1885).
Resident of Selangor as to why this plan could not be implemented. These included
the uncertainty of their location, the inaccessibility of some _dusuns_ and the
considerable cost to the government.\(^{52}\) The income to the government from such
taxation was minimal compared to the cost of surveying and registering the land, and
even though it was proposed that such a system be carried out, it was not financially
sensible and was not urgent.\(^ {53}\)

The commodification of land and its produce had far-reaching consequences for the
lives of Sakai. In the colonial government understanding of land, any land that was not
registered was Sultan’s land and thus, by default, land under colonial guardianship.\(^ {54}\)
As a Taiping forest officer wrote in 1902, “[T]hese Sakeis have from ages ago been in
the habit of doing just as they please in _our jungles_ … At present they cut nearly all
_our rattans_ free and we get no royalty or anything else.”\(^ {55}\) Indigenous peoples were
seen by the colonial government as enjoying the fruit and profits from the trees that
should be in some way shared with the government through tax. Laws were introduced
in 1895 that put the government in charge of selling jungle produce from Sakais. This
was done ostensibly to prevent Malays from paying too little for jungle produce sold
by Sakais, but it was also meant to effect a monopoly for the government on the sale
of jungle produce such that the Sakais could not escape paying taxes. However, it was
difficult to ensure that all produce went through government agents and, as is evident

\(^{52}\) “Sakai Dusuns”, _Selangor Secretariat Files_ 6443/00 (1900).
\(^{55}\) A. B. Stephens, Forest Officer, _Selangor Secretariat Files_ 1310/02 (1902). Emphasis added.
from the complaint of the forest officer in 1902, such laws were difficult to put into effect in their entirety.\textsuperscript{56}

The attempts to bring indigenous peoples under the rule of colonial law produced some interesting cases. For instance, in hearing complaints from indigenous men of indigenous women having relationships with men other than of "the Sakai nationality", the Assistant District Officer of Serendah, who was unnamed in the report, considered the matter in relation to law. He was doubtful of the legal sanctity of a Sakai marriage and was doubtful of the right to punish those who had relationships with Sakai women in the eyes of the law. This was because of the differences in the legal concept of marriage and its implications for sexual relations between women and men between the British and indigenous communities.\textsuperscript{57} The discourse on Sakai that emerges within the government records is one of supposed magnanimity on the part of officials towards aborigines. It was almost as if the lifeways of aborigines were trying the patience of the British who perceived their actions towards aborigines as consisting of continual generous accommodation. The Sakai subject outlined within government documents was one that needed protection from Malays, that intruded into British forests, and that was a minor population within Malaya whose concerns still had to be taken into account.

\textsuperscript{56} Roe, "Sakei Tribes in Selangor, Kuala Lumpur District", 413-414.

Colonial Common Knowledge on Sakai

In this survey of knowledge production on aborigines, the word ‘Sakai’ and occasionally ‘Jakun’ occurred frequently as synonyms for wild tribes or aborigines. In what would become proper racial classification of aborigines in the beginning of the early twentieth century, Sakai was but one of three aboriginal races of Malaya, but it also became a shorthand term for all aboriginal peoples of Malaya or those Malays who were seen as not fully Malay. As shown in Chapter 2, in the writings of the well-known writer and translator Munshi Abdullah, the terms Jakun and orang asal in Malay were overarching categories broadly comparable to aborigine in English in the 1840s and 1850s. Though Jakun connoted aborigines to the British in Malaya, its use was more restricted to one section of aboriginal peoples and it did not gain the wide currency that Sakai did. It could be argued that, at the time of Abdullah’s writings, Sakai was just one of many terms for indigenous peoples and not necessarily the one most commonly used by British writers. By the publication of Crawfurd’s dictionary in 1856, however, the term had spread among English speakers to encompass all manner of indigenous peoples in Malaya and not only one section of this group.

The spread of Sakai as the generic term for aborigines was borne out by several references to Sakai in the Selangor Journal, a weekly newspaper published in the state of Selangor on the west coast of the Malay Peninsula that came under British protection in 1874. In its first volume, published in 1892, a woman known as Monty

wrote an article entitled “A Visit to a Sakei Camp (by a Lady)”. Monty wrote that she was invited to spend a Sunday at a former agricultural estate in order to go to a “Sakei Camp”. The author and another woman had been invited by Mr. Stephenson, a manager of pepper estates. The author described her surprise upon reaching this camp and wrote that “I had expected to find the Sakeis living on trees, as I have heard they make a sort of platform on the branches of trees with just a roofing of leaves and grass overhead, and I was surprised to find them so far civilized as to possess really nicely built huts - which, however, they keep in a filthy state”. The camp was not especially distinctive, though she granted that the “Sakeis” “were certainly interesting from the fact of their being a wild people, - but terribly ugly and dirty”. Monty’s description shows that Sakai as a synonym for aborigines had not only entered the public realm by 1892, but that it had done so with accompanying stereotypes of how Sakai people lived. Sakai were supposed to be uncivilised, a “wild people” who lived in trees.

In addition to its promotion of a general Sakai stereotype, the anecdote illustrated that there were Sakai who did not fit the stereotype and were, in fact, quite “civilised”, which in many cases meant that they were indistinguishable in physical description and lifeway from Malays. In another comical anecdote published again in the second volume of the Selangor Journal in 1894, the author was confronted with people whom his host assured him were Sakai, but whom he mistook for Malay. The author was unnamed and the incident appeared under the section of notes and anecdotes. The keen and humorous observations of the author are worth reproducing in full:

There had been a long-standing invitation from a friend to visit a Sakai encampment, situated not more than a mile or so from his bungalow and within a hundred of Klang. The journey thither, over and along fallen trunks of trees, was not an easy one; in fact, just the sort of approach to the lair of the aborigine one would expect to find. We nervously enquired if there was any likelihood of receiving in our body the poisoned dart of a sumpitan [blowpipe], and “fell all of a heap” when we suddenly stumbled over a dark specimen of humanity in a state of semi-nudity. “Is this a Sakai?” we asked. “Oh, no; only a Malay.” This was encouraging: if this was only a Malay, the Sakai himself must indeed be a wild one; and we pictured a group of naked creatures, with heads of matted hair, crouching over a meal in which monkey and snake figured largely. At length we reached the top of a hill and found a clearing, in the midst of which were some half-dozen Malay huts- or rather, bungalows. Our host and conductor fetched a great sigh, and said, “Here we are!” and then exclaimed, “and there’s the Batin.” “The what?” “The Batin- chief, headman,” and following the direction of his pointed finger we saw advancing towards us a respectable-looking middle-aged man, wearing a tweed jacket and continuations, a black silk handkerchief round his head, shoes on his feet, and, try to imagine it, a waxed moustache! Well, if it wasn’t waxed, it was highly greased- it was a thin moustache, but long. He informed us that everyone else was employed below in the padi-fields- not gone to hunt in the jungle, the reader will notice; merely engaged in the prosaic agricultural pursuit of padi cultivation- and that he, the Batin, alone was in the camp. We looked round: here were the ordinary cooking utensils, there the wooden mortar and pestle for threshing the padi, some poultry, a few bunches of pisangs [bananas], and some guavas; in the corner of the house a rifle leant against the wall, but we failed to see a sumpitan; we certainly did notice a lance or spear, but, from its appearance and position, it was evidently used as a poker for the fire; another thing we saw, and let us not forget to mention it, suspended from the branch of a tree, a swing-just an everyday swing, two pieces of rope and a board; the same sort of swing that is to be seen in many an English garden. “And this,” we exclaimed, turning on our host and conductor, “this is a Sakai encampment: the forest home of the aborigine! Oh, what a fraud! But, oh, how much greater a fraud is the wild aborigine himself! Come,” we said, “let us leave this civilised wildness, and haste to the wildness of civilisation. Go to Saffron Hill, dig out the most decrepit Italian organ-grinder you can find, present him as a type of the Roman gladiator, but don’t, please don’t, ask us to regard this tweed-clothed, moustached individual as a specimen of the orang hutan [jungle people].

60 Anon., The Selangor Journal 2, 16 (1894): 248-249.
Operating within this anecdote are conceptions of separate Malay and aboriginal subjects. If a person was Malay, he could not also be aboriginal, and vice versa. At the same time, the anecdote illustrates that the separate subjects were not always very meaningful distinctions. Malays were mistaken for Sakai in the story, and Sakai lived like Malays and even English people. They lived in “Malay huts- or rather, bungalows”, were “engaged in the prosaic agricultural pursuit of padi cultivation” and used “ordinary cooking utensils, there the wooden mortar and pestle for threshing the padi, some poultry, a few bunches of pisangs, and some guavas”. If not for the host of the party who identified people as either Malay or Sakai, the writer would not have known just from looking at them and observing their lifeways. At every turn in the story, expectations of Sakai (and Malays) were confounded. These Sakai were anything but wild, to the point that the author called “the wild aborigine” a “fraud”.

These two reports in the Selangor Journal about the disappointment of the authors upon meeting Sakai is indicative of the broader changes in the ways of life of people identified by the British as Malays and aborigines in the general colonial sphere. In 1886, the Resident of Selangor, J. P. Rodger, asked district officers for reports on Sakai in the state and to include details on “the number of tribes and individuals, the names of Batins [headmen of aboriginal communities], and any information as to their religion, manners and customs, with the distinctive differences between various tribes”. The reports were subsequently reproduced in the Selangor Journal of 1895.

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Two reports were very brief because the officers felt that there was nothing much to report. The Chief Collector of Klang, Mr. Turney, wrote:

Owing to the proximity of the town to the Sakai villages and their constant intercourse with Malays and Chinese, the Sakais in the Klang District are scarcely distinguishable from Malays. They dislike the term ‘Sakai’ and call themselves ‘Orang Bukit,’ speak Malay like the sons of the soil, whose costume and adornments they assume... The height of their ambition seemed to me to be considered Malays by foreigners, and they seemed to have a disinclination to convey the impression that they could speak Sakai, asserting that their language was Malay. Under the circumstances, it will be seen how impossible it was for me to obtain any information of their language, customs, etc.\(^{63}\)

The District Officer of Kuala Selangor, F. E. Lawder, wrote his report in a similar vein: “There being practically no Sakais in this district, I have been unable to forward any information on the subject. The men here call themselves Sakais, but as they only speak Malay, and conduct themselves exactly like jungle Malays, with the one exception that they eat almost anything they can kill, they can hardly be considered to be Sakais."\(^{64}\) In the judgement of both officers, self-identification as Sakai in both cases was not sufficient to put the people in that category because of their ideas about the quintessential Sakai.\(^{65}\) However, in the 1896 reports on Sakai published in the *Selangor Journal* in 1897, district officers had no qualms in counting people as Sakai in their district even though they appeared to live a settled lifestyle. E. J. Roe for Kuala Lumpur district and O. F. Stonor for Ulu Langat district counted the number of

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\(^{64}\) Anon. “The Sakais of Selangor”, 224.

\(^{65}\) Yet another possibility is that the officers in charge of writing the reports were reliant on information derived from other people, such as *penghulu* (village headmen) and *batins* and it was those viewpoints that were reiterated in the report. As stated by many officers in their reports, they relied on information supplied by other members of the community. The officers themselves were often not familiar enough with the area and people, and possibly could not make such distinctions on their own. Anon. “The Sakais of Selangor”, 223-224; Douglas, “Sakei Tribes in Selangor, Klang District”, 430.
Sakai whose dwellings were “more or less permanent”. For the Klang district, W. W. Douglas enumerated two groups of Sakais that lived in the district and also speculated as to their demographic increase or decrease.\textsuperscript{56}

The gradual increase in knowledge of internal differences among Sakai was most commonly referred to by Europeans in terms of a division between ‘tame’ and ‘wild’ Sakai. The term ‘tame Sakai’ in particular was usually specified in contradistinction to ordinary Sakai who were assumed to be wild. Tame Sakai evoked an important distinction from the commonly understood Sakai subject by approximating characteristics of a Malay subject. The distinction between tame and wild Sakai entered the English language from local Malay usage as reported by British writers.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Crawfurdf included tame and wild distinctions of Sakai in his 1856 dictionary where he wrote: “The Malays, according to their localities or states of civilisation, divide them [Sakai] into forest or wild, and tame or docile, expressed in their language by the words utan and jinak.”\textsuperscript{67} The meanings given by Marsden and Crawfurdf in their earlier dictionaries are illustrative of the connotations that accompanied the pairing of jinak with Sakai. In Marsden’s Malay to English dictionary of 1812, there were a few English translations given for jinak, some of which were “tame”, “domesticated”, “familiar” and “meek”. In Crawfurdf’s dictionary of 1852, jinak was translated as “[t]ame, not wild”, “docile, tractable” and “easy or


\textsuperscript{67} Crawfurdf, A Grammar and Dictionary of the Malay Language, 157; Crawfurdf, A Descriptive Dictionary, 372.
reconciled to one’s position”. For the word liar (wild), Marsden gave the example of “benātang liar” meaning “a wild beast” in addition to “wild”, “untamed” and “savage”. In Frank Swettenham’s 1901 Malay to English dictionary, he translated liar as “uncivilised”, “wild”, “savage” and “untamed”.

Use of the terms utan (jungle/forest) or liar (wild) and jinak (tame/docile) to distinguish different Sakai was evident in articles published in JSBRAS. Most of these mentions were brief. In 1879, W. E. Maxwell wrote about tame Sakai in his article on “The Aboriginal Tribes of Perak”. “A Patani Malay confessed to me,” he wrote, “some years ago, that he cultivated the acquaintance of some Sakei jinak, (tame Sakeis, who mix with the Malays) because he could get them to steal children for him.” The use of tame Sakai was not only applicable to Perak but also to the southern territory of Johor. In 1881, D. F. A. Hervey wrote about the Sakai he met in Johor. After providing details about their settlement and language, he specified that “the foregoing may be described as the orang hulu jinak, or the tame tribes of the interior. There are ... a few representatives also of the orang liar, or wild men, as the tamer tribes, conscious of their own superior civilisation, are proud to call them”.

The Russian ethnographer N. Miklouho-Maclay provided a detailed analysis of the distinction made by Malays between “Orang Sakai-liar” and “Orang Sakai-jina” (the

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70 Maxwell, “The Aboriginal Tribes of Perak”, 47.
wild and tame Orang Sakai), based on his trip from 1874 to 1875 to the Malay Peninsula. Miklouho-Maclay was renowned for his ethnographies of Papuans and for undertaking what would later become a standard practice in anthropological research: intensive time in the field. Though his interests centred mostly on New Guinea and areas east of that island, he also undertook anthropological trips to the Philippines (to study Negritos who might have been related to Papuans) and two expeditions to the Malay Peninsula between November 1874 and October 1875 (again to study Negritos who could be linked to the Philippine and Papuan peoples).\(^\text{72}\) According to Miklouho-Maclay, wild Sakai "live isolated in the dense forest, and probably never came (sic) into any direct contact with Malays". He said that

it proved to be impossible to converse with the Orang Sakai liar when by chance or after long searching I surprised them, even those whom I could inspect, measure and sketch. They either did not understand Malay or their brains and their tongues were so paralysed with fright at being in the presence of a being whom they had never seen before—a white man—that they remained silent when I questioned them. The short list of words which I noted down and which I have published I obtained from the Orang Sakai jina who however had several times to apply for information to their wild fellow-country-men.\(^\text{73}\)

Miklouho-Maclay further confessed that he was only able to talk to Orang Sakai jina or tame Sakai throughout his trip. The Malays, he said, also made a distinction


between the wild ("Orang liar") and the tame ("Orang jina") portion of another group of aborigines called "Orang Utan".\textsuperscript{74} He said that

though they retain their nomadic habits [they] have a certain amount of intercourse with the Malays. They mediate the exchange of jungle produce ... They also work for the Malays for short periods ... and it is not uncommon for them to give their daughters in exchange to the Malays and Chinese who settled down in their neighbourhood. These Orang Sakai-jina generally speak Malay and their children for the most part forget their original language. They visit the huts and the Kampons of the Malays (in small parties with their wives and children) and this is one important reason of the mixture of the two races, the Orang Sakai giving their daughters as wives to the Malays.... These visits are further followed by the gradual feeling of Malay wants and adoption of Malay customs by the Orang Sakai. I had several opportunities in the course of my journey of observing this gradual absorption of the weaker race (the Melanesian) and its gradual assimilation to the Malay population.\textsuperscript{75}

Miklouho-Maclay placed tame Sakai in a gradation from ordinary stereotypical Sakai, who were supposedly wild, to tame and finally to being absorbed by Malays, which would signal their extinction.

The writings on Sakai in the Selangor Journal and by Miklouho-Maclay highlight a conception of Sakai and Malay, not as static categories but as a gradation of stereotypes and expectations about aboriginal and Malay behaviour and lifestyle. At one end of the spectrum, wild Sakai supposedly never came into contact with Malays or Europeans, while at the other end, tame Sakai were supposedly acculturated to a Malay lifestyle and Malay people, and were in contact with Europeans. In both instances, Sakai was understood in relation to Malay, with Sakai connoting wildness

\textsuperscript{74} Miklouho-Maclay, "Ethnological Excursions in the Malay Peninsula", 218.
\textsuperscript{75} Miklouho-Maclay, "Ethnological Excursions in the Malay Peninsula", 211-212.
and Malay, civilisation. The categories tame and wild Sakai, as well as Malay, were all related to one another and were intricately tied to stereotypical perceptions of Sakai and Malay dress, culture and general physical description as benchmarks. The categories could be understood as relational in that each was dependent, or at least tied to, the other two for its being or definition. Wild Sakai were defined by Miklouho-Maclay in their relation to tame Sakai, and Sakai as a whole were defined in relation to Malay. Together, the three categories, wild Sakai, tame Sakai and Malay, form a gradient of categories from the uncivilised wild Sakai to the presumed civilised Malay with tame Sakai somewhere in between. The gradation of stereotypes of Sakai was sometimes extended to include the category of jungle Malays, as mentioned earlier by Lawder, splintering the Malay category as part of the continuum after tame Sakai. Lawder characterised the Sakai in his district as “jungle Malays”, closer to the Malay end of the scale as though the Sakai had entered a subtly different phase of being. Movement between the two extremes of wild Sakai and Malay did not depend on changes in bodies even while they could be understood as changes in race. Like the operation of Jakun in *Hikayat Dunia*, Sakai was a category that could be discarded with certain changes to lifestyle.

Understanding Sakai and Malay as gradations was an integral part of how Sakai was understood in the colonial sphere of Malaya. This understanding came from the Malays referred to by Crawfurd and Miklouho-Maclay, and members of the communities who were consulted by the British asking for Sakai reports. The gradations of wild Sakai to Malay were thus social differentiations identified not only
by the people who were the subject of those categorisations themselves, but also people identified as Malays, *penghulus*, *Batins*, British officers and other people in society. It was within the circulation of ideas on Sakai and Malay as gradations that racial definitions were set (and reset) and the enumeration of races carried out within the pages of government documents such as the census and anthropological texts.

From a presence in the indefinable realm of local knowledge that seeped into British colonial common use, Sakai and tame Sakai entered the official records most prominently through the enumeration of the census that is the subject of the following chapter.

In terms of enumeration based on understandings of races, the authors and architects of censuses were not dogmatic. Thus the census may be read as indicative of the reigning attitudes on race categories and ideas in a changing political landscape of the British and Dutch colonies in the Malay Archipelago. An understanding of the governmental attitudes on race is important to situate anthropological works on race during the same period and to explain the major divergences and convergences between them. The prominence given to tame Sakai in the census is in contrast to its relative absence in professional anthropological works. Thus the next section on the census shows the relatedness of anthropological and governmental endeavours at classification, but also prefigures the separation between the two spheres in their methods of identifying and understanding aboriginal races. The interaction between these two spheres, government and anthropology, and the ideas of Sakai in the wider
colonial setting, produced different criteria for demarcating race, demonstrating the contextualisation and localisation of ideas of race in colonial Malaya.
CHAPTER 4:
Race, Sakai and Census

The focus of this chapter is on the censuses produced specifically for the colonial government from 1871 to 1931 and on unravelling the governmental logics surrounding the classification and identification of Sakai and Malays. The ideas of race within the censuses constituted a realm of knowledge in the governmental arena that was subject to colonial socialisation. The impact of ideas from the colonial sphere in the form of the restrictions of the census, the intended uses of the data, and tame and wild distinctions of aborigines, can be seen in the reports and data. The explanation in the censuses will illustrate the influence of a discourse on Sakai on attempts to classify aborigines within its pages. Though race reigned supreme in the pages of the censuses, with one of the main aims of enumeration being the classification of peoples into racial categories, what was meant by race, particularly Malay and Sakai races, proved changeable from one census to the next and was distinct from anthropological demarcations of those same races, which I discuss in the following chapter. This chapter sketches race knowledge within the census in order to prefigure the remaining chapters in which I draw out the continuities and discontinuities between government and anthropological ideas of aboriginal races and then illustrate the changing ideas of aboriginal races within anthropology specifically. The disjuncture in racial representation between the census and anthropology points to other logics of differentiation that were called upon within the governmental sphere, and which anthropology in Malaya then had to address. I use the general term
'government' to describe an outlook apparent from the census material. While I do not claim that the census operation and the views in the reports were wholly representative of the variety of governmental structures in Malaya, they nonetheless reflect certain governmental imperatives and logics. The uniqueness of the census can be attributed partly to these logics that distinguish the discourses within the census from anthropological texts. This chapter also unsettles further the distinction between Malay and Sakai or aborigines by showing the moving boundaries between the two groups as presented in the census.

The census tables and reports that accompanied them are one of the few sources of rich information on aborigines of colonial Malaya. In general, the censuses were far from a simple tally of heads. The reports included details on the difficulties in locating and identifying aborigines, the methods used, and the idiosyncrasies of the entire endeavour of counting. Even though the report and tables on aborigines comprise a minute proportion of the entire census, they are nonetheless a source of information on a neglected section of the inhabitants of colonial Malaya that can be utilised, albeit with caution. The census in general is also illustrative of the application of different ideas of race to the classification of the population. As Charles Hirschman has shown, racial categories were widely employed by the British in the everyday process of governing Malaya and, in particular, the production of government censuses.¹

Hirschman focused on the consolidation of racial categories through the censuses from the late eighteenth until the late twentieth centuries as evidence of a hierarchy of racial

emphasis within the ruling governments of the time. Building on Hirschman's work, this chapter focuses on the construction of aboriginal race categories and argues that governmental 'working categories' played a large part in determining the character of those categories even though they were also often based partially on anthropological thinking.

The census data referred to in this chapter derives from a variety of governmental and semi-governmental publications and is sometimes incomplete due to the varying years in which states came under British control. The census data ranges from 1871, when the first census of the Straits Settlements was published, until 1931, when the last census of British Malaya was taken before the interruption of the Second World War. The Straits Settlements of Melaka, Penang and Singapore were colonised earlier than other territories on the Peninsula and, therefore, the earliest census data available is for those territories. The census for the Straits Settlements was conducted every ten years from 1871 until 1911 with reports published on the data. Starting from 1921, the Straits Settlements reports were published together with the reports for the entire British Malaya. The 1891 census data for the Malay States of Perak and Selangor were published in the Government Gazettes of the states for that year. For aborigines or "Sakai" of Selangor, there were two specific reports written in 1886 and 1896, published in the Selangor Journal in 1895 and 1897 respectively, covering their

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3 *Selangor Government Gazette*, CO 467/1 (1891); *Perak Government Gazette*, CO 467/2 (1891).
numbers and way of life. From 1901 until 1931, joint reports were published on the census data for the Federated Malay States of Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and Pahang. Data for the remaining states on the Peninsula, Kedah, Kelantan, Terengganu and Johor, were collected for the 1921 and 1931 census of British Malaya.

The subject of the two following chapters has many parallels to Talal Asad’s recent comparison of the methods of representation in ethnography and in social statistics and his exploration of “the idea that ethnographic fieldwork characteristically invokes a conception of knowledge modelled on subjective vision but statistics does not.”

This chapter deals with the way aboriginal races appeared and were written about in the government censuses from 1871 until 1931, while the following chapter analyses ideas of aboriginal races within anthropological writings at a time when scholars were conducting ethnographic fieldwork among aborigines in Malaya. The process by which knowledge on Sakai in the colonial sphere was formed, and how this influenced government and anthropological writings, broadly corresponds to what U. Kalpagem

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has termed “the translation of experience into social knowledge”, and then from social knowledge to government and scientific knowledge in the censuses and anthropological writings respectively. The ideas of aboriginal races in both government censuses and anthropological writings constituted two separate though related fields of knowledge on aborigines as races which had to deal with knowledge about Sakai in the general colonial sphere of Malaya. I approach Asad’s article as a set of general arguments about statistics and ethnography and use it to draw out the various complexities of the census data and later anthropological writings on aborigines in Malaya.

“A judicious blend, for practical ends”

Ideas about race within the government census documents were intended to be practical and changeable. In 1931, the Superintendent of the census for British Malaya for that year, C. A. Vlieland, wrote that the understanding of race that was applied in carrying out the census was “a judicious blend, for practical ends”. Race, he said, was not used in a “strict or scientific” or “ethnographic sense” since such definitions would be “of little use to the administrator or the merchant”. In his report on the census, Vlieland addressed several crucial aspects of the use of race within colonial Malaya: the awareness of the different definitions of the term within anthropological and governmental spheres, the utility of varying definitions, and ultimately, the choice to

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assert or reject certain aspects or definitions of race depending on the intended use of the racial information compiled.

Colonial common-sense meanings of race were used in preference over other known meanings of the words, and the specific character of race was explained in the 1921 and 1931 censuses. Previous census reports did not elaborate on the meaning or meanings of race. For the 1901 report, G. T. Hare commented that “the column ‘Race’ should be made clearer as far as the Chinese are concerned by making it more apparent that the race or tribe of Chinese is to be determined by tongue and not by birthplace”. He also explained that “[w]herever the word ‘Nationality’ is employed in the Census Forms or in the Census Report Forms, it is intended to mean the same thing as is comprised in the wider and better expression ‘Race’ – e.g. there cannot well be, for instance, a Eurasian nationality”. He suggested that for the next census, all sections that used “Nationality” should switch to “Race”. For the 1911 census, A. M. Pountney made no attempt at delimiting race, nor did any of the Straits Settlements census reports.

The description and clarification of race in the 1921 and 1931 censuses is perhaps the most overt expression of the meaning and limitations of the word in a government-directed project in Malaya’s colonial period. In the collection of utterances in this colonial endeavour, the influence of anthropological ideas on race was apparent. In the

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10 Hare, *Federated Malay States, Census of the Population, 1901*, 16.
1921 Census report written by J. E. Nathan, the general description of the inhabitants of British Malaya started with “The Aborigines” when describing its inhabitants:

The earliest inhabitants of the Peninsula were probably the Semang, a race of Negritos, related to the Aetas of the Philippines.... Superior to them in culture are the Sakai, a race supposed, mainly on linguistic grounds, to have migrated to the Malay Peninsula from Indo China.... In Negri Sembilan and Johore are found a number of aborigines, usually called Jakun or Bduanda; it is now generally held that their real language is Malay, though not quite the Malay of the civilised Malay of the Peninsula.12

The division of aborigines into three racial types reflected the standardisation of aboriginal divisions by anthropological methods first proposed by W. W. Skeat. Skeat was a prominent figure in the application of physical anthropology to the study of indigenous peoples in Malaya. He led the Cambridge Expedition to the Malay States from 1899 to 1900 that established three racial divisions of aboriginal peoples in Malaya: the “woolly-haired Negrito tribes called Semang”, “the wavy-haired tribes called Sakai” and “the straight-haired tribes called Jakun”. This racial categorisation also amounted to a ranking, with Semang considered by Skeat to be “a representative of one of the wildest races of mankind now extant”, while Jakun were placed closer to the civilised Malays by their informal designation of “savage Malays”.13 The anthropologist Rudolf Martin had previously proposed divisions of aboriginal peoples in somewhat different form. Martin’s first two categories, “Semang” and “Sakai”, were retained by Skeat, while Martin’s third group, “Mixed Tribes”, was instead

referred to by Skeat as “Jakun”. Skeat’s divisions evidently formed the basis for Nathan’s introduction to Malaya. The bibliography of this general section included the major titles on indigenous peoples of the archipelago, citing Skeat’s seminal publication arising from the expedition, *Pagan Races of the Malay Peninsula*, G. B. Cerutti’s *My Friends the Savages*, the *Journal of the Federated Malay States Museums*, and Charles Hose’s *Pagan Races of Borneo*.15

The description of the “Origins of the Malay Race” demonstrated considerable knowledge of anthropological ideas of migration, levels of connectivity between human groups and the geographical changes of continents in the region through time:

The Malay race, which has given its name to the Peninsula, probably originated in Palembang and Menangkabau in Sumatra, whence it spread over the Archipelago and to the Peninsula. There have been many speculations as to the origin of the race, and no certain conclusions have been arrived at. One of the latest theories is that before Borneo and Sumatra were separated by sea, they were the cradle of a proto-Malay or Indonesian race, whose modern descendants are derived from an admixture of Chinese, Indian and Arab blood; and that the proto-Malay survives comparatively pure in the Toallas and Torajas of the Celebes, the Tenggerese of Java, the Gayos of Sumatra, the Veddas of Ceylon, and in some tribes in the Philippines. Another theory sees, prior to the separation of the islands of the Archipelago, an original family wholly separated from the Malays, and embracing the peoples which the last theory took to be proto-Malays as well as the Queenslanders; besides, but apart from this family, there are, according to this theory, the proto-Malay and the mixed coastal Malay.16

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15 Nathan, *The Census of British Malaya*, 1921, 4. However, Nathan went against the main findings of Skeat’s *Pagan Races* in attributing the difference of the Sakai race on “linguistic grounds”. See Chapter 4 for an in-depth analysis on *Pagan Races*.
Nathan's references to "proto-Malay", "pure" strands of which could be found in diverse areas, to "an original family" and "modern descendants" all point towards an absorption of anthropological ideas of race, with humans divided into families, and subsequent generations more or less mixed.

Nathan further inserted elementary ideas on racial determinants into the census. In British Malaya, Nathan said, "there is little difference in climate between the various states. The great diversity of races and languages of the Indian Empire ... is not found here, or rather, in so far as differences exist, they are the result of immigration of foreigners and not of natural conditions. The Malay of Kedah or Kelantan in the North does not differ appreciably from the Malay of Johore in the South in appearance, language and customs." The reference to climate at the beginning of the section of similarities among Malays seemed to indicate that Nathan assumed climate to be responsible for producing difference in looks, language and culture. On another level, reference to climate could also have served as a convenient justification and a marshalling of factors commonly understood as racial determinants, in order to treat all "Malays" in Malaya as essentially the same race.

Though Nathan introduced anthropological ideas to the census, his approach to race was in fact quite specific to the needs of the government of the day in Malaya. He introduced the chapter on "Race" by stating:

For tabulation purposes the total population was split into six main racial divisions, Europeans, Eurasians, Malays, Chinese, Indians and
“Others.” Not one of these is one race, though no attempt has been made to subdivide Eurasions. In all, no less than 28 different races were enumerated in British Malaya in numbers exceeding 1,000, and the present chapter deals with the separate races constituting the main racial divisions.¹⁷

Nathan acknowledged that each racial division was not really “one race”, but rather that they were aggregated together from a list of at least 28 races. The practical aspects of representing population data were clearly a factor in deciding which sub-groups could be amalgamated into larger headings. I use the term practical in reference to racial headings in the sense that the determination of which categories could remain and which could be incorporated into others was predicated on how much diversity the government staff were willing and able to accommodate within the bureaucracy, and how much detail could be forsaken without sacrificing information that might be useful in the process of governing. Thus, the racial categories were highly reflective of, and responsive to, governmental requirements. At the same time, judgements as to cultural affinities between “races”, self- and enumerator identifications and government requirements were factors determining the presentation of census data. All these issues were perceptible in Nathan’s explanation about the “Malay” race category:

Under the heading “Malays” are grouped all the native peoples of the Malayan Archipelago and considerable difficulty was experienced in coming to a decision as to which of these races should be tabulated separately, and which amalgamated under the heading “Malay.” The difficulty does not arise in respect of the Malayan peoples from the islands in the South and East of the Archipelago... they preserve their distinctive features for generations and are not merged in the native Malay population. The child born in British Malaya of Javanese or

¹⁷ Nathan, The Census of British Malaya, 1921, 70.
Boyanese parents would invariably be described as Javanese or Boyanese on the Census schedules. It is in dealing with the Malays of Sumatra than a decision is difficult.\textsuperscript{18}

Populations such as "Jambi" who were returned in small numbers were included in the Malay category, while "Mendeling" were listed separately even though they were also called "Mendeling Malays" in the census. "Achinese" were involved in a war of independence against the Dutch, and were "a separate race with a language of their own, and the Korinchi have characteristics peculiar to themselves, which render it improbable that many of them were entered under the general term 'Malay' in the schedules", suggesting that identification by the enumerators, language and aspirations for political independence, were all factors that contributed to a group being seen as a race of their own and to the importance of maintaining that difference in the census returns. Nathan still relied on anthropological terminology, if not the essence of the similarities perceived among Malays within the scholarly community, when he concluded that "linguistically, ethically and ethnologically the Malays of British Malaya, and the Malays of Jambi, Kampar, Siak, Menangkabau and the other districts of Sumatra are one race. No fundamental error is involved in their tabulation under one head." In any case, "Malays proper" and "Other Malays" were both part of the "Malay Population" and "Malayan Races".\textsuperscript{19}

Applications of race were also specific to different groups. Chinese were considered one race, and each dialect group was called a "tribe". Their division into "tribes" was seen as the most important detail to be enumerated: "With the diversity in language

\textsuperscript{18} Nathan, The Census of British Malaya, 1921, 71.

\textsuperscript{19} Nathan, The Census of British Malaya, 1921, 72.
among the Chinese comes a diversity of characteristics and customs, and the proper division of the Chinese population into tribes is therefore of paramount importance."^{20} When it came to Indians, "the correct division of the Indian population into its constituent races is ... a matter of no little difficulty, chiefly because the racial divisions are not understood locally and to the average Malay or Chinese enumerator every person of Indian nationality falls into one of two classes, 'Kling' or 'Bengali' ... Careful scrutiny of the information supplied in the birthplace, language and religion columns of the schedules made it possible, in most cases, to classify Indians correctly according to race".^{21} Europeans also presented their own problems: "The term European has been used throughout this report to include all the white races, Americans, Australians, Canadians, etc., as well as Europeans proper." For all those "of British birth", Nathan noted that respondents were asked "to state their precise nationality, English, Scotch, etc." but the request was ignored. Thus, "the birth place returns supplement the inadequate information under the heading 'race'" and were listed as England, Ireland, Scotland, Australia and New Zealand.^{22}

In the 1931 Census, the author of the report, Vlieland, stated explicitly in the introduction his intention to move away from previous introductions that focused on Malaya "from the point of view of the historian, the anthropologist, the ethnographer and the philologist" and to instead concentrate on an interpretation based on "modern scientific geography", which he felt was most relevant.^{23} In line with that philosophy,

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^{20} Nathan, The Census of British Malaya, 1921, 78.
^{21} Nathan, The Census of British Malaya, 1921, 86-87.
^{22} Nathan, The Census of British Malaya, 1921, 70-71.
^{23} Nathan, The Census of British Malaya, 1921, vi.
the introductory chapter of the census focused on the geography of the areas covered by the census. It was not until the seventh page of the introduction that Malaya’s inhabitants were mentioned, which recalls earlier tendencies among savants since the early nineteenth century to picture tropical environments as separate from people in newly discovered lands, as though such an intellectual partition could be practically enacted.\textsuperscript{24} In this story of the tropics, however, abundance in tropical nature was represented as an abundance of economic opportunity associated with Malaya’s rich natural resources.\textsuperscript{25} When people were mentioned, the question of indigeneity was addressed first, with the observation that “only a little over half of the population is Malaya-born, and far less than half in any sense indigenous. The only strictly autochthonous inhabitants are the nomadic aborigines of the primeval forest; the Malays themselves hail from other parts of the Archipelago and their constitutional rights are not those of original inhabitants but of earliest settlers.”\textsuperscript{26} Environmental effects on the people were again a favoured explanatory device for the unique character of the “Malaysians”: “The characteristics of all Malaysians show very clearly the effects of geographic control. Physically, mentally and morally they are the product of a marine-equatorial environment” that shaped “their mental outlook and philosophy, no less than their physique and mode of life. It would be absurd to expect the Malay to exhibit the physical or mental characteristics of the Tuareg or the Zulu, as it would be to expect of the latter the amphibiousness of the typical Malay.”\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{25} Vlieland, \textit{British Malaya 1931}, 8.
\textsuperscript{26} Vlieland, \textit{British Malaya 1931}, 8.
\textsuperscript{27} Vlieland, \textit{British Malaya 1931}, 8.
Ethnography was still referred to when Vlieland addressed the definition of Malay:

"[T]here is little doubt that the use of the term ‘Malay’ in population statistics in the past” embraced, he said "not only Malays proper, but a number of peoples ethnographically and politically alien". 28 The political status of the people referred to also swayed their classification, reflecting the role of the political boundaries erected between British Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies in viewing “native” peoples:

The peoples included under the head “Other Malaysians” in the present report may be divided into three main groups; Javanese, Banjarese and other immigrant races ethnographically akin to, but distinct from, the Malays and politically alien; Menangkabaus and other Sumatran peoples politically alien but ethnographically indistinguishable from the Malay of British Malaya; and aboriginals ethnographically far removed from the Malays but more truly “people of the country” than any other race-in fact the only autochthonous population. The highly controversial question of the origin of the “Malay race” may be left to the anthropologist ... 29

The population was divided “under six main racial heads” following the practice from the previous census, but further sub-divisions resulted in over 70 races being recorded, far surpassing the 28 of previous censuses. The changing criteria for the smaller race headings were addressed, displaying how the boundaries of the meaning of “race” were modified depending on which group was enumerated. For the European races, Vlieland argued that though “English”, “Scottish” and “Australian” were “unscientific” and not races, he included them as racial sub-divisions because they were “of sufficient practical interest and importance”. 30 More interest was paid to the “British” race category, with birthplace entries used as a check on erroneous entries,

28 Vlieland, British Malaya 1931, 38.
29 Vlieland, British Malaya 1931, 38.
30 Vlieland, British Malaya 1931, 74.
especially “in dealing with the schedules of those tiresome individuals who ignored the appeal to refrain from entering the term ‘British’ in the race column of the schedule”, illustrating a change in the conception and recording of the British “race” from 1921.\textsuperscript{31} The Malay race category also underwent change with the “inclusion of the idea of political status amongst the census criteria of race” and an eye towards ensuring those born outside of Malaya were classified as “Other Malaysians” and not with “Malay”. Within this new scheme, aborigines were considered Malaysian but not Malayan.\textsuperscript{32} Vlieland somewhat disdainfully regarded Nathan’s 1921 classification of Malays in the census as “an attempt at a purely ethnographic classification” even though it could be argued that this was far from the case. Vlieland, however, had to emphasise the “politically alien immigrant” due to the agreement by the government of Malaya to “meet the wishes of the Netherlands Indian Government in the matter of the classifications of Malaysians”.\textsuperscript{33}

The fullest expression of how race was utilised in line with colonial governmental needs was in Vlieland’s lengthy exposition on the term:

The term “Race” is used, for the purposes of a Malayan census, in a peculiar sense, which requires explanation. The information... is of importance for a variety of purposes, and the word “Race” is used, for lack of a more appropriate term, to cover a complex set of ideas of which race, in the strict or scientific sense, is only one small element. It would be of little use to the administrator or the merchant to attempt a classification of the population by race in the ethnographic sense, to say nothing of the fact that any such tentative classification would be highly controversial. An attempt at classification by “nationality,” or, more
exactly, by national status or political allegiance, would be almost equally open to controversy, and of little, if any, greater practical value. It is, in fact, impossible to define the sense in which the term “Race” is used for census purposes; it is, in reality, a judicious blend, for practical ends, of the ideas of geographic and ethnographic origins, political allegiance, and racial and social affinities and sympathies. The difficulty of achieving anything like a scientific or logically consistent classification is enhanced by the fact that most Oriental peoples have themselves no clear conception of race, and commonly regard religion as the most important, if not the determinant, element. The Malay, for instance, habitually regards adherence to Islam in much the same light as a European regards racial distinction, and will speak of a Muhammadan Indian and a Hindu (even if the two are of precisely similar origin), as though the distinction between them were similar in nature and magnitude to that between a Frenchman and a German... The confusion of ideas has even affected current English usage of terms, and the European will frequently use the name “Sikh” instead of “Punjabi” (since the majority of Punjabis he knows of profess the Sikh religion). In default of anything resembling a definition of the term “Race” as used in this report, perhaps the best way of conveying its meaning in a few words is to say that, in asking the question of an individual “What is your race?” the census authority is trying to obtain an answer of the same nature as we expect when we ask in ordinary non-technical conversation “What is that man?”... In such circumstances, we should be surprised, and possibly annoyed, to be told that a Madras Indian was British or Dravidian, when we wanted to know whether he was a Tamil or Telegu; yet either of these answers might well be correct. We should be more shocked to receive the information that a given white man was Teuto-Erse, when we wanted to know whether he was in fact an American, and not a Canadian, Australian or Englishman.34

As Hirschman commented, Vlieland could not define race “except in terms of popular images held by Europeans”.35 At the same time, however, Vlieland’s explanation demonstrated that several other influences besides European stereotypes were at work in the census definition of race. Vlieland decreed that the race tables needed to be “of greater practical value” to “the administrator or the merchant”. A more precise and

34 Vlieland, British Malaya 1931, 73-74.
anthropologically accurate meaning of race would not be able to fulfil such value to the groups that the census was intended for.

Vlieland appeared humbled by the wealth of methods of differentiation that went into race when he admitted that it was “impossible to define” and then proceeded to detail the various ways of understanding the term and answering the question of racial identification. The latter half of Vlieland’s quote also indicated that the meanings of race employed by several segments of the population made their way into the census, for instance when he mentioned that religion was a prime marker for membership in a race for “Malays”. The census superintendent intimated that social categories and social differentiations were most important. The question “What is that man?” could be answered in a number of ways, depending on how the individual was placed within society, who was doing the identification and which aspects of their being were seen as most important.

One of Asad’s assertions about statistics was that “unlike the real cultural wholes of ethnography, the statistical universe, as well as the categories out of which that universe is created, is the product not of experience but of enumerative practices”. Asad used “statistics” to mean “social surveys and probability theory”, while the statistical data I refer to in this chapter refers primarily to aggregated data divided into fields such as sex, location, occupation and age and the reports that accompanied the census tables that were meant to guide the reader. Though it might be true for other times and places that the enumerative practices of statistics overshadowed experience,

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the censuses of Malaya show that the racial categories within their pages were the products of both experience and enumerative practices, and that the census racial categories were highly malleable depending on the input from census enumerators about social categories. Racial categories, as illustrated by Vlieland’s quote, changed depending on which groups were enumerated. When it came to enumerating and writing about Malaya’s aboriginal population, racial categories were especially dependent on definitions of Malays, of what constituted Sakai lifestyle and the influence of anthropological methods of racial classification.

Sakai, “Tame” and “Wild”

The various influences on the philosophy of race as explicated in the previous section were also impacting on the racial boundaries of aborigines in the census in subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, ways. This section details the identification and classification of aborigines within the census. I pay particular attention to the names used to describe aborigines and their synonyms, and the larger headings under which aborigines were placed. In many instances, there were inconsistencies from one census to the next in definitions of aborigines and problems of enumeration that call into doubt the reliability of the count. Thus, I do not present the census data as a continual series of numbers from the earliest available information in 1871 until the last census analysed here, which is that of 1931. Such a comparison would be misleading since the referent, aborigines, were understood dissimilarly from year to year. Rather, I present the numbers to show that government officials were sufficiently interested in aborigines to track such a population and that the counts for earlier years were often reproduced in
later censuses under a modified or completely different heading, or that the numbers themselves were inconsistent with the data presented in previous years. The following section will reconstruct the rationales for identification and classification of people as aborigines, and draw out the presence of various systems of differentiation.

Aborigines had been enumerated since 1871. In the return of the population for the Straits Settlements for that year, “Mantra” was one of the groups enumerated. The section on Melaka revealed that 30 Mantras were enumerated solely in that state.37 Mantra and Jakun were two groups of aborigines that were the objects of proselytisation by the French Roman Catholic Mission established in Melaka in 1847. Father Borie and Father Favre were the two missionaries who were first stationed at the mission and both wrote about aborigines in Melaka.38 Mantra were not listed in the population tables for the Straits Settlements in 1881, but “Aborigines of the Peninsula” was added instead, with a total of 308 people enumerated only in Melaka.39 In the following census of 1891, the number of aborigines counted in Melaka decreased again to 108, while 34 people were enumerated in Penang and the Dindings, which was the territory comprising a group of islands off the coast of Perak and a strip of land on the Peninsula.40

37 McNair and Knight, Straits Settlements. Census. Reports and Returns. 1871, 6, 32.
39 Dunlop, Pickering, Cousins, Hewetson, Knight and Talbot, Straits Settlements. Population (according to the census taken in 1881), 3.
The Perak and Selangor Government Gazettes of 1891 both published the results of a census count and among the groups enumerated were “aborigines” or “aborigines of the peninsula”. Some district officers referred to this segment merely as “populations” but others chose to put them under the heading of “nationality” along with other nationalities such as Arabs, Chinese, Malays, Javanese and Siamese. Collector and Magistrate of the Batang Padang district in Perak, Cecil Wray, referred to “tribes of Sakeis” in Perak.  

In the overall tabulation of the census in Selangor, “Aborigines” appeared first under the larger heading “Malays and Other Natives of the Archipelago”, signalling the connection posited between aborigines and the larger group in the governmental sphere. For the state of Selangor, enumeration figures also came from district officers who submitted reports “relating to Sakei tribes” in Selangor in 1896. Officials enumerated “Sakei tribes” and divided them according to male, female, and boys and girls. The officials sometimes included the names by which communities wanted to be called such as “Orang Bukit” and “Orang Tanjong”. As the reports were more specific in nature than a general census, there were more details concerning the officials’ opinions and miscellaneous information concerning those tribes.

Table 1 presents a compilation of data from several of governmental sources on aboriginal population numbers from 1871 to 1891. The enumeration figures for 1884

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41 Perak Government Gazette, CO 467/2 (1891), 273, 447.
were included in the 1891 *Selangor Government Gazette* report. The total figure for aborigines in Perak for 1891 was aggregated from the district reports in the *Perak Government Gazette*. As the table shows, there were two different counts of aborigines in the Malay States in 1891. Besides the enumeration figures published in the *Government Gazettes*, a census of five Malay states was taken in 1891 and the results were published in the *Straits Settlement Census Report* for that year. Within both reports, no reference was made to the existence of another set of enumeration numbers. This discrepancy is indicative of the inconsistencies in the reporting of census figures, to say nothing of the variability in actual enumeration practices which were not at all touched on in the reports.\(^{43}\)

**Table 1: Aborigines in the Census, 1871-1891**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1871</th>
<th>1881</th>
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<th>1891</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>108</td>
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<td>Penang</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>34</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
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<tr>
<td>Straits Settlements</td>
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<td>308</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sungei Ujong</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negeri Sembilan</td>
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<td>759</td>
<td>447</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pahang</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2032</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malay States</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4546</td>
<td>10982</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The 1901 Census of the Population of the Federated Malay States (FMS) covered the states of Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Pahang; nearly half of the total population of Malaya was located in Perak due to immigration as a result of tin-mining. Segments of the population were referred to as “races”, with “Aborigines” coming last in a summary table of the distribution of the main races after “Malays”, “Chinese”, “Indians” and “Other Races”.44 “Aborigines” were listed under the larger heading “Malays and Other Natives of the Archipelago” in the more detailed table of the population of the Federated Malay States that compared 1891 to 1901.45 Indigenous peoples did not figure prominently in the 1901 census, but references to them were scattered throughout. In the summary table of the distribution of the main races, “aborigines” came to a total of 18,574 people, with the bulk of the population equally divided between Perak and Pahang. Out of this total, 1,397 “Sakai” were enumerated in the general population. Hare noted that “the returns further show that there is little tendency on the part of the aboriginal Sakais and Simangs [Semangs] to decrease”.46

The report of the 1911 Census of the FMS was written by Pountney who replaced the term “race” for several other closely linked words. Pountney did not discuss the merits of using “race” as opposed to “nationality”, or of changing the wording of what used to be “Malays and other natives of the Archipelago” to “Malays and Allied races of the Archipelago”.47 There was now interest in distinguishing between “race” and

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44 Hare, *Federated Malay States, Census of the Population, 1901*, 21, 22, 27.
45 Hare, *Federated Malay States, Census of the Population, 1901*, 55.
46 Hare, *Federated Malay States, Census of the Population, 1901*, 30.
“birthplace”, in particular with regards to Malays who were native to the Peninsula or Malays who were foreign-born. The modification of the category “Malay and its allied races” was carried out primarily based on the knowledge of a Malay clerk called Abdullah, but “Sakai or aboriginal tribes” were still considered to be part of this category although they were treated separately in another chapter. The 1911 report also improvised on the reporting on indigenous peoples by dedicating a specific chapter to discussion of “The Sakai” and by asking R. J. Wilkinson to write up the report as someone who was a specialist in the area. The year before, Wilkinson had published a pamphlet on “The Aboriginal Tribes” that was part of a series of papers published partly as government instruction manuals to help British cadets pass the entrance exam to the Malayan Civil Service.

Aboriginal tribes were enumerated specifically in what Pountney called the “Sakai Census”. In a section discussing the cost of the census, he commented that “the cost of the Sakai Census, which was taken by specially appointed enumerators” was very low considering that enumerators had to be “specially despatched to visit the Sakai encampments”. Even for the previous 1901 census, aborigines were the target of a different kind of enumeration. The circular ordering the commencement of the 1901 Census of the Population of the Federated Malay States noted specifically that “it is highly desirable that special efforts be made to ascertain the number of Sakai and

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other indigenous peoples living in each state. If necessary, a few trifling presents
might be offered to them in various districts, so that they may be induced to come to
the nearest villages for the purpose of the census.” 53 This method of enumerating
Sakai became known as the Sakai Census as opposed to the general census where
enumerators went door to door and counted the occupants of households.

During the census, Wilkinson was British resident of Negri Sembilan, and was the
force behind using language differences between aboriginal peoples as a means of
classifying them. Enumerators were given a list of names of various body parts in
English and in Jawi (such as foot/kaki, hand/tangan and knee/lutut) and were
instructed to note the equivalent word in the person’s language. 54 It was also stated in
the census report that Wilkinson voluntarily took on the task of examining all the
census returns and of writing the resulting report. 55 His report was rife with the
‘proper’ anthropological terms for the various divisions of tribes. While he stated that
the tribes were difficult to locate and classify, and that they differed from one another
in custom, and belief, and were very often of “mixed race”, nevertheless divisions
were given that were explained initially in terms of their features, skin colour, hair
type and language. Wilkinson stated that “[t]he aborigines have been divided into
seven main groups:- (1) the Negritos, (2) The Northern Sakai, (3) The Central Sakai,

53 Hare, Federated Malay States, Census of the Population, 1901, lxxxvi.
54 “The Papers of Leopold Amery, Papers on the Census, 1911”, Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill
55 Pountney, The Census of the Federated Malay States, 1911, 68.
(4) the Besisi, (5) the Jakun, (6) the aborigines of Gunong Benom, and (7) the Malay speaking aborigines".  

The 1911 Census of the Federated States of Malaya enumerated for the first time “tame Sakai” separately. Wilkinson had himself used the term “tame sakai” in his pamphlet written the year before where he mentioned this group as a means of getting in touch with “wilder” Sakai.  

In a note to the main figure of 26,277 aboriginal peoples, Wilkinson wrote that “including ‘tame’ Sakai, the complete total is 27,218". Tame Sakai were also enumerated in terms of states and districts, male and female, occupation and race, whether Negrito, Sakai or Jakun. This last practice was not repeated in the following 1921 census. Wilkinson defined “tame Sakai” as “wild tribesmen” who had abandoned their own language for the use of Malay. Yet it was not solely language that determined who was tame. It appeared that tame Sakai was not an a priori category but one employed to deal with some of the people who were returned as aborigine in the regular census.

Against government expectations, some Sakai were enumerated in the general population census. In 1901, 1,397 Sakai were singled out from the general population because it was assumed that Sakai would only be found within the Sakai census. In 1911, Wilkinson stated that “besides the above, a certain number (941) of people of aboriginal descent were included in the regular census schedules through their

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56 Pountney, The Census of the Federated Malay States, 1911, 70.
58 Pountney, The Census of the Federated Malay States, 1911, 72.
marrying or settling down among the civilised peoples of the country”.\footnote{Pountney, \textit{The Census of the Federated Malay States, 1911}, 69, 72-74.} The tame Sakai category was thus a product of the census methods and expectations, where individuals were counted in fixed abodes, but still returned themselves as Sakai or were identified by the enumerators as such. Sakai were expected to be enumerated through the Sakai Census where Malay enumerators were sent to inaccessible areas, or where Sakai were invited by village leaders to come for a feast and to be counted. The very fact of their being enumerated in the “regular” census where households were visited seemed to be the determining factor in this instance. Thus the category of tame Sakai was as much about identifying lifestyle traits that were different from the stereotypical understanding of Sakai as it was about methods of census enumeration.

Individual reports from officers responsible for enumerating Sakai in different districts around Malaya showed yet another understanding of tame Sakai in the 1911 census. A report for the district of Batang Padang, Perak, stated: “I have no doubt that the return of ‘tame’ Sakai is approximately correct. I much doubt if the record includes the wild tribes (Semang)”.\footnote{Pountney, \textit{The Census of the Federated Malay States, 1911}, 172.} Tame Sakai in this case referred to people who chose to answer the invitation to attend a feast in order to be enumerated. It could be surmised that the author considered those present to be tame, since they did not hesitate to attend, while he considered wild those groups that did not attend. The author’s use of tame Sakai clearly is different from that of Wilkinson who judged identity solely based on their inclusion in the regular census. Yet another possible interpretation is that whether Sakai were tame depended on which of the three sections of aboriginal people were
enumerated. Semang, who were considered anthropologically lowest, were also considered the most wild, hence the decision of the writer of the report to conflate “wild tribes” with “Semang”. These inconsistencies were not addressed in the report and it is not known if the tame Sakai figures reflected the understanding of Wilkinson’s or of the individual census-takers.

The following table illustrates the new interest in differentiating “tame” and “wild” aborigines in the 1901 and 1911 censuses. As with previous years, there are discrepancies in categorizing the enumeration figures and in the reproduction of the figures themselves. In 1901, the data on aborigines were presented as a total, yet when reproducing the 1901 data in the 1911 census, all data for 1901 was recategorised as “wild”. The data for “wild” aborigines given in 1911 census was again different from the corresponding data, “nomad” aborigines, reproduced in the 1921 census for 1911.
Table 2: Aborigines in the Census, 1901-1911

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1901 Total</th>
<th>1901 “Wild” (from 1911 census)</th>
<th>“Tame”</th>
<th>“Wild”</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>1911 “Nomad” (from 1921 census)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>82</td>
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<td><strong>18574</strong></td>
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The 1921 Census had further ambitions in terms of accuracy and scholarly integrity with regards to the Sakai Census. The chapter on “The Aboriginal Peoples” was renamed “The Aboriginal Races” without explanation and included not only the FMS but also the Straits Settlements, Johor, Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu. Richard Winstedt was entrusted with the duty of writing the report for the chapter on the aboriginal races. He noted that the previous method employed by Wilkinson in order to determine the race of aboriginal peoples offended “the canons of the anthropologist
in basing race on linguistics” even though that was the most practical method available at the time and the word lists collected were valuable to anthropological scholarship.\(^{61}\) The preferred method of sending enumerators out to encampments was adopted since the previous method of inviting indigenous peoples for a feast in order to count them was not accurate as it resulted in only “the semi-civilised Sakai attending the feast, while all the wilder and shyer aborigines kept away”.\(^{62}\)

Winstedt discarded the “tame Sakai” category in favour of “settled aborigines”. The reason for this change appeared to be his assumption that settlement or non-nomadic living was the main distinguishing characteristic of tameness. Winstedt wrote that, “it has been apparent to everyone who has come into contact with the wild tribes during the last few years that in many districts they are tending to settle down among Malays, and that, even where they are kept apart, they tend to lose their nomadic habits and form semi-permanent settlements”. This change in lifeway was given due attention in the census by the separate enumerations of “settled aborigines” and “nomadic aborigines” and greater detail was provided as to how the former differed from the latter and Malays. There was also discussion of cases where identification was difficult and required extra attention to properly identify “settled aborigines” or “tame Sakai”.\(^{63}\) The report even retrospectively calculated figures for “settled” versus “nomadic” aborigines for the separate states going as far back as 1901. The figures calculated appear to be unreliable, but it is telling that there was sufficient interest in the matter to warrant a recalculation of the earlier figures. Even though Winstedt had

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\(^{62}\) Pountney, *The Census of the Federated Malay States, 1911*, 16.

in most cases replaced "tame" with "settled", enumerators still employed the earlier concept, pointing towards its continued relevance and salience within the process of differentiating aborigines. "Tamer" was mentioned in the report of J. E. Kempe, District Officer of Pekan, Pahang, in reference to the Sakai of Rompin, Pahang. He stated that "the Sakai are less interesting than those of Keratong, but obviously of the same type. As one gets nearer the sea, they become 'tamer', and the use of the blow pipe disappears half-way down".  

The 1931 Census seemed uninterested in aboriginal peoples in comparison to previous years. The writing of the report, and the orchestrating of the census itself, was concentrated in the hands of the Superintendent of Census, C. A. Vlieland. The 1931 Census changed the definition and the use of Malay yet again, with the effect that aboriginals were now considered Malaysian but not Malay. Similar to groups from Sumatra, aborigines were seen to be closely related to Malays as it was assumed, in the censuses as in anthropological scholarship, that aborigines were being progressively assimilated as Malays. It is noticeable that the specific chapter on "The Aboriginal Races" had much less information on these groups, whereas previous reports included additional details for the interested reader. Most of the chapter comprised of excerpts taken from the report of one of the special enumerators, Kempe, who was also responsible for taking the Sakai Census in Perak for the 1921 Census Report.  

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64 Pountney, *The Census of the Federated Malay States, 1911*, 129.  
65 Vlieland, *British Malaya 1931*, 75.  
Vlieland used "settled" and "nomad" to distinguish two segments of aboriginal races. Again, in the reports given by Kempe, tame/wild distinctions were used together with the general Sakai term.\(^{68}\) Vlieland commented frequently about the changes experienced by aborigines:

It is ... certain that the conversion of the aborigines from their characteristic nomadic habit of life has been far more considerable than these [settled and nomad] figures suggest, and they have, of recent years, become progressively more assimilated with the Malays. Where no assimilation, or intermarriage has taken place, the aborigines still tend to lose their nomadic habits and form permanent or semi-permanent settlements marked by coconut and other plantations. It is fairly certain that many of these settled aborigines would not be detected as such by, and often would not admit their true descent to, any enumerator not well acquainted with them. Further, any aborigine who had been converted to Islam would be returned as "Malay." There is, therefore, every reason to believe that, far from "dying out," the aboriginal races are not really decreasing, but only being assimilated and absorbed.\(^{69}\)

Table 3 highlights the eventual preference for the terms "Settled" and "Nomad" within the 1921 and 1931 censuses. For 1921, the "Settled", "Nomadic" and total columns were compiled from figures provided in the report and in the tables. 39 people are placed in the settled column for the Straits Settlements due to the report stating that there were no nomadic tribes there for that year. For 1931, "Settled" and "Nomadic" columns were compiled from figures in the census chapter on Aboriginal Races, with the total calculated as an addition of the first two columns.

\(^{68}\) Vlieland, *British Malaya 1931*, 101-104.  
Table 3: Aborigines in the Census, 1921-1931

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
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**Systems of Differentiation**

Arising from the socialisation of race knowledge in the census, there can be discerned several organising features in the differentiation of aborigines. Some were taken from the general colonial sphere discussed in Chapter 3 and some were anthropological, but all these aspects blended in the census in particular ways. Analysing the systems of differentiation in the census allows for comparison in the coming two chapters in which the anthropological form of racial knowledge is scrutinised, and in order to tease out the overlaps and divergences in race knowledge between government and anthropology. The most salient feature of the system of differentiation in the census is
the introduction of tame/wild distinctions of aborigines as elements to be enumerated in 1911 and their continued use until 1931. The presence of this element of aboriginal racial classification and understanding shown in the census, government and general colonial spheres is brought into sharper relief by its conspicuous absence in anthropological works. The presence of such a differentiation in the former sphere points to other logics of racial differentiation. Government concepts of aborigines were directly engaged in the business of governing a population so conceived. Ideas of aboriginal races were thus particularly sensitive to the wants and needs of colonial rule and profoundly enmeshed in the ideological underpinnings of that rule in Malaya which, as mentioned previously, was justified on the basis of protecting Malay interests. The prominence given to the Malay racial group affected ideas about aboriginal races with the British tracking the entry of aborigines into the Malay group through tame and settled categories.

The inclusion of tame Sakai or settled aborigines in the census pointed to the use of Sakai-Malay gradations and reinforced the idea that aborigines and Malays were essentially and intricately connected. From the earliest censuses, aborigines were almost always included under the wider definition of Malays. In the 1871 Straits Settlement census, Mantra were treated as a separate category from Malays, but starting from the 1881 census, the renamed “Aborigines of the Peninsula” were listed under “Malays and other Natives of the Archipelago”. This was continued into the FMS Census of 1901 where in one table, aborigines were one of the Malay “races” in

70 McNair and Knight, Straits Settlements. Census. Reports and Returns. 1871, 33; Dunlop, Pickering, Cousins, Hewetson, Knight and Talbot, Straits Settlements. Population (according to the census taken in 1881), 9.
a table where Malays and its affiliated “races” were divided according sex for each state. At one point in the 1901 FMS Census, aborigines were referred to as “Aboriginal Malays”, a phrase that was usually applied by anthropologists specifically to one section of indigenous inhabitants of Malaya, also termed Jakun, and not to refer to indigenous peoples as a whole. However, this could reflect the view of the superintendent of the census that all indigenous peoples of Malaya were somehow just under-developed Malays- yet another indication of the importance of a Malay identity in defining Sakai.

In 1911, Pountney assumed that “Sakai” were part of the “Malayan population” (Malay and associated groups) since he had to specify that birthplace tables dealing with the “Malayan population” were always “exclusive of Sakai”. In the Kedah report, the author gave a wide definition of Malay inclusive of its “sub-races” and “Sakais” were one of them along with Samsams, Achinese, Banjarese, Boyanese and Bugis. The extension of aboriginality into the Malay category was affected in the writing and editing of the serious of works published as Papers on Malay Subjects that begun in 1906. In one of Wilkinson’s publications in the series about “The Peninsular Malays”, he started with sections on “The Peninsular Aborigines” with whom he said Malays had intermarried but “failed to absorb completely”. His pamphlet on

71 Hare, Federated Malay States, Census of the Population, 1901, 55, 59.
72 Hare, Federated Malay States, Census of the Population, 1901, 30, 36.
73 Pountney, The Census of the Federated Malay States, 1911, 49.
aboriginal tribes and languages was also, curiously, published under this series of purportedly “Malay subjects”.  

That aborigines were placed under the category of Malays highlighted the importance placed on Malays in the minds of colonial officials, an emphasis that influenced the concepts of aboriginal races by linking the understanding of aboriginal races to ideas and stereotypes of Malays. The incorporation of tame and wild categories coincided with the government’s emphasis on Malays as the major ideological focus of the colonising venture in Malaya. As P. L. Burns argued, the publication Papers on Malay Subjects was not merely a government aid to cadets wanting to gain entry into the government service, it was also a testament to the concern of officials for Malays. 

Burns situated the publication in terms of the “pro-Malay campaign” in the beginning of the twentieth century whereby some colonial officers sought to ‘protect’ or ‘conserve’ Malay interests and lifestyle in the rapidly developing landscape of Malaya. It was, of course, on behalf of Malays that Britain was supposedly developing Malaya, while at the same time ‘allowing’ Malays to live ‘traditionally’. Elements of the lifestyle to be conserved were explicitly stated in the censuses. In 1911, Pountney again noted that

Turning to the constituent elements of the urban population ... the most striking feature is the small proportion of Malays who choose town life .... Roughly, 15 Malays live in the country to one in town, and this is entirely in accordance with the Malay’s distinct preference for kampong

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life. His distaste for commercial life is also amply demonstrated by the comparatively small number of Malays who return their occupations as traders or shopkeepers.\textsuperscript{77}

Stereotypes of Malays, such as those expressed by Pountney, abounded in publications by colonial administrators and scholars such as Swettenham and Winstedt, citing Malay laziness, lack of industry and lax Islamic observance as key features of the “race”.\textsuperscript{78}

It is curious that, within the census, various characteristics were supposedly typical of the Malay race even while that category was known to be in flux and constantly reorganised. The category of Malay was continually modified to take into account the shifting colonial boundaries of the Malay Peninsula and Archipelago from year to year. For instance, in 1901, Kedah was at this time still under the suzerainty of the Siamese. Hence, Malays from Kedah were categorised as “foreign” instead of “native” Malays along with those from Java and Sumatra.\textsuperscript{79} In 1911, however, Kedah was part of the Unfederated Malay States and the Malays there were no longer “foreign” but “native”. In 1911, other categories of people such as Minangkabau, Kampar and Rawa were taken away and subsumed under the heading of Malay, with the rationale that in most cases they would return themselves as Malay.\textsuperscript{80} In 1921, Winstedt was frank about the slippage between being enumerated as Sakai or Malay: “In States, like Negeri Sembilan, the merging of the aborigines into the Muhammadan Malay is rapid: only to an enumerator acquainted with them, or able to detect their descent, would

\textsuperscript{77} Pountney, \textit{The Census of the Federated Malay States, 1911}, 26.
\textsuperscript{78} Swettenham, \textit{British Malaya}, 136, 139, 144; Winstedt, \textit{Malaya}, 89, 107.
\textsuperscript{79} Hirschman, “The Meaning and Measurement of Ethnicity in Malaysia”, 30.
\textsuperscript{80} Pountney, \textit{The Census of the Federated Malay States, 1911}, 22, 40.
many settled aborigines admit their race; converts to Islam would always be recorded as Malay”.  

The practice of including people who were assumed to be affiliated with Malays, or not questioning people who returned themselves as Malays, did not please some people who had different ideas of what Malay should constitute. Anthropologist Nelson Annandale wanted to meet and measure Malays who were really “Peninsular Malays” and “sons of Perak”. He did not wish to study Achinese people who were not born in the Malay Peninsula, and Malays from other parts of the Peninsular not born in Perak even though they had returned themselves as being from Perak in the 1901 census. Annandale noted that the people counted in the 1901 census as Malays in Perak were actually from neighbouring states and were “aliens who have been attracted to the state from other parts of the Peninsula and Archipelago”.  

This difference between an anthropologist’s attempts at defining and identifying ‘accurate’ racial categories, and the government’s working categories, will be explored further in the next chapter.

Anthropological ideas of differentiation were also a feature of race knowledge in the census and were mixed in with the Sakai-Malay gradations. The method of differentiating aborigines within a complex of relationships between Malays, tame Sakai and Sakai, mixed with the more anthropological categories of Semang, Sakai

and Jakun, is evident throughout the 1911 census and often required explanation or clarification. Wilkinson stressed that:

It must not be inferred that the aborigines who speak Malay are merely “tame Sakai,” i.e., wild tribesmen who have abandoned their own language for the use of Malay. On the contrary, it is probable that the use of a Malayan dialect by the tribe known as “Biduanda,” “Blandas,” or “Mantra” ante dates the first coming of the Malays to Malacca.\textsuperscript{83}

Wilkinson’s observation illustrates the two related systems of differentiation in operation in the census. He acknowledged the dominant system of situating Malay-speaking aborigines as “tame” but stressed the importance of placing some of them as another category of aborigines who were Malay speakers according to anthropological racial classifications and not necessarily closer in scale to Malays. The grouping of Jakun was another case in which anthropological and Sakai-Malay gradations clashed. Wilkinson wrote that, in the census, Jakun referred to aborigines who were living in the plains and lower hills of Pahang with a distinct language. This, he said, was in contrast to the understanding of Jakun by Malays who also considered “Malay-speaking aborigines” under this heading.\textsuperscript{84} As most enumerators of aborigines were identified as Malay in the reports, it is not clear whose definition of Jakun was used in the census. Despite Wilkinson’s endorsement of the anthropological understanding, it was not clear to what extent the anthropological method took the place of the Sakai-Malay gradational method of identifying aborigines. Certain aspects of anthropological identification, such as enumeration based on the three racial divisions of Semang, Sakai and Jakun, were carried out in 1911 under Wilkinson, but this

\textsuperscript{83} Pountney, \textit{The Census of the Federated Malay States, 1911}, 72.
\textsuperscript{84} Harc, \textit{Federated Malay States, Census of the Population, 1901}, 72.
practice was not continued in the 1921 and 1931 censuses. On the other hand, enumeration of tame and wild aborigines continued and was frequently a topic of interest in the reports. Understanding aborigines as part of a gradation with Malays had a profound influence on the meaning of aboriginal extinction within government and was vastly dissimilar from anthropological conceptions. In many instances, tame aborigines were still counted as aborigines in the census. In his 1910 Papers on Malay Subjects, Wilkinson commented on the difference between “tame” and “wild” Sakai:

It may, however, be surmised that the “tame” aborigines differ from the “wild” only in the fact that they have discarded their old communal houses and the use of the bow and are losing other racial traits such as the making of bark-cloth and the painting and tattooing of the face. Briefly, they are becoming sophisticated.\(^5\)

On other occasions, the census reports indicated that many aborigines would be counted as Malay if they converted to Islam or took on cultural characteristics stereotypical of Malay. Wilkinson, again in the 1911 census, wrote of the Besisi, a Sakai “race” in Selangor and Negeri Sembilan that “they seem destined to lose before very long their distinct language and their tribal characteristics and beliefs. This tendency was already marked in the apparent shrinkage of the aboriginal population

\(^5\) Wilkinson, Papers on Malay Subjects, 18. It should also be noted that the “tame” and “wild” system of classification is mirrored in Taiwan where Han Chinese have used the terms “raw” and “cooked” in order to distinguish between indigenous people who were outside the purview of Qing control and those accustomed to Qing culture. For a fuller discussion of “raw” and “cooked” distinctions in Taiwan, see Emma Teng, “Taiwan as a Living Museum: Tropes of Anachronism in Late-Imperial Chinese Travel Writing”, Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies 59, 2 (1999): 445-484. I am thankful to Robert Cribb for bringing the Taiwan case to my attention.
in the coast district.” In this case, Wilkinson signalled that changes in language and lifestyle meant extinction.

If someone were returned as Malay in the census, they would disappear into the Malay population. At the same time, the government started with a wider definition of aborigines by including many tame Sakai who would otherwise have been counted as Malay by anthropologists. It is instructive to recall Pountney’s comment on extinction as an indication of the difference between governmental and anthropological divergences on this issue. Pountney insisted in 1931 that “[t]here is, therefore, every reason to believe that, far from ‘dying out,’ the aboriginal races are not really decreasing, but only being assimilated and absorbed” into the Malay population. In 1921, Winstedt also noted the “merging of the aborigines into the Muhammadan Malay” but was not alarmist about their extinction. The absence of tame aborigines and the broad assumption of aboriginal extinction within anthropology will be explored further in the following chapter as proof of the different concerns of anthropology local to Malaya and globally, producing dissimilar concepts of aboriginal races.

The racial classifications of the census demonstrate the absorption of colonial common knowledge into conceptions of race in the governmental sphere. The addition of tame Sakai constituted a different subject from both Malays and Sakai, arising from the awareness in the colonial sphere that there were people who did not fit the outlines of

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58 Nathan, The Census of British Malaya, 1921, 124.
either category. The emergence of the tame label in the census came about due to the presence of people who were identified, either by themselves or by enumerators, as aboriginal but who were not enumerated through the special Sakai census. As previously indicated, this meant that they lived in households that could be visited, instead of having to be invited to a particular location through word of mouth. Tame and wild denominations were readily incorporated into the vocabulary of the census since it had already formed part of the larger discourse of Sakai within colonial Malaya.

The introduction of “tame” and “wild” Sakai distinctions in 1911, which later changed to “settled” and “nomad” distinctions of aborigines, shows the receptiveness of government officials who were willing to incorporate an informal system of differentiation if it was believed that such distinctions were important to keep in mind in order to govern. The quality of tameness evidently originated in the realm of general knowledge as a way for Malays, aborigines and the colonial government to understand divergences in the stereotype of the quintessential Sakai and to place them along a gradient of civilisation along with the stereotypical Malay. The knowledge of this manner of differentiation and its use came through the interaction of colonial officials and scholars with Malays and aborigines, as indicated by the writings of Miklouho-Maclay and Hervey, as well as the different ways Sakai were enumerated. The use of tame Sakai as a category to be enumerated is a prime illustration of the close ties between census racial classification and governmental imperatives. Census categories were malleable and census takers and report writers incorporated social
categories that were seen as important to the government as and when they became so. Thus “tame” and “wild”, and “settled” and “nomad”, categories only emerged as important distinctions from 1911 onwards as Tables 1 to 3 illustrate. The inconsistencies in defining tame or wild aborigines shows how whimsical the construction of race was precisely because it was produced and fitted within a certain structure of colonial power in Malaya.
CHAPTER 5: 
Sakai and Anthropology

This chapter focuses on the construction of aboriginal race categories within anthropological thought and argues that conditions within colonial Malaya, and governmental ‘working categories’ specifically, played a large part in determining the local character of anthropological racial categories. As with the use of the term ‘government’, ‘anthropology’ does not adequately capture the specific circumstances of Malaya and the distance from anthropological endeavours elsewhere in the world. Yet the character of this scholarly endeavour in Malaya overlaps with several tenets of anthropological thought and practice in other colonies and metropoles such as referencing major anthropological texts and adopting physical anthropological methods. The particular history of anthropology in Malaya, and the continuities with anthropology in other parts of the world, is implied in my use of the term anthropology.

Concerted effort at producing scholarly knowledge on aborigines in Malaya began with J. R. Logan’s publications in JIAEA from 1847 until the end of the journal’s publication in 1862, and was continued by anthropologist W. W. Skeat and linguist C. O. Blagden in the late nineteenth century, culminating in the publication in 1906 of the well-known book on aborigines, Pagan Races of the Malay Peninsula, based on the Cambridge Expedition to the Malay States from 1899 to 1900. The distance traversed by the racial classifications from the simple multiplication of aboriginal groups in the
1820s is considerable. From an expansion of groups known to be aboriginal in
Anderson’s work to non-negrito peoples as well, *Pagan Races* resolved the previous
confusion of races of aboriginal peoples of Malaya into three simple categories:
Semang, Sakai and Jakun.¹ Skeat regarded aboriginal peoples of Malaya as distinct
from Malays, who, though still considered from the region and ‘native’, were seen as
having a higher level of civilisation than the aforementioned aboriginal peoples.

The racial classification endorsed by Skeat attests to the influence of metropolitan
thought on ideas about race. Skeat was part of an international network of scholars in
European metropolitan centres and colonies that were investigating races, and his
work participated in a global conversation on racial divisions and characteristics. The
divisions of aboriginal peoples had been proposed previously in 1902 by the Swiss
anthropologist Rudolf Martin in a slightly modified racial configuration. Skeat agreed
with Martin’s first two categories, Semang and Sakai, but was more certain than
Martin in calling the third division Jakun whereas Martin had merely named it “Mixed
Tribes”.² At the same time, however, the very fact of having conducted research in
many parts of what was then colonial Malaya and engaging with local ideas about
divisions of people meant that Skeat’s work had to take into account other modes of
differentiation. This points to a colonial socialisation of his racial science whereby his
ideas about the aboriginal races of Malaya were formed within a colonial situation that
had its own means of differentiating aborigines. Colonial socialisation was an over-

² Martin, *Die Inlandstämme der Malayischen Halbinsel*; Skeat, “The Wild Tribes of the Malay
Peninsula”, 124 fn 1.
arching context for the work of Skeat and other scholars working on aborigines in Malaya, illustrating how the theorising of races was situated in that context.

**The Malay Peninsula and Race Science**

The field of race science of the Malay Peninsula shows general agreement in several areas with the developments in race science elsewhere in the colonial and metropolitan worlds, but also divergences that add a layer of specificity to the resulting theorisation of aboriginal race identification and classification. The initial entry of the Malay Peninsula into the domain of race science was due to the inclusion of a Malay segment in divisions of man from the eighteenth century. Reinhold Foster advanced a theory of migrating Malays displacing and supplanting the already present “aboriginal black race” also known as “Papuas”, or people from New Guinea.3 Johann Friedrich Blumenbach in his 1795 *On the Natural Varieties of Mankind* classified the “five foremost varieties of mankind, one true species” as “Caucasian”, “Mongolian”, “Ethiopian”, “American”, and “Malay”.4 Subsequent nineteenth-century British writers who visited the area of the Malay Archipelago and the Peninsula in particular reinforced the distinction between two types of people in the region, whether or not those were considered different races of the same human species, or different species of humans altogether. John Crawfurd, George Windsor Earl and Alfred Russel Wallace all wrote about the two types of people, the Malay and the Papuan, found in

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the Archipelago. Crawford considered both Malay and Papuan types to be indigenous, meaning that they were both from the region.

British colonial engagement in the Malay Peninsula was mainly with coastal peoples who were identified as Malay and sultanates that were considered Malay, but Malays were too civilised to be of much anthropological interest. The attention of writers on the Malay Peninsula turned to the ‘wild’ component of indigenous peoples, which, by the publication of Anderson’s book in 1824, was understood to comprise not only of a “Papuan” or “Negrito” category but also “wild” non-Malay indigenous peoples. While Negritos were not singled out as a group of particular interest within the discussion of aborigines among colonial society and government, internationally this anthropological category remained a subject of interest due to its connections to the larger grouping of “Oceanic Negroes”. Within this scheme, Malaya was connected to an inquiry into the history of its language and racial affinities that included island territories all the way from Madagascar in the Western extreme of Oceania, to the Andaman Islands, the Malay Archipelago, Taiwan and eastward towards Polynesia. The prominence of Negritos in early studies of the Malay Archipelago also cemented the Malay Peninsula’s eastward orientation as the British and French anthropology of “Oceanic Negroes” grew and was tied to Negritos in Malaya.

5 Ballard, “‘Oceanic Negroes’”, 158.
7 Anderson, Political and Commercial Considerations (1824), xxx-xxi.
8 Ballard, “‘Oceanic Negroes’”, 166.
The gulf between the internal emphases on aborigines or Sakai in Malaya, and the external international anthropological interest in Negritos of Malaya, demonstrates the disjuncture between local interests and metropolitan anthropological concepts. The difference between the interests of anthropologists working in Malaya as opposed to scholars based in metropolitan centres will be investigated in detail in the following chapter which focuses on the scholarship of Ivor H. N. Evans, an anthropologist based in Malaya in the early twentieth century. In the mid-1800s, however, a thinker whose ideas bore the imprint of situatedness in Malaya was Logan. The various strands of Logan’s ethnological thinking are worth unravelling to illustrate the uneven influences of metropolitan British scholars on his ideas and to foreshadow how this influence persisted in the writings of subsequent scholars of aboriginal races in Malaya in the twentieth century.

As evident in Logan’s writing, comparative philology and ethnology were intertwined disciplines in Britain by the mid-nineteenth century, with the latter forming “the most general scientific framework for the study of the linguistic, physical, and cultural characteristics of dark-skinned, non-European, ‘uncivilized’ peoples”. Appropriately, ethnology was a term that featured regularly in the pages of Logan’s journal the *JIAEA*. Logan mused at length about the study of ethnology and areas that contributed to it. He thought of ethnology as “the unchangeable physical and moral nature of man” and an “investigation of the origin and relations of particular groups of human

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9 Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, 57, 47.
families". He was well versed in languages but noted that it was a means to an end, a basis on which to delve deeper into ethnology, a view also shared by Jones.

“Ethnology,” Logan wrote, “only attends to philology so far as it is connected with and can serve to unlock the general history of the development of man, physically and intellectually, and the particular history of races.” Logan, who was the journal’s editor and main contributor, wrote an article in the first volume published in 1847 about the “ethnology of the Indian Archipelago”. He followed this up with several articles, published throughout the career of the journal that lasted until 1862, on the ethnology of Johor and the “Indo-Pacific Islands”. It was in the pages of the JIAEA that Crawfurd expanded on the languages that covered the whole of Oceania, publishing his now well-known paper “On the Malayan and Polynesian Languages and Races” in JIAEA in 1848, the same year the paper was printed in the Journal of the Ethnological Society of London after being presented before the society the previous year.

Like many strongly religious scholars in Britain such as Prichard, Logan was frank about the place of Christianity in his ethnology. In 1847, he wrote that “[m]an is essentially, even in his lowest or normal state, a shadow of the Divinity”, and that “the highest natural study of mankind is man … because he is the highest and most

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complex manifestation which the Deity has given of His being".\textsuperscript{14} Logan held that "[t]he perfecting of ethnology will be the latest and noblest scientific product of Christianity, for it is eminently the science of Christianity, on the spirit of which it depends in its very origin and at every step of its progress". Furthermore, "[t]he God of nations is seen working everywhere and in all time, and the revelations of his being in the wonderful diversity of human races and conditions of mind" was seen as evident in the science of ethnology.\textsuperscript{15} Ultimately, ethnology was a way to illustrate God’s workings and possibly to lay bare his immutable laws.\textsuperscript{16} No doubt Logan’s thought was heavily influenced by that of Prichard, himself an Evangelical Anglican.\textsuperscript{17}

Logan frequently mentioned the presence of multiple races and varieties of people such as when he wrote that "there are now in the Archipelago an extraordinary number of races, differing in colour, habits, civilization, and language".\textsuperscript{18} He also asserted that "[a]ll kinds of minds are born into each race" and that there was "a wonderful difference in the degree of perfection to which different races have brought the art of speech or the construction of sentences".\textsuperscript{19} There was an indication that he was aware of the arguments for monogeny and polygeny when he tellingly wrote that "we have no right nor desire, in a purely scientific enquiry, to assume the unity of the human race".\textsuperscript{20} Nonetheless, he maintained the assumption of a common origin, though

\textsuperscript{14} Logan, "Introductory Remarks", 173, 179.
\textsuperscript{15} Logan, "Miscellaneous", 449.
\textsuperscript{16} Logan, "Miscellaneous", 445-449; Logan, "The Languages of the Indian Archipelago II", 639.
\textsuperscript{19} Logan, "The Languages of the Indian Archipelago II", 668-670.
\textsuperscript{20} Logan, "The Languages of the Indian Archipelago II", 671.
perhaps one deep in time. He posited a “primary era of human existence” out of which grew a variety of savage races with languages, some of which became civilised races while others remained savage. He did not entertain the idea that there could be degeneracy from a savage state to one lower than what he called that primary era. Indeed, he said that “the savage fixed in his range of ideas, and gaining nothing new from experience, must still be much more rich in ideas and words than men could have been in the primary era of human existence”, and thus while savages were still “the very lowest existing type of humanity”, they nonetheless had progressed from that primary era as had civilised races.21

Yet, the biologisation of race was not prominent in Logan’s thinking. Logan’s use of races was more in the vein of ‘peoples’, and not steeped in terms of human species. Nonetheless, it was not uncommon for him to utilise similarities between bodies to argue for connections between people. Logan saw a direct influence of Africa on the Indian Archipelago, and indeed also the main continent of Asia, and attempted to prove such a connection by showing similarities in the physical bodies of the peoples, particularly between East Africans and a group commonly termed as Asiatic Negroes, in customs as well as in language.22 The slow progress of the biologisation of race in Logan’s theorising of peoples was coupled with the prominence of physical anthropological measurements in his studies about aborigines of Johor and his published diagrams showing the facial angles of aborigines. Logan did not write

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21 Logan, “The Languages of the Indian Archipelago II”, 642.
specifically about physical anthropology, identifying rather as a philologist and using his knowledge of languages to draw connections between races. However, in the first volume of the journal in 1847, he and another author, J. T. Thomson, tried their hand at collecting and presenting physical anthropological analyses. A group of people whom Logan called *Orang Mintira* lived in the vicinity of Bermun Mountain in Melaka and were brought to Singapore by his Malay writer. Logan had lithographs drawn and measurements taken of this group of people as well as several other “aboriginal tribes” in Singapore, the *Orang Sabimba* and *Orang Biduanda Kallang*.

In a series of articles, he provided comments on all the lithographs, guiding the reader as to what should be noted or how the lithograph did not capture particular features of the faces. For instance, Logan wrote that a man from the group of Biduanda Kallang had shoulders that were “narrow and arms fleshless, approaching in this respect to the Australians. The woman’s face is very broad across the cheek bones, so as to present the most Mangolian [sic] of all the heads”.

The emphasis on the skull and bodily measurements taken by Logan and Thomson shows what Paul Turnbull characterised as the “centrality of bodily measurement within anatomical and anthropological circles” in Britain that then formed the subject of interest for intellectuals coming from Britain. Scholars who came to Malaya to study aborigines believed in and applied physical anthropological methods and

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24 Logan, “The Orang Biduanda Kallang”, 299.

thinking in their works. Logan presented the data in table format and calculated the
facial angles, but he did not interpret the data in terms of gradations of civilisation
pointed to by the measurements, leaving the reader to draw those conclusions.
However, his belief in the significance of facial angles was implicit. It was obvious
that the facial angle of one Orang Mintira individual, Pawang, was the highest and
Logan had said that “[h]is head was decidedly intellectual in its formation”.26

But though physical anthropology was supposedly objective, based on bodily data and
requiring little interpretation, this was not the case in the application of physical
anthropology. In Logan’s work, the social circumstances surrounding the meeting of
the people and production of data provided an important frame into which the data and
science had to fit. Not coincidentally, Logan identified Pawang as a respected man
amongst his peers, thus Pawang’s high facial angle confirmed what Logan already
perceived, which was his apparently higher intellect and position within his society.
The coincidence between physical anthropological data and the social facts as
perceived by the authors was also apparent in Thomson’s article on Sletar and
Sabimba people in which he provided comments on plates that he annexed to the
article. A lithograph of subjects was set against a grid so that the reader could
calculate the facial angles. Thomson based his drawings on the Dutch anatomist Petrus
Camper’s “celebrated facial angle”. The proportions of the heads, he argued, “would
place the Orang Sletar intermediate between the European and Negro in expansion of
the organs of intellect, and again shews them to possess a greater developement [sic]
of the jaws and ‘organs subservient to sensation and animal faculties than either’”. The

last section was (mis)quoted by Thomson from Prichard’s *Natural History of Man* and he also mentioned other methods of calculation that he attributed to Blumenbach.27 Just as Logan’s placement of Pawang was mediated by his standing among his peers, Thomson’s positioning of Orang Sletar was predicated on comparisons with Malays. The “part Malay conductors” who brought two families to see Thomson “assumed over them an air of superiority and command, which is never witnessed” in Malays “when in the presence of Europeans alone, and affording at once, I might say, a standard for judging of the place which the Orang Sletar should hold in the ranks of civilization”.28

There was a greater influence of biologisation in the writings of other authors whose work appeared in *JIAEA*. James Low, for instance, wrote in 1850 that “there seems to be no reason why we should not allow them [the woolly-haired races, which have been discovered in the Eastern Peninsula, and in the Indo-Chinese Archipelago] to be a distinct variety of the genus man”. He also entertained the possibilities that “the African Negro” was “a distinct species” developed through “physical and perhaps moral causes which contributed to stamp them so indelibly” in terms of “form, feature, and complexion”.29 Low’s stark polygenist views were not echoed by many scholars of Malaya and in fact the question as to the singular or plural origins of humans was

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29 Low, “The Kareaan Tribes or Aborigines of Martaban and Tavai”, 414, 424.
not explicated in the arena of Malaya’s aborigines. More fundamental questions needed to be answered, such as the “identify of the aboriginal races in the North and South of the Peninsula, and the marks of their connection with other Asiatic races to be found in their language, physical peculiarities” and so forth.30

In line with this desire for knowledge, the contribution to knowledge in the *JIAEA* and the subsequent scholarly journal *JSBRAS* was on the basis of its collection of ethnological observations.31 The preoccupations of the British who came to Malaya, like other “men on the spot” stationed in British colonies, were, as Stocking observed, “more likely to be those of traditional ethnology, since the problems of ethnic origin and relationship (who were these people? where did they come from?) were perhaps the most likely to command the immediate attention of ethnographic observers” with the theoretical grounds for analysis being “a rather generalised body of ethnocentric assumption”.32 Many areas of scholarship centred on the Malay Peninsula focused on the collection of information as a main priority and from which other scholarly endeavours could be developed. The establishment and filling of museums in Selangor and also in Taiping, Perak was part of this effort. As expressed by a writer known only as Wurtenburg in the *Selangor Journal* in 1893:

> ... I think it cannot be too strongly urged that the [Selangor] museum, while retaining this mainly zoological character, should at least be supplemented in the departments of geology, botany, anthropology and antiquities. We want, therefore, ... a more or less complete exhibition of

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31 Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, 259
specimens of native dresses, books, coins, instruments and implements, whether for business or amusement, together with specimens of the few existing native products, including models of houses, mines, mosques, plantations, boats and fishing stakes...\textsuperscript{33}

As the nineteenth century unfolded, the main producers of knowledge about aborigines came from the ranks of colonial officers, or people connected to colonial government or business at one time or another. This is evident in the list of authors who contributed on the subject of aboriginal peoples. W. E. Maxwell played a major role in establishing the \textit{JSBRAS} and was its editor for several years. Maxwell had been an administrator in Province Wellesley and Melaka since the 1860s. He held important posts such as Resident of Selangor (1889-1892) and Colonial Secretary of the Straits Settlements (1892-1895) before leaving the Malay Peninsula in 1895.\textsuperscript{34} In the first volume of the journal, Maxwell contributed an article on “Semang and Sakai tribes” in Kedah and Perak, based on an article that had already been published in \textit{Field} newspaper on April 23, 1878. In the following year, Maxwell wrote another article on aboriginal tribes in Perak.\textsuperscript{35}

Another high profile colonial officer who contributed on matters aboriginal was Frank Swettenham. He started his career in Malaya as a cadet and rose through the ranks of the colonial government. He was Resident of Selangor before Maxwell from 1882 to 1889, Resident of Perak from 1889 to 1895, and he was the first to fill the post of

\textsuperscript{34} Gullick, \textit{Malay Society in the Late Nineteenth Century}, 373; Thio, \textit{British Policy in the Malay Peninsula, 1880-1910}, 141.
Resident-General of the Federated Malay States from 1896 to 1900. In 1880, he contributed an article exploring the areas of the Slim and Bernam Rivers in which he wrote about meeting indigenous peoples. He also compiled a comparative vocabulary of aboriginal “dialects” that was published in 1880.

Despite the articles produced by these high-ranking officials, the relatively minor characters in the colonial administration were the ones who contributed much of the corpus of knowledge on indigenous peoples. For instance, A. D. Machado, a staff member of the Perak Government, collected various Sakai artefacts such as a skull and ornaments and took photographs of Sakai. He appeared as a census taker in the 1891 Perak census report, and in the records of the Raffles Library and Museum, established in Singapore in 1849, as a donator of Sakai ornaments. Mining engineer and later anthropologist Jacques de Morgan first came to Perak in 1884 in order to prospect for tin. Swettenham, then resident of Perak, employed him to survey parts of Perak. De Morgan wrote about his experiences with aboriginal peoples and amassed an ethnographic collection of approximately 180 items. He became well known as a writer and ethnographer of Negritos.

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One such minor colonial officer who became an important figure in the anthropology of aborigines of Malaya was Skeat. Skeat’s career followed the colonial activities of the British in the Malay States. He attended the University of Cambridge and in 1891 he joined the Selangor Civil Service. He was District Officer in Kuala Langat, Selangor, before becoming District Magistrate for Larut, Perak, in 1898. After a career in the civil service, he organised an anthropological expedition to the Malay Peninsula—the “University of Cambridge Expedition to the North-Eastern Malay States and Upper Perak, 1899-1900”. The expedition was supported by ethnographer A. C. Haddon, who had recently led his own Cambridge expedition to the Torres Strait and Borneo. Skeat’s expedition included zoologist Nelson Annandale, who undertook a second trip to the Malay Peninsula from 1901 to 1903 with funding from the universities of Liverpool and Edinburgh. The major work arising from the Cambridge expedition was *Pagan Races of the Malay Peninsula* by Skeat and C. O. Blagden, the latter a former member of the Straits Settlements Civil Service. From 1894, Blagden wrote several articles for *JSBRAS* on linguistic subjects and the influence of various peoples on the languages of the Malay Peninsula. From 1894 to 1905, he and Skeat were the principal contributors of articles on indigenous peoples to *JSBRAS* and other international journals.

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As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, the formation of knowledge on and anthropological study of aborigines was seldom used by the colonial government in Malaya to justify its presence and power. While government sources in the 1870s made mention of enslaved aborigines as a means to justify the British presence in Perak, by 1900 the British were more secure in their position in Malaya. Although the influence of anthropology on government was minimal beyond perfunctory additions in the census report and scholars who used anthropological theories, ideas about aborigines in the colonial sphere and the racial concepts employed in colonial government censuses were discourses that anthropology fed into while at the same time developing its specifically anthropological ideas of aboriginal races. The circularity of the flow of ideas is typical of the various ideas about aborigines that were present in colonial Malaya, and that could then be harnessed and developed by institutions, the government census and anthropology, in terms more specific to the needs of each field and its practitioners. This indeed is what Stoler, quoting Foucault, describes as the “polyvalent mobility” of racial discourses which, in this instance, centres on aborigines. Stoler further argues that “the fact that racial discourses contain and coexist with a range of political agendas is not a contradiction but a fundamental historical feature of their nonlinear, spiraling political genealogies”.\footnote{Stoler, “Racial Histories and Their Regimes of Truth”, 376. Original emphasis.} The mobile and multi-faceted nature of this process of knowledge formation cannot be adequately mapped, but certain aspects of this process will be drawn out in order to show the implications of the specificities of racial knowledge formation that sometimes resulted in completely different understandings of who constituted an aborigine. The following
section will highlight the divergences between government reports that emphasised anthropological concepts and other writings that did not.

**Anthropology within Government**

The 1886 and 1896 reports on Sakai of Selangor show tentatively the situation in which certain authors heavily influenced by anthropological ideas interpreted the aboriginal communities in Selangor differently from their counterparts. As mentioned in Chapter 3, in 1886, the Selangor Acting Resident Rodger asked the officers for vocabularies from “Sakai tribes in their [the officers’] districts” and reports on their number, division and customs. Two of the longer reports were reproduced in the *Selangor Journal* in 1895, while all of the 1896 reports were reproduced in 1897. It was likely due to Skeat’s interest in matters aboriginal that these reports were published so as to reach a wider audience. Skeat was one of three founders of the *Selangor Journal* in 1892 and he wrote many ethnographic papers for the journal until the end of its publication in 1897. At the time of the 1896 reports, Skeat was District Officer of Kuala Langat in Selangor and himself wrote a lengthy report on the Sakai in his district that was reproduced in the *Selangor Journal* in three parts.

The reports were written in response to orders from the government in Selangor, as represented by the Resident, and were thus official government documents. The

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authors of the reports were all colonial officers. However, this did not indicate a
uniformity of outlook. Anthropological ideas informed some of the reports to a great
degree. Especially in the 1896 reports, the difference between an anthropological
versus a governmental interest in aborigines can be brought into sharper relief by
comparing Skeat’s report to that of the other district officers. The differences in
emphases, in what constituted evidence, and in how difference was described between
Skeat and others prefigured the greater divergences between the texts of the
Cambridge expedition and those of the government census in their conceptions of
aboriginal races.

Writings on indigenous peoples reflected a gradation of anthropological and scholarly
interest amongst government officials. There were government officials who had no
interest in anthropological ideas, and there were those who could be considered
amateur anthropologists and who dabbled in writing their observations about these
people. Then there were officials who had a serious interest in anthropology, who took
the opportunity during their employment to study them, and who later became
scholars. Anthropologically minded officials constituted a minor group, yet they were
quite easily identifiable by the tone of their writing, which differed considerably from
that of their colleagues. This difference became more pronounced after these officials
became full-time scholars when their writings were then compared to those of authors
still in government.
A comparison between the shorter reports and the longer ones shows the obvious
difference in the way that those officers interested in anthropology approached race as
compared to their less scholarly colleagues. For the 1896 reports, the government
officers uninterested in anthropological matters responded to the request for reports by
focusing on the practical aspects of how Sakai communities lived in their districts and
on the problems facing the officers in dealing with them. Roe reported for Kuala
Lumpur district on the reception of a government directive to survey and reserve land
for aborigines.46 For the Klang district, Douglas offered suggestions on how to
improve the conditions of aborigines.47 Several of the officers brought up issues they
faced when dealing with Sakai. The reports addressed matters pertaining to the
governing of Sakai, in particular the trade in fruit and jungle produce in which Sakais
were engaged. C. N. Maxwell of Ulu Selangor District included a case he dealt with in
which officials were asked by Sakai men to prohibit the interaction between Malay
men and Sakai women. Aborigines’ general welfare and treatment by neighbouring
peoples including Malays was also noted to be generally good.48

Two lengthy reports among the 1886 reports were written by G. C. Bellamy for the
Kuala Langat district and J. A. G. Campbell for Ulu Langat district.49 The way in
which the reports were written show a scholarly bent, and part of Bellamy’s report was
quoted in an article by Richard Temple, the scholar of the Andaman Islanders.50

48 Roe, “Sakei Tribes in Selangor, Kuala Lumpur District”, 414; Maxwell, “Sakei Tribes in Selangor,
Ulu Langat District”, 398.
Campbell, “The Sakais of Selangor - II: Ulu Langat”, 240-245
Bellamy addressed the question of the origins of the “jungle-men” of that district and referred to Logan as an authority on the matter. Though Logan considered them “aborigines of the Peninsula, at least anterior to the Malays”, Bellamy contended that he “failed to find any further proof that one would naturally look for to support this theory of their being aborigines”. While Bellamy discussed origins, Campbell’s report was mostly a collection of ethnographic details of marriage customs, games, methods of obtaining food and word lists.

Physical descriptions of the people in question made up a small section of both reports. The presence of this line of reasoning goes to show the elements of scholarly thinking on aborigines that tried to find physical correlations to already noted social facts. At first, Bellamy established the connection between Malays and the “Orang Hutan” tribe he was describing. He then went on to say that

> [t]he features of the Orang Hutan tribe prove, as mentioned above, their relationship to the inhabitants of certain of the East Indian Islands. The forehead is narrow and receding, the nose broad and flat, the mouth large, and the hair crisp and woolly in some, but long and wavy in others .... There is, of course, a great admixture of Malay blood amongst the community, and this will account for the similarity of the appearance of many to the members of that race.

The connections and similarities in physical appearance and lifestyle between aborigines and Malays were explained by an “admixture of Malay blood”, an occurrence that continued to be used as an explanation for unclear racial boundaries.

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As shown in Chapters 3 and 4, the similarities between Sakai and Malay were often explained in the colonial arena and government censuses as Sakai who were ‘tame’. In this case, admixture was the explanation given by Bellamy, an official of anthropological leanings. Campbell ended his report with physical descriptions of the “races” of Sakai in his district. Yet the social conditions of the groups were in fact the cornerstone of differentiation that was then looked for in measurements. Campbell focused on the height of certain groups, with greater height linked predictably to a higher degree of civilisation. The Orang Laut (Sea People), who were identified as “the best-made race” and “the best-looking set”, were also the tallest among the three groups he reported on, while the Orang Bukit (Hill People) were the shortest group and displayed the most “primitive” characteristics.⁵⁴

In 1896, Skeat’s report stood out as the longest at eight pages while most of the other reports did not exceed two pages. Skeat begun with a section on the “origins” of the Sakai with origin accounts from the people in his district before anchoring their origins in “the fusion of at least two distinct races, the Negritos and the ‘Laus’ [sic] of southern China, both in their language and physique”.⁵⁵ As with Bellamy, Skeat explained the different Sakai tribes he encountered in terms of “mixed races” and “fusions” of essential types. He quoted from an article by S. E. Peall that appeared in the Journal of the Polynesian Society about the physical characteristics of the two races instead of providing his own personalised descriptions.⁵⁶ In Skeat’s report, the

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main reference was other races, not just internal to Malaya but regionally and worldwide.

The fact that many aborigines were introduced to the British through Malay masters of slaves and headmen was already a situation that placed indigenous people in a separate category from Malays that could then be read in terms of differences in bodies. Power differentials between groups of people served to highlight and reinforce difference. In the reports, notables in the Malay community were used to gain access to aboriginal groups. Roe observed that the “Raja Laut appears to have real influence with the older [Sakei] men, who look to him for advice and assistance. A levy, which was largely attended, was held at Raja Laut’s house during the present month, all the Sakeis present appeared well-clad, well-fed and contented.” It was conceded that other reports were based mostly on reports on Sakai inhabitants gathered by Penghulus of the district and the Batins or heads of aboriginal communities.58

While Skeat saw differences in terms of physical anthropological facts, other government staff hardly mentioned any divergence in the physical characteristics of indigenous peoples from those of the neighbouring populations of Malays. In fact, many stated that it was hard to tell the difference between Sakai and Malays. Roe mentioned that “[i]n general appearance they [the Sakai] greatly resemble Malays, and there is often considerable difficulty in distinguishing between them”, comments that

were also echoed by Douglas and Stonor for their respective districts. Where difference was mentioned it was mostly discerned on the basis of lifestyle (mostly nomadic or mostly settled like Malays), economic activity (collecting jungle produce or familiar with money economy like Malays), location (close to Malay villages and towns or people in the recesses of the jungle) and clothing (wearing bark clothing, which was typically known to be the attire of forest dwellers, or wearing clothing associated with Malays such as the sarong) rather than physical differences.

The writings of Bellamy, Campbell and Skeat show the impact of physical anthropology on the study of aborigines on the Malay Peninsula and the influence of metropolitan ideas of race on the interpretation of the specific situations in Malaya. As more detailed racial schemas were developed at the end of the nineteenth century, drawing on the Cambridge Expedition to Malaya, physical anthropological methods had to be rationalised against other methods of aboriginal differentiation. The resulting racial science betrayed the uncertainty of physical anthropological methods in answering the question of the exact division of aboriginal races, and the ensuing need to fit the results to social configurations or to rename the social configurations according to anthropologically palatable theories.

The Cambridge Expedition (1899-1900)

The Cambridge Expedition, or Skeat Expedition as it is also sometimes known, was planned and organised by Skeat himself. Skeat’s interest in anthropology was apparent in his report on Sakai in 1896, and in his hosting a number of scholars who had come to Malaya to study aborigines. Among them was the distinguished Swiss anthropologist Rudolf Martin who had come to Selangor in 1897 to study Malays and aborigines.61 While on leave to Cambridge in 1898, Skeat discussed his plan of embarking on an expedition to the northern states of Malaya with Haddon, who had recently concluded his expedition to New Guinea, the Torres Straits islands and North Borneo.62 Skeat was still a government officer at the time of proposing the expedition and had to obtain leave from his duties in order to undertake the expedition, in addition to obtaining permission from the government in Malaya to embark on a “scientific expedition” to what were then the “Siamese Malay States”. The possibility of the Siamese government misinterpreting such an expedition as having political aims was discussed, and eventually permission was granted to carry out the expedition.63

Several people were attached to the expedition at one time or another during the year it was undertaken. The zoologist Annandale was born in Edinburgh in 1876 and graduated from Oxford University in 1898. The following year he joined the Skeat

63 “Scientific Expedition”, CO 273/244 (23 Nov. 1898); “Scientific Expedition to Siamese Malay States”, CO 273/253 (9 Jan. 1899).
expedition and from 1901 to 1903 visited the Malay Archipelago again with H. C. Robinson. Other people on the Skeat expedition were Richard Evans, D. T. Gwynne-Vaughan, Frank F. Laidlaw and R. H. Yapp, all of whom were affiliated to Cambridge or Oxford University and had expertise in areas such as botany, molluscs and insects. The expedition started in Bangkok, where permission and assistance was asked from and granted by the Siamese government, before beginning the expedition proper. The areas covered by the expedition are today the Patani, Yala and Narathiwat areas of Southern Thailand and included the states of Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu, which were under Siamese influence at the time. Trips were also made to Tahan Mountain in Pahang and to Melaka and Singapore.

The aborigines studied by members of the Skeat Expedition were at the time under Siamese influence. The area was officially called “North-Eastern Malay States” by the expedition, while Annandale and Robinson in their expedition undertaken in 1901 to 1902 called a similar area the “Siamese Malay States”. Skeat and Annandale both relied on the cooperation of a variety of government officials to carry out their expeditions. The presence of the Siamese government and influence in the area that the expedition traversed adds another layer of colonial circumstance to the resulting anthropology. The bureaucratic integration of the states into Siamese government varied from state to state since they were not considered integral to Siam and since

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there was British influence in the region due to their presence in the rest of the
Peninsula. As Barbara and Leonard Andaya stated, “[t]o Bangkok the national prestige
derived from suzerainty over the Malay states became less important than using them
as a bargaining point with the British government”.68 There were layers of
bureaucratic arrangements between the central government of Siam and the southern
states. For instance, at the time Annandale was in Patani, he explained the intricate
recent history of the area that comprised seven smaller states, each under an official
appointed by the government, who may have been Siamese or Malay. In 1902,
however, the seven states were joined under one over-arching administrative unit
under a commissioner.69 These arrangements undoubtedly influenced the way
Annandale and Robinson saw divisions within the populations they visited, for
instance in the importance they placed on religion. Though categorising the villages
and towns into Malay, Siamese and aboriginal inhabitants, they regarded “the very
mixed indigenous population of the Patani States” as “Malayo-Siamese”, and were of
the view that the division of the population into Malay and Siamese was actually
between those who were Muslims and Buddhists.70 As Annandale explained, “a Malay
who has become a Buddhist calls himself Siamese, while the converse is true of a
Siamese who has entered Islam.”71 In 1909, parts of the area visited by Skeat and
Annandale were ceded to the British in a treaty dividing up the Peninsula into British
and Siamese spheres of influence.72

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68 Andaya and Andaya, A History of Malaysia, 195.
71 Annandale and Robinson, “Some Preliminary Results”, 409.
72 Andaya and Andaya, A History of Malaysia, 197.
Annette Hamilton has written insightfully about the “Sakai” people who live in areas that today are divided into southern Thailand and northern Malaysia:

“Sakai” is the term most commonly applied in Thai to the people belonging to several closely allied minority groups in the far southern region [of Thailand]. The same term was common in Malaysia in earlier times, although Orang Asli (Original People) has largely replaced it there. The term has the implication of “slave” or “servant”. In Thai today it is not considered a proper or polite term, and the term ngo or ngo paa will be applied. This refers to the physical appearance of the people: being dark-skinned with thick woolly hair, they are thought to resemble the rambutan fruit, which is dark red in colour and hairy.  

The people named Sakai in Thailand refer to the Semang or Negrito division of indigenous peoples in anthropology.

Research and analysis could be carried out on the place of ngo paa within the Thai state and imaginary. Hamilton has written briefly about a Thai play that was composed by King Chulalongkorn (1853-1910) in 1906. The material for this play was gathered in part from Khanang, a “Sakai” child from Phattalung in southern Thailand, who was taken from his home and became a royal page. King Chulalongkorn wrote in the preface to the play that “it was about people who lived in the forest, where everything was lacking”. The King also provided accounts and took photographs of indigenous people in the southern Thai region and Malaya. For this dissertation, however, I focus on the impact of ideas in Malay and of the British government in Malaya on the

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74 Hamilton, “Reflections on the ‘Disappearing Sakai’”, 307; King Chulalongkorn, Ngo Pa (Romance of the Sakai), 4. Many thanks to Julian Kusa for providing me with information concerning Khanang.
developing racial science of aborigines in the Malay Peninsula. A great majority of the 
population visited in the areas covered by the Skeat’s and Annandale’s expeditions 
were identified as Malys, thus the impressions formed by anthropologists of 
aboriginal peoples were still formed in large part with a Malay population in mind as a 
comparison and source of information.

*Pagan Races of the Malay Peninsula* was the major work arising from that expedition. 
It was written by Skeat and Blagden and published in 1906.\(^\text{76}\) Blagden wrote articles 
for *JSBRAS* on the subject of languages and the influences of various peoples on the 
languages of the Malay Peninsula. Both he and Skeat were the main contributors of 
articles on aborigines from 1894 to 1905 in *JSBRAS* and other international journals. 
Blagden did not participate in the expedition but his contribution was based on his 
analysis of the word lists and language notes compiled by members of the expedition. 
Thus, Blagden only wrote a section on aboriginal languages in the second volume of 
*Pagan Races*.\(^\text{77}\) The other prominent publication arising partly from the Cambridge 
Expedition was *Fasciculi Malayenses*. The book was written jointly by Annandale and 
Robinson though it was not as comprehensive as Skeat and Blagden’s *Pagan Races*. 
The anthropology of aborigines, Malys and other people comprised only one part of 
*Fasciculi Malayenses* though it was the most prominent. The series also comprised 
sections on zoology and musicology.\(^\text{78}\) Annandale was connected to the Indian

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\(^\text{76}\) Skeat and Blagden, *Pagan Races of the Malay Peninsula*, Vol. 1, xii.


\(^\text{78}\) Nelson Annandale and H. C. Robinson, *Fasciculi Malayenses, Anthropological and Zoological 
Results of an Expedition to Perak and the Siamese Malay States, 1901-1902*, Vol. 1, Part 1: Zoology 
(London: University Press of Liverpool, 1903); Annandale and Robinson, *Fasciculi Malayenses*, Vol. 1, 
Part 2: Zoology (London: University Press of Liverpool, 1903); Annandale and Robinson, *Fasciculi 
Museum for much of his professional life after this period and wrote numerous articles on anthropology and zoology. Robinson, on the other hand, became director of museums in the Federated Malay States and continued writing on aboriginal people of the Malay Peninsula and on ornithology.\textsuperscript{80}

The output from the Cambridge Expedition, and the offshoots of scholarly activity that emanated from it, received international scholarly attention and admiration, placing the expedition and its findings in line with international anthropological trends and ideas. A report in \textit{Science} in 1900 hailed the expedition as “eminently successful” and expressed confidence that the results would be valued as comparisons to the findings resulting from Haddon’s expedition.\textsuperscript{81} The main findings from the expedition were the establishment, or the confirmation, of the three racial divisions of aboriginal races in Malaya. This was reported in the first substantial article published about the expedition in 1902 in the \textit{Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland} and was also reiterated in the main publication of 1906. Skeat wrote in the former that there were “at least three groups of savage and heathen tribes” that could be discerned on the basis of their hair. The first was the “woolly-haired Negrito tribes called Semang”, the second “the wavy-haired tribes called Sakai” and the third “the straight-haired tribes called Jakun”. Skeat gave due deference to Martin, whom he said

\textsuperscript{80} C. B. K., “Herbert Christopher Robinson”, \textit{Journal of the Federated Malay States Museums} 6 (1931): 1-12.
\textsuperscript{81} Anon., “The Cambridge Exploring Expedition to the Siamese-Malay States”, \textit{Science} 11, 284: 916.
first set out this schema of racial division, though Skeat differed from Martin in calling the third type “Jakun” instead of regarding it as a “Mixed Tribes”, as Martin did.\textsuperscript{82}

The place of physical anthropology in Skeat and Blagden’s \textit{Pagan Races}, and Annandale and Robinson’s \textit{Fasciculi Malayenses}, typifies the prominence of this method in the study of aborigines in Malaya. The discussion of results leading up to the publication of \textit{Pagan Races} relied on physical anthropology for its ‘proof’. The strength of the conclusions of three aboriginal races was presented as being based on physical anthropology as expressed by Skeat’s dictum, “Racial classifications must be based on racial facts”.\textsuperscript{83} While the presentation of the expedition’s findings was in line with international anthropological standards of reportage in basing his conclusions on the physical attributes of hair type, it masked the process of socialisation that occurred during the course of the expedition and subsequent publications. From expedition through the series of publications, the eventually more rigid racial identification and characterisation was honed and then explained using anthropological methods that were actually inconclusive in offering clear-cut racial types.

Many of Skeat’s publications dealt with the question of the exact number and divisions of aboriginal races. He proposed to answer the question using the scientific method of physical anthropology. In 1901, Skeat wrote, “There are on the east coast [of the Malay Peninsula] two sharply-contrasted racial types, but as the conclusions of Messrs. Duckworth and Laidlaw (the latter of whom took the measurements and the

\textsuperscript{82} Skeat, “The Wild Tribes of the Malay Peninsula”, 124 fn 1.
\textsuperscript{83} Skeat, “The Wild Tribes of the Malay Peninsula”, 125.
former is largely helping to work them out) are not yet fully published ... it is impossible to go into this question now ...”84 The person whom Skeat relied upon for proof was W. L. H. Duckworth, Reader in Anatomy at Cambridge University, and author of articles on physical anthropology, focusing on Malaya and skulls from the region, and a textbook on physical anthropology intended for use at Cambridge University.85

Following Skeat’s 1901 publication, wherein he stated that he was awaiting the results of Duckworth and Laidlaw before firmly proposing the existence of two races of aborigines, he then wrote in 1902 that there were three groups of aborigines whose “physical contrast” was “most fortunately sharply drawn”.86 Though Skeat was adamant that “racial facts” should be used to determine “racial classifications”, he did not state which facts led him to his divisions. Skeat wrote about “pure types” of the three aborigines as “antagonistic elements”, propping up the assumption that those types were objectively present and easily recognised.87 Despite Skeat’s insistence on the presence of the three racial types, the physical anthropological data on which the types were supposedly based was patchy and uncertain at best. Duckworth’s conclusions about the skull and skeletal material collected during the expedition were general and unspecified. In 1902, he wrote of the skull of a member of the “Pangan

tribe” or “Pangan Sakai” that “the characters of the skull are not such as will cause it to be referred at once and unhesitatingly to any well recognized type”. He went on to write, however, that “certain characters of inferiority ... often seen in lower races” were found. The “Pangan Sakai” skull resembled, said Duckworth, skulls of the “negro races”, and were comparable mostly to “African and especially certain Central African crania rather than to those of Oceanic negroes”. Reading the measurements collected from the living did not give clearer indications as to their racial type. In the table of measurements collected by Laidlaw of 11 aborigines, the “race” of the people measured was entered as “Pangan” and/or “Orang Teku”, names given to the people by themselves or others, and not one of the three anthropological racial divisions of Semang, Sakai and Jakun.

Where physical anthropologists were hesitant to state the more specific racial affiliation of the skull and living people, the knowledge from colonial situations was paramount in classifying the race of the subject, along with the racial typecasting associated with physical characteristics. It was stated in Duckworth’s report that the 11 aborigines measured by Laidlaw were either slaves or the children of slaves, non-Muslims, with thick lips and/or curly or woolly hair. The social position of the subjects already placed them in a separate category from the general Malay by virtue of being slaves and not Muslim, while their physical characteristics, associated with those of ‘negroes’, were used to place the remaining people as aborigines.

89 Duckworth, “Some Anthropological Results”, 144-145.
91 Duckworth, “Some Anthropological Results”, 149-150.
The physical anthropological data was too opaque to offer ready-made racial categories. Thus, those categories had to be imposed from without, often with doubt attached to earlier analyses. The classification of the skulls and measurements of living people transformed from the time of the initial report by Duckworth in 1902 to the publication of *Pagan Races* in 1906. In Duckworth’s 1902 article, skull and skeletal material collected was classed from the outset as “Pangan Sakai”.92 Skulls described by another prominent physical anthropologist and Professor of Anatomy at the University of Edinburgh, Sir William Turner, were also identified as Sakai.93 In 1903, however, Duckworth used inverted commas when naming Turner’s “Sakai” skull, indicating some doubt about the naming and classification of the skull and that he was using “Sakai” in the more specific anthropological sense and not in the general sense meaning aborigine.94

The later addition of further racial categories meant that some skulls had to be re-categorised, revealing the uncertain foundations of the classifications. Skeat reclassified the “Pangan Sakai” skull that was the subject of Duckworth’s 1902 article as part of the Semang “woolly-haired” Negrito category.95 The “Sakai” people, whose measurements were included in the same article by Duckworth, were reproduced in *Pagan Races* under the heading “E.[East] Semang (Pangan) of Kelantan”, now affiliated with Negritos. The “Pangghan” skull studied by Virchow was similarly

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92 Duckworth, “Some Anthropological Results”, 143.
93 Duckworth, “Some Anthropological Results”, 146.
95 Skeat and Blagden, *Pagan Races*, Vol. 1, 12
reclassified under the general “Semang” heading. Any mention of “Sakai” in reference to those groups was omitted in *Pagan Races*.

Physical anthropology was also the most notable aspect of *Fasciculi Malayenses*. As stated in the “Prefatory Note”, the authors were encouraged particularly in their second expedition by anatomist Turner from the University of Edinburgh who had published numerous articles on craniology of various indigenous peoples. Annandale and Robinson boasted of the measurements taken on their expedition, “more or less complete, of about four hundred individuals” of which 90 were of “wild tribes”. In *Fasciculi Malayenses*, Annandale and Robinson were more cautious in their conclusions resulting from the physical anthropological data they collected than Skeat had been. The reviewer of the book stated that “it is worthy of note that the old two-fold division of aborigines into Semang and Sakai is followed, instead of Mr. Skeat’s three-fold division into Semang, Sakai, and Jakun”. Even Semang and Sakai were difficult to tell apart, with the authors stating in 1902 that “it is hard to formulate any valid difference between a Sakai and a Semang”, and in 1903 that they doubted the legitimacy of the “Sakai” grouping.

Regardless of what Annandale and Robinson derived from their findings, Duckworth reinterpreted their data so that it fitted in with the general findings in *Pagan Races*. In

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100 Annandale and Robinson, “Some Preliminary Results”, 413.
a review of *Fasciculi Malayenses* published in *Pagan Races*, he acknowledged the difficulty of identifying races, stating that “the Semang and the Sakai types are connected by transitional forms so numerous that it is only from the examination of very large numbers of individuals that the two extreme forms can be differentiated”. However, certainty in the physical anthropological method was recovered by arguing that where the “cephalic index fails conspicuously to differentiate the two”, the skin colour and hair characteristics instead offered the means by which the distinction between Semang and Sakai could be made.\(^\text{101}\) The once unclear data was made to support the racial distinction between Semang and Sakai that Skeat and others proposed, with the line of argument in *Pagan Races* providing an over-arching and compelling narrative of racial categories into which the work of other scholars could be fitted.

The switch in racial type could be approached as a decision to make the fieldwork data correspond to anthropological theory. As Sumit Guha has argued in relation to the late nineteenth-century scholarly interpretation of anthropometric data collected in India, “no measurement could ever disprove theory”. When brachycephalic head shapes, which were related to the lower castes and “black races” of central and southern India, were found among the upper castes of Bengal, the shapes were said to derive from the Indo-Burmese and not the lower castes/“black races”.\(^\text{102}\) Anthropometric data was made to fit the social realities of caste expressed by the British and upper-caste Hindus. In the case of Malaya, the ethnographic fieldwork that yielded the “Pagan

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Sakai” label did not fit with the theory of the Sakai race in Malaya. Thus, the designation was changed to Negrito, the division of aboriginal races that was most appropriate according to anthropological standards.

The reclassification demonstrates that racial science was a product of the needs of anthropological theory and data as interpreted by the scholars. Racial science was also a product of local circumstances and exigencies. The science of Skeat and Annandale conceded to the importance of social constructions of identity as such in using religion as a racial marker. By the publication of *Pagan Races*, it was clear that Skeat’s anthropology had to take into consideration non-racial “facts”. Skeat commented that in defining “wild tribes”, “the point of religion (as between Mohammadan and non-Mohammadan) was perhaps a better dividing line, on account of its definiteness, then the fake, indefinite, and perhaps undefinable quality of wildness”.103 Islam was the marker of Malays and thus civilisation. There were accounts of Sakai being forced or influenced to convert to Islam only to “cast away Islam” when they were released from being slaves or dependents and “ran back to the woods”,104 the argument being that they were essentially pagan and wild. Islam was linked to non-forest living, Malay language, clothes and diet. This did not exclude Skeat from criticising Islam and Malay conversion to Islam for being responsible for the oppression of indigenous peoples.

This definition of civilised tribes following Islam and not physical distinctions
operated as well in Annandale and Robinson’s *Fasciculi Malayenses*, especially in the
section on the coastal people of Trang. In the southern Siamese state, Annandale wrote
that the area is “occupied by two tribes, which appear to belong to distinct races”.
Though it was posited that one “race” originated from the island of Langkawi off the
west coast of Malaya, Annandale used Islam as the main distinction between the two.
Annandale studied two groups of sea people called *Orang Laut Islam* (Muslim Sea
People) and *Orang Laut Kappir* (Infidel Sea People). Both groups called themselves
*Orang Laut* or Sea People, with only the designation of *Islam* and *Kappir* to
differentiate them according to whether they were Muslim or not. The former were,
from the outset, regarded as civilised by virtue of their religion, and physical
measurements collected from them were interpreted in this light. These *Orang Laut
Kappir* were distinguished physically from the other “race” according to the
“brightness of their eyes”, a description used for those on the Malay Peninsula for
“wild tribes” and how to differentiate them from Malays.105 Annandale wrote in 1902
that they had “the shortest heads of any, and the broadest faces of any civilized race,
that we investigated”.106

The switch from Sakai to Negrito in the earlier example involving Duckworth was not
a change that conflicted with any other prominently known understandings of
aborigines. The divisions of Semang or Negrito, Sakai or Jakun in the sense used by
anthropologists were not used by aborigines themselves or by the Malay informants

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106 Annandale and Robinson, “Some Preliminary Results”, 411. Original emphasis.
scholars came across. Nor were these divisions elements of interest to colonial
government. Religion, on the other hand, was a very prominent marker of identity for
both to the local population and colonial government, and local racial science thus
had to bend to accommodate its significance. There were other more mixed reactions
from anthropologists in dealing with the predominance of differentiations that were
important to society and government, such as the category of tame Sakai and the
Sakai-Malay gradations it implied. As shown in the previous chapter, this method of
differentiation had been present in the colonial sphere from the late nineteenth century
and was formalised in the census in 1911. The interaction between the two systems of
differentiation, the tripartite racial division, and the Sakai-Malay gradation produced
varying configurations of racial ideas.

**Systems of Differentiation**

The racial categories of Semang, Sakai and Jakun in anthropological discourse were
slightly removed from the tame/wild Sakai and Malay distinctions. The three were
used to group certain cultural and physical characteristics. For instance, Sakai
described people who partially cultivated the land and used the blowpipe, Semang
were supposedly nomadic and used the bow, while Jakun had habits that were close to
Malays but were still ‘savage’. Semang, Sakai and Jakun were in the main not
comparative categories but rather described different kinds of aborigines altogether
who were then also different from Malays. On the other hand, the designations of
tame/wild were not meant to be static nor sharp racial distinctions but instead an
overlapping series of differentiations. Despite their differences, there were overlapping
elements in their systems of differentiation. Tame and wild were relational in that they expressed a scale of civilisation or its absence assumed to manifest in different forms of dress, living habits and physical characteristics. Similarly, the three racial types were also mapped according to a gradation of civilisation, with the “woolly-haired Semang” deemed the most primitive and the “straight-haired Jakun” the most civilised. Comparing the two methods reveals a general affinity between them, with the possibility of ‘tame’ being mapped onto the Jakun or Sakai races, and ‘wild’ being mapped onto the Semang.

For instance, in the 1911 census, a report had assumed that “wild Sakai” were actually just “Semang”.¹⁰⁷

Both of these logics operated in some aspects of the census, particularly when Wilkinson was involved in conducting the Sakai census and in writing the report, yet the tame/wild method predominated. Within anthropological texts, the particular logics of anthropological racial classification and definition were mostly antagonistic to the other method of classification though it was sometimes co-opted. Miklouho-Maclay was the only scholar who discussed at length the distinction made by Malays between “Orang Sakai-liar” and “Orang Sakai-jina” (the wild and tame Orang Sakai).¹⁰⁸ After his publication in 1875, there was no sustained analysis and use of tame/wild Sakai in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century published anthropological reports and studies on the aboriginal races of Malaya. Skeat himself did not discuss the tame/wild distinction though he must have come across

¹⁰⁷ Pountney, Census of the Federated Malay States, 1911, 172.
¹⁰⁸ Miklouho-Maclay, “Ethnological Excursions in the Malay Peninsula”, 211.
characterisations of Sakai as “tame” during his time in the colonial service in Selangor. Skeat did not single out tame indigenous people as a distinct category for analysis even though he recorded that “Orang Jinak”, which he translated as “Tame men”, was a name that Malays called aborigines. This name referred, he said, to “all tribes either settled or less absolutely nomadic”.\textsuperscript{109} From Skeat’s journal of the expedition, it is clear that he was aware of such differences and that he applied those distinctions himself. He wrote that another member of the expedition, Laidlaw, took photographs and measurements of “three so-called ‘tame’, and two ‘wild’ Negritos”. Skeat also mentioned meeting “half-wild” Negritos who “bolted into the jungle” at their first meeting but whom he met again later.\textsuperscript{110} While there was a gradation of tame to half-wild and finally to wilder Negritos, such appellations were neatly sidestepped in the final analysis in \textit{Pagan Races}.

Though Skeat referenced “[t]ame men” in the early pages of \textit{Pagan Races}, in the two volumes of the book, each consisting of more than 700 pages, instances of tame/wild differentiations were scarce, indicating that Skeat chose not to highlight and use this common method of differentiation. Skeat tended to use the terms tame/wild only when quoting other authorities who had written on aborigines in Malaya, such as Hrolf Vaughan Stevens, D. F. A. Hervey, Errington De La Croix and Hugh Low. Each of these men had invoked one or another form of the relations between tame/tamer and wild/wilder.\textsuperscript{111} Nonetheless, in a few instances in \textit{Pagan Races}, the differentiation of tame and wild was allowed to remain, perhaps because it seemed to make more

\textsuperscript{110} Skeat, “Reminiscence of the Expedition”, 111-112.
\textsuperscript{111} Skeat and Blagden, \textit{Pagan Races}, Vol. 1, 71, 82, 229; Vol. 2, 42.
analytical sense than systematic racial distinctions. When discussing food habits in relation to aborigines in general, Skeat wrote that "the less wild tribes" ate rice. Similarly, "‘tamer’ tribes" used earthenware water-pots similar to those used by Malays.\textsuperscript{112} In neither case did he specify which of the three racial divisions he was referring to. Within racial types, tame/wild distinctions were used occasionally. "Wilder" Semang did not stay long in one place and the presence of cigarettes indicated that they were in contact with "‘tamer’ fellow-tribesmen".\textsuperscript{113}

It is likely that Skeat’s placement of "‘tamer’" in inverted commas signalled his discomfort with, and disapproval of, the term, since he would have preferred to use racial distinctions to explain such differences in lifestyle. In most cases, this is precisely what he did. Skeat subsumed tame/wild distinctions under his racial divisions such that there was little or no mention of that former system of classification. At the same time, there were other ways that anthropological racial categories took into account the tame/wild distinction and the gradations it implied. The tame/wild and Sakai-Malay gradation were often transcribed as racial mixing in anthropological parlance. It was a convenient way to account for the diversity of aboriginal peoples in looks, language and lifestyle while still holding on to essential racial types. For instance, where certain items of material culture were found among groups ranked either higher or lower than the supposed racial origin of the item, racial mixing was invoked to account for the apparent discrepancy. Thus, according to Skeat, "racial factors" determined the occurrence of particular forms of material culture and

legends. The bow was associated with the material culture of the Negrito or Pygmy race, a connection made not only by Skeat but also by Haddon, and was an indication of Negritos’ arrested evolutionary progress.\textsuperscript{114} But when it was found to be in use among a group he had called Sakai, Skeat presumed an admixture of Negrito in the Sakai tribe to account for their use of the bow, thereby rendering the Sakai group more ‘wild’.\textsuperscript{115} Elsewhere in the book, when personification of gods, another purportedly Negrito racial attribute, was also found amongst the Jakun, it was explained as a result of the absorption of Semang by Jakun in the southern part of the Peninsula.\textsuperscript{116}

In \textit{Fasciculi Malayenses}, Annandale also refrained from using the terms ‘tame’ or ‘wild’ in reference to the indigenous peoples he met. Be that as it may, some of his descriptions of various kinds of indigenous people fit the tame or wild categories as used by others. For instance, he wrote about meeting Sakais of “two separate tribes … one living near the village, in subjection to the Malays, the other leading an independent existence on the hills”.\textsuperscript{117} \textit{Fasciculi Malayenses}, unlike \textit{Pagan Races}, seemed to frequently attribute groups and individuals to “mixes” of their “pure” races, even for Malays.\textsuperscript{118} The mix and difficulties in finding purity points to the presence of various stereotypes of Malays and Sakai in individuals and communities assumed to be mostly one or the other. This mix is a product of the anthropologist’s

\textsuperscript{115} Skeat and Blagden, \textit{Pagan Races}, Vol. 1, 297.
\textsuperscript{117} Annandale and Robinson, \textit{Fasciculi Malayenses}, Vol. 3, Supplement: Itinerary, x.
preconceptions about racial purity, and the failure of living people to live up to these
expectations.

*Anthropological versus Colonial Extinction*

Anthropological writings on aborigines of Malaya reinterpreted certain aspects of
aboriginal cultural wholes into more anthropologically palatable theories. The system
of gradual differentiations between Sakai and Malays that was present in the colonial
sphere as social knowledge, and formalised in the censuses, was reworked as a range
of mixtures among the three basic aboriginal races. While racial mixing within the
three aboriginal races meant the absorption or mixture of cultural, linguistic and
physical traits, without a set directionality as presupposed, the mixing between any of
the aboriginal races and Malays almost always presumed the absorption of all traits
linked to aborigines into Malays and thus the extinction of aborigines. The extent to
which anthropologists such as Skeat conceived of aboriginal-Malay racial mixing as
absorption forms a stark contrast to the way the government census allowed for a
variety of tame or Malayised aborigines to still be counted as aborigines.

Scholars of Malaya commonly presumed that aboriginal people were on the verge of
extinction. However, the very character of that anticipated disappearance is peculiar in
that extinction was understood to mean absorption into another related culture. Skeat
believed that aboriginal people would be absorbed by “the Malay genius for
assimilation” and suggested that British paternalism had much to do with the state of
affairs. In *Pagan Races*, he stated that “to confine a herd of wild deer in a buffalo pen
must necessarily be fatal to the deer”, in reference to propositions to reserve tracts of jungle for aborigines.\textsuperscript{119} Furthermore,

we are now confronted by the yet graver question, whether our system of protection is to become more fatal to our proteges than even the Malay slave-raids that we so strenuously put down, the effect of which was, after all, though individual members might be lost to the community, to keep them a race apart, whereas to-day (though there is as yet no marked decline in their numbers) they are fast tending to become assimilated and absorbed, losing their language, their customs, their purity of blood and (worst loss of all) their natural truthfulness and honesty.\textsuperscript{120}

Earlier, Miklouho-Maclay had also predicted racial extinction due to the intermarriage of Sakai women and Malay men or the production of “cross-breed children” through the casual intercourse of Sakai women with Malays or Chinese. This extinction was again predicated on lifestyle factors, “the gradual feeling of Malay wants and adoption of Malay customs by the Orang Sakai” that signalled to Miklouho-Maclay the journey of Sakai into absorption and assimilation.\textsuperscript{121}

The predicted dying-out of aborigines was ascribed to the loss of their way of life, as in the link proposed by Skeat and Miklouho-Maclay between the loss of indigenous language and custom, their absorption by Malays, and their supposed imminent extinction.\textsuperscript{122} This social rather than somatic conception of extinction was repeated in reports in JSBRA\textsuperscript{S} updating the scholarly community about studies on aborigines. The man responsible for many of these updates was H. N. Ridley, the Superintendent of

\textsuperscript{119} Skeat and Blagden, Pagan Races, Vol. 1, 524.
\textsuperscript{120} Skeat and Blagden, Pagan Races, Vol. 1, 16.
\textsuperscript{121} Miklouho-Maclay, “Ethnological Excursions”, 212, 218, 221.
\textsuperscript{122} Skeat and Blagden, Pagan Races, Vol. 1, 16.
the Singapore Botanic Gardens, who developed the systematic study of botany in the Malay Peninsula. In a review of Skeat and Blagden’s *Pagan Races*, Ridley wrote:

> As the work of civilisation progresses and the forests fall before the axe of the planter, the more primitive tribes of jungle folk disappear, to be replaced by the imported and more civilised labourer from other countries; and should these old world folk themselves not actually disappear, they amalgamate with the later arrivals, and adopting their ideas and customs, they become so changed that all that is interesting about them is lost. Many tribes of the human race have thus passed away, leaving few or no relics of their ever having existed.

Adopting the culture and habits of another group was not always thought of as racial extinction. David Wallace Adams has shown that parties concerned about the fate of Native Americans in the United States in the late nineteenth century regarded their absorption into civilisation as a way to save them from annihilation. In 1881, many American policymakers believed in “extermination or civilisation” for “Indians”. However, in anthropological discourse on Sakai, civilisation in the form of absorption into Malay culture signalled their (anthropological) extinction.

Not all anthropologists of Malaya’s aborigines shared this view of absorption as extinction. While Annandale and Robinson also remarked that aborigines took on various habits and customs of Malays with regards to dressing and way of life, they did not link lifestyle change with racial extinction: “[W]e do not think that contact with civilisation ... shows any tendency, at present, to lessen their actual numbers.”

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They did, however, anticipate the loss of purity of aboriginal blood through contact with Chinese and other races and their gradual absorption “into the mixed racial type that is now being evolved in the Federated Malay States”. For Annandale, extinction was dependent on the loss of a way of life linked to the forest and not to Malay lifestyle and culture per se.

Indeed, Skeat and Ridley’s insistence on aborigines in Malaya becoming extinct by virtue of becoming more like Malays was also intricately tied to the forest, the landscape in which aborigines were placed, and the impact that development on the Peninsula had on transforming that landscape. As noted earlier, Malays were assumed to be a coastal people, while anthropologists placed most aboriginal races in the jungle at various elevations. Deforestation, however, occurred at a steady pace with land cleared to make way for plantation rubber, for mining and to provide timber for railway sleepers and fuel. Given the pace of development and deforestation, there were literally fewer areas in which the stereotypical lifeways of aborigines could be carried out. The depletion of the forest meant that lifeways related to the forest, and thus aboriginal in the minds of anthropologists, became more difficult to sustain, prompting changes in lifeway or migration to other parts of the Peninsula where forest was still plentiful such as in the state of Pahang. This view of extinction linked to the fate of the forest was voiced by Annandale and Robinson when they wrote that the

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only way aborigines would decrease in number was if “the wholesale destruction of the jungle” ever took place on the Peninsula.\textsuperscript{128}

The foregoing discussion on how anthropologists conceived of aboriginal extinction demonstrates that the concept of extinction was socially-oriented and dependent on comparisons between one group conceived of as a race and other racial groups. Pronouncements of extinction were not concrete statements of movement from existence to non-existence, but were instead indications of how out-of-date anthropological racial definitions were. As shown above, assumptions of aboriginal extinction were based on varying underlying causes such as the British “system of protection” mentioned by Skeat, the march of civilisation noted by Ridley and the depletion of the forest mentioned by Annandale. These scholars did not theorise further on the application of the concept of extinction to aborigines of Malaya. Nonetheless, it can be seen that predictions of aboriginal extinction were indications of racial categorisations that were becoming obsolete because the subjects of study no longer fulfilled the definitions attached to their supposed race through, for instance, becoming more civilised according to British observers and living outside the forest.

As Michael Wilcox has noted, the insistence on indigenous disappearance entails the act of ignoring or affirming certain other stories that were also being told.\textsuperscript{129}

Government and anthropology recorded aborigines in their registers based on different

criteria and uses. Some colonial officers chose not to declare people as aborigines even if inhabitants identified themselves as such, thus rendering them invisible and/or extinct. Recall the case of Lawder, district officer of Selangor in 1886, not counting a group of self-identified Sakai as such and also Winstedt’s admission that those who had converted to Islam would be categorised as Malay. Even though the censuses rendered many aborigines invisible, the official category of tame Sakai/settled aborigines made some allowance for the changes in the way of life of jungle dwelling people and thus allowed many into the Sakai category who would otherwise be counted as Malay by anthropologists by virtue of having been ‘absorbed’. The census data enumerated an increasing number of aborigines from 1901 until 1931. Thus the claims of extinction by Skeat and Ridley do not account for the “invisible descendents” of Sakai whose numbers were continually counted in the censuses. Admittedly, there are many problems with relying on census data. However, I approach the overwhelming contemporary willingness to assume the inevitability of indigenous disappearance with equal caution.

Within anthropology, aborigines were becoming extinct because many scholars refused to incorporate tame Sakai as a racial category unlike the colonial government in the censuses. The variation in Sakai subjects in the colonial sphere was not reproduced in the anthropology of aboriginal peoples. Aboriginal extinction was conceived of in a very narrow manner by anthropologists who based it on lifeways in

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130 This historical critique is not meant to doubt the veracity of present-day reports surrounding Orang Asli life expectancy and health statistics in Malaysia which, for reasons of government mismanagement and socio-economic factors, are appallingly poor. See, for example, Rusaslina Idrus, “Basic Human Rights for the Orang Asli”, *Malaysian Insider* (5 March 2010).
131 Wilcox, “Marketing Conquest and the Vanishing Indian”, 124.
the forest that the changing landscape of colonial Malaya rendered difficult to find. Instead of adopting the category tame and the gradations it implied, Skeat and Annandale, at least ideologically, conceived those changes in terms of assimilation or absorption by Malays and hence as racial extinction. Some aborigines were becoming too tame to be considered aboriginal by anthropologists, a trend that continued in the 1910s and 1920s in the work of Ivor H. N. Evans, who effectively ignored aboriginal stories and histories if they were too Malay by his standards.\footnote{See for instance, Ivor H. N. Evans, “Notes on the Sakai of the Korbua River and of the Ulu Kinta”, \textit{Journal of the Federated Malay States Museums} 7 (1916): 75-90.} In addition to the foregoing factors that would explain the insistence on aboriginal extinction, extinction was also a product of the changing landscape of Malaya under heavy development such that some anthropologists could no longer ‘see’ aborigines since they were becoming invisible to them as they could not distinguish aboriginal lifeways from Malay lifeways. The anthropological extinction of Sakai, however, did not signal their colonial extinction since the government census takers recognised and formalised the tame group in the censuses. As argued in the previous chapter, the tame category was assumed to be relevant to the practices of governing and in order to track the possible movement into the Malay group.

\textit{The Status of Sakai Humanity}

A final conceptual difference between government and anthropology in approaching aborigines is the starting point from which aborigines were considered. In the report of the expedition published in 1902, Skeat mentioned that
It may, perhaps, be of interest to add that for many years, perhaps on account of the tree-dwelling habits of some of these tribes, it was hoped that the Semang might possess some ape-like attributes.\footnote{Skeat, "The Wild Tribes of the Malay Peninsula", 125.}

Members of the expedition and other keen observers had hoped that in meeting and studying the Negritos of Malaya they would finally be able to conclude whether or not they were closer to animals than humans. They were interested in identifying gradations between man and animal and more specifically whether Negritos tended more on one end or the other of that cline. Another notable physical anthropologist, Virchow, whose views were reproduced in the Appendix to \textit{Pagan Races}, also thought that Semang might be the missing link between humans and apes. He wrote that "for many decades the Semang tribes have been regarded as the chief representatives of the lowest form of bodily structure. When all other ‘lower’ races have been successively stripped of their conjectured resemblance to apes, all hopes of discovering at least some kind of a \textit{Proanthropos} were directed to the obscurity of the forests of Malacca."\footnote{Skeat and Blagden, \textit{Pagan Races}, Vol. 1, 583-584.}

"These hopes," wrote Virchow, "now appear to be futile."\footnote{Skeat and Blagden, \textit{Pagan Races}, Vol. 1, 583-584.} Duckworth announced in 1900 that based on the anthropological measurements of living persons and of a skeleton, hair and measurements of the Panghan tribe in Kedah, "it is important to notice that they present comparatively few anatomical features which can be claimed as evidence of an approximation to an ape. However primitive in their mode of life,
they are anatomically truly terrestrial and human.” Skeat also had to admit that no such connection existed. He had conducted tests to measure aborigines’ resemblance to apes. “The aborigines were at first much perplexed”, Skeat wrote, “by being asked whether when their fist was closed they could still stretch up one finger of the hand without closing the others. Both the Semang and the Sakai (Blandas) could, however, do this very easily when it was explained to them.” Nevertheless, Skeat affirmed that “though these expectations [of having ape-like characteristics] have been shattered, and the Semang cannot henceforth be regarded as possessing an abnormally pithekoid character, he still retains the interest which attaches to him as a representative of one of the wildest races of mankind now extant”.138

The approach of anthropologists in questioning the humanity of Negritos in particular is curious, especially when one considers that in the colonial government’s dealings with aborigines, there was never any consideration of them not being human. Within the census, for instance, government always regarded aborigines as human and counted them as part of the population. It was also possible that the same people who were involved in taking census counts of aborigines had perhaps later written about their doubts in anthropological writings. Skeat, for instance, conducted the census of Sakai in Selangor in 1896, assuming them to be members of the general populace, while in his expedition of 1899 to 1900, he was testing to see if some groups of

137 Skeat and Blagden, Pagan Races, Vol. 1, 49.
aborigines were in fact fully human, though this of course did not imply that they were not regarded as inferior or needing protection.

Other scholars had already previously questioned the humanity of certain aborigines in the mid-nineteenth century. Logan seemed to address these questions by saying that even the rudest of tribes had language and customs that made them similar to Europeans. He mentioned in 1847 that

When we look upon some half or wholly naked people as dark in their minds as in their persons, to judge from the absence of all arts, we are ready to conclude that they are in every respect at an infinite distance from ourselves, and in fact are as near the orang utan as they are remote from us. But these people have a possession ... which, when known, leads to a totally different conclusion. They have a language ... \footnote{Logan, "Introductory Remarks", 180.}

In the early reports from Leyden, Raffles and Crawfurd, there was no mention of Negritos being animals or apes instead of humans. In Thomson's article in \textit{JIAEA}, he included a plate that showed the side profile of a European, an aborigine from Johor, a young Negro and finally that of an orangutan against a grid. However, this was intended to show the difference between indigenous peoples and the orangutan and not to point out similarities.

Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection made an appearance in the next-to-last issue of \textit{JIAEA} in 1859 in a short review of some of the ideas of the book. No author was identified but the piece represented a very severe interpretation of natural selection when it was applied to humans, with the assertion that men, even more so
than animals, illustrate the laws of natural selection with lower species of varieties of men being gradually exterminated by the higher.\footnote{Anon., "The Natural Selection of Human Races", \textit{Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia}, New Series 3 (1859): 99.} Logan did not express this view, although the idea that some groups of people were ‘naturally’ becoming absorbed, assimilated or killed had been aired. The theory of natural selection as expressed in the \textit{JIAEA} could explain this tendency of trying to look for the missing link, the human that was almost animal, or for the animal that was almost human.

Statements made by Malay intermediaries possibly added fuel to this idea already present in the minds of anthropologists. Some Malays considered the jungle folk of Jalor in the southern Thai region as intermediate between beasts and spirits. Skeat mentioned a comment made by a Malay calling indigenous peoples animals because they did not know how to lie.\footnote{Skeat and Blagden, \textit{Pagan Races}, Vol. 1, 14.} In Annandale and Robinson’s \textit{Fasciculi Malayenses}, it was said that Malays distinguished Hami people by their feet, which they claimed had a larger space than normal between the first toe and the second toe. Accordingly, sketches were taken of several individuals’ feet by anthropologists looking for difference in their feet from those of Malays.\footnote{Annandale and Robinson, \textit{Fasciculi Malayenses}, Vol. 2, Part 1: Anthropology, 4.} The impression made on British anthropologists by Malay comments of aborigines being like animals, however, differed from the understandings of speakers. Looking at the writings by Abdullah, general humankind would be indicated by \textit{manusia} (human) and animals, \textit{binatang}. Within Abdullah’s writing, the appearance of \textit{manusia} was evoked in relation to the use of \textit{binatang}, as well as \textit{jin} (spirits), \textit{syaitan} (the devil) and \textit{Allah} (God), types of
beings in this world. References to animals in the phrases such as *sepreti binatang* (like animals) and *buas* (wild) would refer to behaviour that was seen as improper. Furthermore, in one of the few early Malay language dictionaries, by Raja Ali Haji, the definition for *buas* was given as actions or behaviour that were out of bounds, and when referring to animals, it referred to animals that were fierce. Thus using terms like *binatang* and *buas* in reference to aborigines did not necessarily indicate their non-human status, or even that such a conception of gradations between apes and humans existed and was in operation as it was in European conceptions. Nonetheless, the comments by Malays were clues for European anthropologists looking to find a connection between people seen as primitive and apes.

The varying forms of racial ideas about aborigines within government and anthropology convey the uncertain limits of indigeneity. The different conceptions of race ideas that produced dissimilar outlines of aborigines destabilise the apparent fixity of race. The racial ideas within anthropology that diverged from government understandings and anthropological theories in other contexts highlight the fact that science was always socialised in having to confront other logics of differentiation within neighbouring spheres, whether it was in government or society in general. The ways in which the science of race was socialised in colonial Malaya was sometimes clear and at other times incoherent, but in both instances the resulting concepts of race demonstrate the concern for the contexts in which race ideas were formed, including

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understandings of Sakai within the colonial sphere, and the formalisation of tame Sakai within government and metropolitan theories of race. The highly localised outlines of what it meant to be aborigines, as well as governmental needs and global anthropological trends, contributed to the many-layered racial discourse on aborigines during the colonial period. The changing weight of these factors would continue to influence the ways in which indigenous peoples of Malaysia are approached and studied in the present.

The contextualisation of anthropology in Malaya is analysed in greater detail in the next chapter, which focuses on the work of Evans. This final chapter maintains an emphasis on the local circumstances that affected Evans’ work while also taking a wider view of the anthropological world to determine how his work is to be understood. Evans’ engagement with the colonial government throughout his career as an anthropologist and his own idiosyncratic tastes set him apart from global anthropological developments. This next chapter explores the case of Evans as illustrative of the interactions of anthropology within a colonial government sphere, as opposed to other scholars who were not so directly or obviously affected by the exigencies of colonial government.
CHAPTER 6:

Anthropology and Colonialism, the Case of Ivor H. N. Evans

The final chapter focuses on the writing of one scholar based in Malaya, that of Ivor H. N. Evans, and explores the impact of colonial conditions and government on Evans' studies of aborigines. At the beginning of this thesis, the knowledge on aborigines was neither solely governmental nor anthropological. British colonial structures were just being established on the Malay Peninsula and scholarship that was termed anthropological was emerging in Europe and in the colonies. In the late 1800s, structures of British colonial government were set up on the Peninsula and the study of aborigines was conducted on a more regular basis. Knowledge on aborigines was produced both for the emerging colonial rule of, and anthropological study on, the Peninsula. In the beginning of the twentieth century, ideas about aborigines became more specific to the arenas of the colonial government, as exemplified in the census reports, and to anthropological scholarship, as epitomised by the results of the Skeat Expedition. In this chapter, both governmental and anthropological ideas about aborigines are intertwined in the work of Evans. After Skeat and Annandale, Evans was the main producer of anthropological studies on aborigines of the Malay Peninsula from 1913 to 1937 and his work shows the continuation of the impact of colonial conditions and government on the conceptualisation of aboriginal races.

Throughout his career, Evans was employed by the colonial government and governmental logics strongly influenced his brand of anthropology. Of all the scholars
analysed here, Evans’ work most closely fits the description of ‘colonial anthropology’ since he operated entirely within the context of the British Malayan government. However, as stated in the introduction to this thesis, the terms ‘colonial’ and ‘anthropology’ need to be weighed against each other, and placed in the context of Malaya, to determine their relative importance within Evans’ interpretation of aborigines. The discourses within government and anthropology pulled Evans in different directions in terms of his writing, mirroring the distance between the census reports and Skeat’s and Annandale’s scholarly work. The content of Evans’ work on both aborigines and Malays, and his various roles within the government throughout his career, also illustrate the subordinate relationship of anthropology to government in Malaya. Many of the features of anthropological scholarship evident in the results of the Cambridge Expedition were also evident in Evans’ work. However, his scholarship demonstrates to an even greater degree the faith in physical anthropological methods and the filtering of supposedly non-aboriginal or Malay elements from his set of subjects.

Evans’ scholarly career was entangled with the politics surrounding local and global anthropological practices and trends. Interest in studying Negritos again brought Malaya into the purview of scholars on the subject. Father Paul Schebesta wrote on indigenous people of Malaya though his field of expertise was on African Pygmies. While Schebesta made a later start on the subject of Negritos of Malaya, producing his first scholarly work on the subject in 1926, he quickly superseded Evans in international popularity and acclaim. Schebesta’s fame and Evans’ relative obscurity
demonstrates the somewhat arbitrary character of anthropological trends. The Negritos in Malaya suddenly became important when the tide of anthropological interest flowed in their direction. However, anthropological attention asked very specific questions about the Negritos that were removed from the colonial situations in which they were found and the governmental logics in which they were enmeshed. That Evans gained little public recognition relative to Schebesta shows how the socialisation of Evans’ work could produce scholarship that was distant from international anthropological trends, again illustrating the difference that colonial socialisation and governmental concerns made in the study of aboriginal races.

**Anthropology after the Cambridge Expedition**

In his unpublished autobiography, Evans traced his interest in ethnography and archaeology to his days growing up in Cambridge, England. He collected objects and explored prehistoric sites in England with the then curator of the Museum of Ethnology and Local Archaeology, Baron von Hugel.\(^1\) He remembered being intrigued by gypsies whom he thought “unusual and exotic”.\(^2\) He signed up to work for the British North Borneo Company from 1910 to 1911, returning to Cambridge thereafter.

While Evans was attending lectures on ethnology by A. C. Haddon, the prominent ethnographer suggested to him that he apply for the post of Ethnographic Assistant in the Federated Malay States Museums. Evans applied and was hired for the post, and he was under the service of the FMS government from 1912 to 1932, during most of

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which time he was resident in Perak where the Taiping Museum was located. The museum became Evans' base from which he conducted most of his research. Established by Hugh Low in 1886, the museum housed a wide variety of ethnographic specimens collected from Malays and aborigines of the Peninsula as well as archaeological findings collected by Evans himself. Leonard Wray was curator of the Perak Museum at the time Evans' was hired, and Robinson, co-author of *Fasciculi Malayenses*, was Director.³

The journal published by the museum, the *Journal of the Federated Malay States Museums* (*JFMSM*), became a mouthpiece for scholars publishing on aborigines. Until the early 1900s, there were a significant number of articles on "wild tribes" and aborigines in the pages of *JSBRAS*, mostly contributed by Skeat and Blagden. After that period, however, articles on aborigines were few and far between. This can be linked to the diminishing number of articles on inland expansion and exploration, as was noted in the 1916 annual report of *JSBRAS*.⁴ The 'wilder' portion of Malaya was being developed and there was more knowledge generally available on inland areas. Thus, articles that used to appear in the pages of *JSBRAS* illuminating the unknown Sakai or aborigines were no longer a novelty.

Publications on indigenous peoples were then picked up by *JFMSM*, which was first published in 1905. In contrast to the publications on aborigines in *JSBRAS*, that tended

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to emphasise ‘new’ and useful knowledge for scholars and colonial officials, *JFMSM* focused instead on the serious scientific study of aborigines, flora and fauna and archaeological findings for a more academic readership. *JFMSM* took the place of a series entitled *Perak Museum Notes* started in 1893 by Wray. In this earlier publication, physical anthropological methods were already highlighted. The 1894 issue featured articles by Wray and two other men on industry-related subjects such as tin-mining and the padi industry, as well as articles on “wild tribes”, or “Sakais” and “Semang”. Wray wrote of Sakais in relation to the scholarship that had been conducted on them previously: “These people are often called dwarfs and pigmies, but it is doubtful how far these names are appropriate to a race whose mean height is only about seven inches less than the average height of Englishmen.” He observed that the height among Semang was uniform within that group and used this to argue for a connection to Andaman Islanders. Tests of eyesight with army test spot cards were made, but the results were “insufficient to support the claim which has often been made for the vastly superior eyesight enjoyed by savages”.

The emphasis on the physical anthropology of aborigines was also present in *JFMSM* and contributions to this area continued to be regarded as an essential part of serious research into aborigines of Malaya. Some individuals and groups were even measured several times. In 1915, C. Boden Kloss, who along with Evans was a leading

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contributor on aborigines in *JF MSM*, published the measurements he took of “some Sakai” in Sungkai and Slim in South Perak. The type and colour of hair, the skin tone according to the Broca chart and measurements of the head were all details that he noted. At the end of the article, Robinson added that the same group had been measured by Annandale either during the Cambridge Expedition (1899-1900) or the subsequent expedition (1901-903) he undertook with Robinson. Many of the adult men were represented in both the first and second rounds of measuring. Some of the measurements were almost identical while others differed considerably. Robinson attempted to recuperate the validity of the measurements by arguing that in cases where measurements diverged, it was due to differences in technique.⁸

Physical measurements were supplemented with a great number of photographs of aborigines, mostly taken by Evans and Kloss. It is telling that the majority of photographs in the journal were of aboriginal subjects and not of the other topics addressed in the journal, showing the skew towards objectifying the exotic humans in the journal. The sheer number of photographs taken and reproduced is startling: from 10 to 20 photos per article written by Evans and Kloss, of various poses by the same subjects, in clothes not worn typically by Malay groups, with implements such as spears and blowpipes, and also sometimes of dwellings.⁹ There was often no comment accompanying the photographs other than a note in the article *telling* the reader what should be seen in the character of the subject’s hair, for instance. In all likeliness, the

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⁹ See, for instance, Volumes 5 and 6 of *JF MSM* and the numerous photographs that accompanied articles written by the two men.
authors thought that it was self-evident that the material would be scientifically useful.

The publication of photographs continued until 1918, after which the rate of
publication on indigenous peoples again nose-dived and then resumed sporadically
throughout the 1920s.

Similar to the results of the Cambridge Expedition, physical anthropological methods
proved uncertain and inconclusive in offering or affirming racial identifications
despite the belief in the method by Evans. As seen with the skulls and skeletal material
collected during the Skeat Expedition, the result of the physical anthropological
findings offered no clear-cut racial designations. In any event, Kloss and Evans did not
doubt Skeat’s tripartite racial division and treated it as fact.\(^{10}\) Evans, in particular,
frequently applied one of the three racial divisions to groups he met and provided
theories of racial mixing in order to account for people who did not fit the racial
typecasting. For instance, he described the Senoi of Jeram Kawan in the Batang
Padang district of Perak as “the purest tribe of Sakai in the Peninsula. They had [a]
somewhat long and lean type of face with an often almost delicate nose, [and] the
straight eyes without any trace of the Mongolian fold” that was usually attributed to
Malays.\(^{11}\) At the same time, two people from the group had “features which led me at
once to suspect the presence of Negrito blood, though their skin colour was scarcely


\(^{11}\) Ivor H. N. Evans, “Notes on the Sakai of the Ulu Sungkai in the Batang Padang District of Perak”, \textit{Journal of the Federated Malay States Museums} 6, 2 (1915): 86.
darker than that of many of the up-country Sakai”. He attributed this anomaly to their father being Negrito.\textsuperscript{12}

The same physical anthropological methods produced widely varying pronouncements on race, showing the unstable foundations of racial categorisation. Evans disagreed with earlier racial classifications put forth by Annandale. In \textit{Fasciculi Malayenses}, Annandale had placed the Orang Jehehr of Temengoh, Upper Perak as “Sakai” due to their hair being “nearly straight” and their skin colour being “very much paler than chocolate”.\textsuperscript{13} As mentioned in the previous chapter, Annandale was not convinced that there was a Sakai race. Nonetheless, he included Sakai as a racial division to account for what he saw as divergences from Negrito and Malay races. Evans, however, strongly disagreed with Annandale and unanimously placed the Orang Jehehr in the Negrito race category. He argued that “if we take into consideration the three characters of hair, skin colour, and features, the Jehehr are, according to my mind, very distinctly Negrito”. He admitted that it was often the case that not all three characteristics were found in one single individual and that “there is no doubt some slight admixture of foreign blood” was present in the group. Despite these caveats, he thought it obvious that they were Negrito.\textsuperscript{14} In addition to his physical proof, Evans asserted that “though language is in itself admittedly not a fair criterion of race, yet the Jehehr do speak a ‘Semang Dialect’”. He added that it was unlikely that a Semang

\textsuperscript{12} Evans, “Notes on the Sakai of the Ulu Sungkai”, 86.
\textsuperscript{14} Evans, “Some Notes on Aboriginal Tribes of Upper Perak”, 205.
language could “impose” itself on a Sakai group, subscribing to the theory that the language of a ‘lower’ race and civilisation could not be absorbed by the ‘higher’.\footnote{Evans, “Some Notes on Aboriginal Tribes of Upper Perak”, 205. Original emphasis.}

Following Skeat and Annandale, racial mixing was an essential component of Evans’ anthropological system of differentiation when the tripartite racial division could not be clearly applied. In an aboriginal village in Ungkun, Perak, Evans remarked that “[h]ere again the community is decidedly mixed”, while the Jakun of Retang river in Pahang were “probably by origin a mixed-blooded Jakun-Sakai tribe”.\footnote{Evans, “Notes on the Sakai of the Ulu Sungkai”, 86; Ivor H. N. Evans, “Some Notes on Aboriginal Tribes of Pahang”, \textit{Journal of the Federated Malay States Museums} 5, 4 (1913): 212.} For another group, the Hill-Sakai in Upper Perak, Evans placed them firmly in the Sakai race category even though he wrote that it was “obvious” that they had a “considerable admixture of Negrito blood” as was shown “by the occurrence of Negrito facial characters, woolly hair, and dark skins”.\footnote{Evans, “Some Notes on Aboriginal Tribes of Upper Perak”, 210.} Contrary to Skeat, who used racial mixing to account for material cultural and religious elements that were considered anomalous to the group, Evans used racial mixing specifically to account for physical characteristics of people whom he thought did not belong to that group according to the racial categorisation applied by anthropologists.

It would seem that the movement of people within the Peninsula would have made racial identification problematic. Evans noted that “the amount of shuffling and re-shuffling among aboriginal tribes has often been extraordinarily complex”, producing an “admixture of tribes and even of races”. He cited the specific situations in the
Peninsula that accounted for this movement such as the pressure from “alien populations” such as Malays, Siamese and Chinese, slave-raiding expeditions by Malays and the escape of male slaves who fled into the jungle and married aboriginal women. Nonetheless, the anthropological system of differentiation put in place by Skeat, using three base races and mixtures between them to account for all non-Malay people considered indigenous to the Peninsula, was followed dutifully by Evans.

Other colonial situations and systems of differentiation were sometimes apparent in Evans’ work and at other times not. Evans was writing at the time of the 1911, 1921 and 1931 censuses where the Sakai census was conducted and “tame” and “settled” Sakai were categories formalised in the government’s registers. Yet, for the most part, Evans managed to write as though the communities he studied remained unchanged for a number of years. This was clearly incongruous with the growing development of inland areas and urbanisation that were present even during Skeat’s time and that were then already making their mark on forest-dwelling communities. A closer reading of Evans’ detailed ethnographies reveals that it was not that he did not see change, but rather that he disregarded change in aboriginal stories and filtered out certain communities and individuals from his overall scholarly representation of aborigines.

Change in aboriginal communities was, in fact, the main reason for directing attention to aboriginal topics in *JFMSM*. In January 1913, Robinson wrote that “[t]he status of many of the [non-Malayan] communities has changed, and is changing, so rapidly that it seems desirable to place on record with as little delay as may be such information as

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18 Evans, “Notes on the Sakai of the Ulu Sungkai”, 85.
has been obtained, even though the facts are not novel or apparently trivial, reserving
to some future period any general correlation of results or discussion of the facts
already recorded on recently elicited." 19 "Non-Malayan races" and "non-
Mahommedan" tribes were his terms for aboriginal peoples. His interest in reporting
observations concerning aborigines was mostly due to the urgency of the pressures on
their lives. Robinson wrote about the Semang Paya of Ijok, Perak, that

In former days, as we were informed by their present headman, their
range extended to Kuala Kurau and Kuala Larut on the sea coast and
even so far south as Brusas but the destruction of jungle due to the
advance of cultivation and the spread of population, Malay and foreign,
now confines them to their present narrow limits. 20

Robinson further stated that the Semang Paya had been affected by the advance of
civilisation to the point that they "were a tribe rapidly approaching extinction". 21 As
with much of salvage anthropology, the urgency was about recording ways of life that
were supposedly dying out due to the very colonial conditions that brought
anthropologists to the area in the first place and about studying people who were
apparently being assimilated into majority populations. 22 It was not clear if Robinson
meant that aborigines were changing their lifestyle from one associated with
aboriginal/tribal habits to that of the more commonly encountered Malay population,
or if they were literally dying out. As discussed in Chapter 5, extinction was

19 H. C. Robinson, "Notes on the Non-Malayan Races of the Malay Peninsula", Journal of the
Federated Malay States Museums 5, 1 (1913): 1.
20 H. C. Robinson and C. Boden Kloss, "Additional notes on the Semang Paya of Ijok, Selama, Perak",
21 Robinson, "Notes on the Non-Malayan Races of the Malay Peninsula", 1; Robinson and Kloss,
22 Akitoshi Shimizu, "Colonialism and the Development of Modern Anthropology in Japan", in
Anthropology and Colonialism in Asia and Oceania, ed. Jan van Bremen and Akitoshi Shimizu (Surrey:
commonly conflated with Malayisation and absorption. In all likelihood, Robinson’s understanding was similar.

While Robinson addressed the reasons for research into aborigines, such explanations and contextualisations were missing from Evans’ own accounts. The absence of tame/wild categories and changes experienced by aboriginal communities points to a holistic filtering of tame elements from his work and the unwritten decisions that underpinned his choice of subjects. He noted that on one of his expeditions to Negeri Sembilan, indigenous peoples “did not yield any objects of great ethnographical interest, but this was only to be expected, since none of these people are now distinguishable in dress and belongings from the local Malays”. Implicit in his statement were the wider changes affecting his subjects and his unspoken preference for those who could be considered wild aborigines.

The choice of subject can also be seen in the photographs of aborigines taken by Evans with the predictable features of aboriginality and primitivity. Vishvajit Pandya, writing about the process of photographing Andamanese, noted that the types of photographs of the Andaman islanders reproduced throughout the late 1800s remained largely of a similar type. Though the reality that accompanied each successive generation of photographs had changed, nonetheless similar compositions were reproduced and published. Pandya posited that earlier photographs “had inspired other photographers of the Andamanese to take similar photographs” despite the changed

situation at the later time of picture making.\textsuperscript{24} Such a situation can be observed when looking at the photographs taken by Evans and Schebesta in the 1910s to 1930s. Though the development of Malaya meant that many people who used to live in or close to the forest no longer lived in those locations, photographs of aborigines continued to look the same or contain recognisable tropes of savagery from the 1890s until the 1930s, reflecting Christopher Pinney’s observation that though photography was supposed to show “scientificity and indexicality”, “in practice vigorous efforts were often made to construct a different reality for the camera”.\textsuperscript{25}

There was one instance where Evans used the tame/wild system of differentiation. When he visited indigenous peoples in Pahang, he identified two groups of Jakun whom he named “The Tamer Jakun” and “The Wilder Tribe”. Evans did not explain why he used the terms “Tamer” and “Wilder” to distinguish the two groups. For the “tamer” group, he said, “The people have reached as high, or possibly higher, state of civilization than that of the ordinary Malay peasant of Pahang.”\textsuperscript{26} He noted how “[w]ith this progress in civilisation the Jakun have of course become much less interesting from an ethnological point of view”, though he still reported on elements


\textsuperscript{25} Christopher Pinney, \textit{Camera Indica: the Social Life of Indian Photographs} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 46. This is not to say that there can be no cultural continuity among people who lived inland. However, asserting cultural continuity when it comes to indigenous peoples is a double-edged sword: while it shows that such ways of life are possible, sustainable, and valued by its practitioners, it also occasionally indirectly implies ‘stagnancy’ or an ‘incapacity’ to adapt. It also glosses over the cultural work undertaken in order to live a particular way, as exemplified by the case highlighted by Signe Howell about a group of Chewong Orang Asli who found their way of life changing due to contact with Malays and a market economy who then chose to reject such a lifestyle for one that was more reminiscent of earlier patterns. Signe Howell, “‘We People Belong in the Forest’: Chewong Re-creations of Uniqueness and Separateness”, in \textit{Tribal Communities in the Malay World: Historical, Cultural and Social Perspectives}, ed. Geoffrey Benjamin and Cynthia Chou (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2002), 264.

\textsuperscript{26} Evans, “Notes on Some Aboriginal Tribes of Pahang”, 206.
he considered aboriginal and took their bodily measurements.\textsuperscript{27} Their customs and beliefs were unchanged, but in weapons, dress and manufactures they were Malay. In this case, they were tame in reference to the material culture that Evans wanted to collect but that he found was not different from Malays. Evans combined the tame/wild distinctions with race as understood in anthropology by giving tameness a physical anthropological basis. He said the “tamer” group were “alert” and clean, but their “facial type” was “ruder” than Malays and “the angles of the lower jaw were usually stronger developed”.\textsuperscript{28}

For the “wilder” group, their dress followed Malays, but they were not “clean” and one person was wearing a T-bandage loincloth. Compared to the “tamer tribe”, the “Sakai element was stronger” in the “wilder” group and they were apparently distinguished by their “very wavy” and “slightly curly” hair, again finding a physical anthropological basis to wildness. Evans’ attempts at grounding tameness and wildness in physical anthropology are evidence of his belief in its ability to answer questions about racial identification. Evans racialised tame and wild designations in order to make the use of the tame/wild distinctions more anthropological palatable.

In most other instances, Evans’ desire to write only about those of “ethnographic interest” meant that some groups were completely ignored. Evans did not have to explain tameness with racial-mixing; he merely excluded groups that could be considered tame from his study. For instance, when he was looking for Sakai in the

\textsuperscript{27} Evans, “Notes on Some Aboriginal Tribes of Pahang”, 206-211.
\textsuperscript{28} Evans, “Notes on Some Aboriginal Tribes of Pahang”, 208.
region of Korbu and Ulu Kinta in 1916, he passed two Sakai settlements but did not stop to study them because they seemed “very much civilised”. This begs the question of how many other Sakai were passed over for study because they were too civilised in Evans’ eyes. Their bodily measurements would not have been taken and their way of life would not have been recorded. This makes Evans’ data set very much skewed towards what he would consider wild or wilder Sakai even though these would not be considered racial distinctions. While not overtly employing the categories of tame or wild, they nonetheless formed the basis for his entire selection of subjects and his ensuing ethnographies.

Evans also filtered out cultural change from his anthropological writings of Bornean peoples in the late 1930s. As Victor T. King notes, Evans “disliked certain kinds of cultural change, and therefore either eliminated them from his account or described them in negative terms”. King points out two instances where Evans specifically asked his subjects to remove elements he found incongruous with the lifeway and beliefs he was recording: he asked a few Murut men to take off their “European shirts” before taking photographs of them, and he also asked a Dusun man to remove a figurine of Mickey Mouse from the stern of his boat.

29 Evans, “Notes on the Sakai of the Korbu and of the Ulu Kinta”, 75.
30 Evans retained tame/wild distinctions if they came from his informants. In 1923, he reported on the classification of his aboriginal informants about neighbouring groups. The aborigines he met in Kuala Jerai spoke of “two divisions of aborigines on the Lompat, both wild. The first, the Maroi, are said to be similar in appearance to the Krau aborigines, but speak a different dialect: they make clearings and houses. The second, the So-ben ... are very wild, live in shelters and do not cultivate the soil.” As Evans did not meet the groups described, it is not known how he would have described them himself. Ivor H. N. Evans, “An Expedition to Gunong Benom”, Journal of the Federated Malay States Museums 12, 1 (1924): 6.
31 King, “Foreword”, in Evans, Bornean Diaries, xvii-xviii.
For an internationally renowned scholar such as Schebesta, tame/wild distinctions also entered into the conceptualisation of aboriginal people, as can be seen in his work on Negritos of the Malay Peninsula. Schebesta was a Jesuit priest who was connected to a network of German-language scholars. He was a student of Father Wilhelm Schmidt, Austrian anthropologist and missionary, in the area of Linguistics from 1905 to 1906 in Vienna. In 1902, Schmidt published an important book analysing all the information available thus far on the languages of the “wild tribes” of Malaya and trying to prove a definite relationship between those languages and the Mon-Khmer family.\(^{32}\) Schmidt was also interested in Pygmies and was Schebesta’s teacher in linguistics, spurring on Schebesta’s interest in these same areas.\(^{33}\) In the 1910s, Schebesta went to Portuguese East Africa as a priest for several years. It was here that he moved towards becoming an anthropologist, and undertook his first scientific expedition to Malaya in 1924.

During the time that Schebesta spent an intensive year studying the Negritos of Malaya from 1924 to 1925, the tame/wild concepts and mixing of races were not missed. In a prominent example that was included in several of Schebesta’s scholarly articles, he mentioned that a Negrito man made the distinction between himself as a “Semang” instead of what he and his group had been before when they were “Sakai”.

The man said that Sakai “roamed through the jungle” while Semang had plantations


and lived “in the open country like Malays”\footnote{Paul Schebesta, “The Negritos of the Malay Peninsula. Subdivisions and Names”, *Man* 27 (1927): 91. This example also appeared in Schebesta and Blagden, “The Jungle Tribes of the Malay Peninsula”, 270.}. Similar to Evans, tame/wild categories were not explicitly mentioned but it was implied in the dichotomy put forth by Schebesta between a lifestyle in the jungle and that adopted supposedly only by Malays. In this case, however, the usual tame/wild combination with anthropological racial categories was reversed, with Semang paired with lifeways usually considered tame by government officials and anthropologists and Sakai wild.

Both Evans and Schebesta tried to maintain a concerted emphasis on specific aboriginal races to the exclusion of other aboriginal racial divisions and Malays. However, both authors found it difficult to separate their subjects from other groups and in many cases ended up expanding their focus to include more groups. In the introduction to *Among Forest Dwarfs*, Schebesta repeatedly stated that his book was solely about the Negritos and not the other two racial components.\footnote{Paul Schebesta, *Among the Forest Dwarfs of Malaya* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1973), 13, 17.} Yet in the contents of the book, he referred consistently to the other units. A single racial grouping was hard to sustain in its coherence and as a relevant explanatory tool if it was not contextualised as well within the tripartite division. Furthermore, Schebesta acknowledged that “speech, traditions, and tribal area” were the factors that explained the coherence of the group and not “race”.\footnote{Schebesta and Blagden, “The Jungle Tribes of the Malay Peninsula”, 270.} Elements identified as Negrito were overlain with Sakai, such as when a Negrito group was identified speaking a “Northern Sakai dialect”\footnote{Schebesta and Blagden, “The Jungle Tribes of the Malay Peninsula”, 272.}. The Jakud’n Krau dialect was supposedly “impregnated
with Semang” and this was explained by absorption of a Batek Negrito group that was in the area before. 38 Lifeway and social organisation were the most relevant group markers, but race was such an important anthropological explanatory tool that it was written into the narratives of ways of life and organisation despite the difficulties in maintaining the pairing of race with these other aspects.

Evans’ invisible screen affected a huge gap in the study of indigenous peoples since he did not regard settled or tame Sakai as being of interest to the scholarly world. The assumption that Sakai were being assimilated into Malays, and that the only direction of their change was to become more like Malays, meant that whole indigenous communities merely disappeared into the broader Malay population in the anthropological register constituted largely by Evans’ work. Similarly, many aborigines in the census were categorised as Malay if the enumerator did not ask further questions about ancestry or language use. With more investigation, people who were linked to Sakai parentage or aboriginal language use would be returned as aboriginal, making racial categorisation and identification inheritable within governmental logics. Evans, however, did not concern himself with the possibility that the people he excluded from study were nonetheless aborigines according to the inheritability of racial characteristics or governmental systems of classification. Thus, while purporting to use physical anthropology methods for racial identification, the inheritability of racial traits was marginalised and he instead focused on lifestyle factors as the defining point of aboriginality, unlike the census.

38 Schebesta and Blagden, “The Jungle Tribes of the Malay Peninsula”, 273.
Evans and the Colonial Government

The minor position of Evans within the colonial government is indicative of the overall subordinate position of anthropology, as the study of 'primitive' peoples, within the government of Malaya. Evans' speciality was as an anthropologist of aborigines but this expertise was hardly called into service by the government. His position in the department of museums, indeed many other museum positions in Malaya during the same period, were under threat due to funding cuts and the impression of their expendability. Evans' most notable service to the government as an anthropologist was in writing pamphlets about Malays for the 1924 British Empire Exhibition at Wembley. The marginalisation of aborigines and prominence of Malays in the very public exhibition of Malaya to the British and the world was connected to the overall marginalisation of anthropological study of aborigines within Malaya since aborigines had already been relegated as a minor and unimportant element in the 'native' population.

The British position in Malaya in the 1920s had changed from the time Malaya featured in the first colonial exhibition, the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886. The 1924 exhibition was held at the Royal Horticultural Society Gardens in London and was the first fair concentrating primarily on imperial themes. In the first exhibition in 1886, Perak had newly entered into the Pangkor Agreement and was

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provided with a British Resident to ‘assist’ in the running of its affairs. Thus exhibits were sent from the Straits Settlements and Perak to the exhibition. A pamphlet entitled *Notes on Perak, with a Sketch of its Vegetable, Animal and Mineral Products* was compiled in order “to accompany the exhibits sent by the State of Perak” to the exhibitions.\(^{41}\) Wray, curator of the Taiping Museum, was responsible for both the sending of the exhibit and the writing of the pamphlet.\(^{42}\)

The 1886 exhibition highlighted the economic aspects of the colonies, and to that end, the pamphlet devoted much of its contents to products that came from Perak. However, no introduction to a territory under British rule or protection would be complete without early chapters introducing its people. In the short chapter on “Native and Other Races”, “the aborigines” featured first, then the Malays and Chinese.\(^{43}\) Groups were clearly addressed in descending order of belonging to Malaya, with aborigines accorded the highest level of autochthony. The length of description given over to aborigines was roughly the same as that devoted to Malays. Sakais and Semang were named as tribes present in Perak with general descriptions of their hair and build compared to Malays. They wore only bark clothing, it was written, used the blowpipe, and were raided by Malays. Semangs were described as “rather darker and more negroid in appearance, with close curly black hair”.\(^{44}\) No conjecture into the origins of the aborigines was entered into.

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At this point in the representation of the Malay Peninsula, Malays were presented as newcomers. Wray wrote that “[i]nto the much contested question of the origin of the Malays it is needless to enter, but it may be safely affirmed that they are only colonists, who, at no remote period, settled along the shores of the Malay Peninsula, and on the banks of its rivers”.45 Positioning Malays as colonists was beneficial to the British as they too could be seen as just another in a long line of colonists and not the primary usurper of the original inhabitants. The presence of Semang and Sakai was naturalised in order to destabilise the position of Malays in the Peninsula and provide the rationale for British presence there. This was the late nineteenth century justification at a time when British presence in Malaya was not so certain.

The tone and content of the 1886 pamphlet were starkly different from the writing that accompanied the Malaya exhibit to Wembley in 1924. The distance in ideology between the pamphlets of 1886 and 1924 is illustrative of the changed nature of British presence in Malaya. In that period of time, the whole of the Peninsula had came under British control in some form or another. The development spurred on by British capital and imported labour had changed and was continuing to change the landscape of the Malay states, as mentioned by a commentator of Malaya, Edward E. Long, in the British Malaya magazine in the 1920s.46 By 1924, no justification was required to account for the presence of the British in Malaya and the confidence and certainty of the British position were apparent in the accompanying pamphlets.

45 Wray, Notes on Perak, 9-10.
The exhibition involved only territories of the British Empire. Malaya was included amongst those territories and a Malaya Pavilion was constructed in a Moorish style in line with the architecture of many public buildings in the Federated Malay States.\textsuperscript{47} Of the 19 pamphlets prepared to accompany the Malaya exhibition, two were written by Evans: \textit{Native Life in the Malay Peninsula} and \textit{Malay Arts and Crafts}. Other pamphlets concentrated on such matters as agricultural and mining goods and the running of government in Malaya.\textsuperscript{48} In the report following the exhibition, it was stated that the two pamphlets written by Evans were in high demand by visitors to the exhibition and would have sold out if a few had not been kept for the organisers themselves.

Given the size and range of the Malaya Pavilion, many people were involved in setting up the exhibition. Evans was one of those commissioned to lend a hand at Wembley. The Director of Museums, Robinson, was in charge of the section on Malay arts and crafts, along with the well being of the people who were brought from Malaya in order to demonstrate their skills and wares. Evans was seconded from his duties as Acting Director of the museum in Taiping to assist in the Malay arts and crafts section, but it

did not appear that he was heavily involved in the planning or running of the exhibition.\footnote{Caldecott, \textit{Report on the Malaya Pavilion}, 17-21; Evans, \textit{The Years Behind Me: An Autobiography}, 214-215.} Other materials provided for the exhibition included postcards for sale featuring Malays, Chinese, scenes from Malaya and basketry, a guide to the pavilion as a whole entitled \textit{Malaya Pavilion, Illustrated Guide to British Malaya} and a special book souvenir called \textit{Malaya in Monochrome}.\footnote{\textit{Malaya Pavilion, Illustrated Guide to British Malaya}, (Singapore: Fraser and Neave, 1924); \textit{Malaya in Monochrome: A Souvenir of the British Empire Exhibition}, (Singapore: Houghton-Butcher (Eastern) Limited, 1924).}

\textit{Native Life in the Malay Peninsula} by Evans was the fifteenth in the series of publications for the exhibition, and was 44 pages long. In comparison to the 1886 pamphlet that devoted equal space to aborigines and Malays, only nine pages were devoted to the “wild tribes”, a few pages to “foreign populations” of Chinese and Indians and the rest dealt with Malays. “In this little pamphlet,” Evans wrote, “I deal with only [sic] the everyday life of the native-bred people of the Malay Peninsula.” Evans wrote on Malay dress, housing, occupation and forms of amusement. Five photographs were reproduced in the pages, all featuring Malay subjects.\footnote{Evans, \textit{Native Life in the Malay Peninsula}, 1-44.}

There were several critical differences between the written materials for the exhibitions in 1886 and 1924. In the former, the only true ‘natives’ were the Semang and Sakai while the Malays were mere colonisers like the British. By 1924, governmental logics of racial identification and positioning had shifted. Indigenous or aboriginal people were ideologically and racially separated from native peoples
understood as Malays, who were the more important population in the colonised territory. In presenting the public face of Malaya to the international community, Malays were positioned as the natives and imbued with greater political significance as the group to be protected and nurtured in the enterprise of colonialism.

While Malays were exceedingly important to the colonial government, anthropologists like Evans found them largely uninteresting. As Evans himself wrote in *Studies in Religion, Folk-Lore and Custom in British North Borneo and the Malay Peninsula*,

the Malays, from the point of view of the student of primitive religion and custom, are not particularly interesting as compared with the pagan peoples of the Malay Archipelago, for, though they still retain a good number of ancient beliefs and customs, they are Moslems, and though their present religion forms only a thin veneer over a slight layer of Hinduism, and a mass of animism, shamanism and fetishism, yet Mohamedanism has had sufficient influence partially to destroy the older beliefs and customs such as can still be studied in their entirety among the pagan peoples of Borneo.\(^\text{52}\)

Evans’ statement echoed closely Skeat’s assessment of Malay culture in 1900 in his book *Malay Magic*. Both authors, despite their understanding of the various groups that made up the general Malay category, assumed an internal uniformity within that category, echoing the position adopted by the government in governing Malaya and illustrating the impact of governmental racial logics on anthropological assumptions and scholarship.

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In the few pages of his pamphlet that dealt with aborigines, Evans provided a bare sketch of the people and their divisions for the reader and visitor to the pavilion. Ideas on origins were touched on in the pamphlet, with Evans tabling a few theories as to how the peoples in Malaya came to be there. Interestingly, Evans positioned Malays and the “pagan races” as being of different origins altogether, though Evans did not explain how far back in time that difference extended. The Negritos of Malaya were a “very ancient and primitive stock” related to other Negrito and Pygmy groups in Southeast Asia and Africa, while Evans linked Sakai to the Veddahs in Ceylon. Negritos and Sakai were not primitive relations of Malays, but rather of different strands altogether: “Malays stand in regard to the aborigines somewhat in the same relation as the Teutonic peoples of England do to the Welsh. That is to say they are more recent invaders of the country.” Even among the three groups of pagan races, the difference between Negritos and Sakai on the one hand and Jakun on the other was “as great as that between a native of England and a Chinese”. He also inserted some questions posed by archaeological findings in Malaya and related them to anthropological questions: namely, whether the producers of stone implements had been overrun and absorbed by Malays, or if they were now the people called Negritos and Sakai.

The differences between his publications specifically for the government and his scholarly publications demonstrate the effect of audience on writing, and show Evans’ awareness of the overriding context of Malay prominence in which his studies on

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aborigines were situated. The two publications for the British Empire Exhibition saw Evans focusing on all aspects of Malay culture, even though the majority of his scholarly writing addressed aborigines. From details in his autobiography and his articles on Malay material culture, it is clear that Evans was also very knowledgeable on the subject of Malay customs.\textsuperscript{55} In anthropological circles of the 1920s, Malays were not considered as significant as aborigines, other than as evidence for remnants of non-Islamic influences.\textsuperscript{56} In the service of the government, however, Malays took centre stage.

Evans’ government writing featured a largely positive representation of Malays while his treatment of aborigines was more harsh. Evans made it a point to refute common stereotypes of Malays in the pamphlet, countering claims that they were “cruel and treacherous” and that they were characterised by a “mental laziness”. In fact, he said, “the European could well afford to learn from the Malay”.\textsuperscript{57} Evans’ treatment of the subject of wild tribes, however, was not as positive as his views on Malays nor as nuanced as his scholarly work. His language describing the lifeways of wild tribes was crude and simplistic. He talked about their “facial and cranial characteristics”, which could be “rightly described as ‘childish’”. The “purest” of the Sakais had skin colour


\textsuperscript{56} See, for instance, the articles on Malay language and literature: Ivor H. N. Evans, “Malay Back-Slang”, \textit{Journal of the Federated Malay States Museums} 7, 3 (1917): 115-116; Abdul Majid Zainuddin, “A Malay Bird Story”, 104. See also an article on Malay customs that showed the earlier influences on the Malay Peninsula: R.O. Winstedt, “Hindu Survivals in Malay Customs”, \textit{Journal of the Federated Malay States Museums} 9, 1 (1920): 81-83.

\textsuperscript{57} Evans, \textit{Native Life in the Malay Peninsula}, 16-20.
that was yellow or brownish-yellow, and he clearly identified higher and lower groups of aborigines. The tone of the pamphlet shows how Evans pandered to the wants of the organisers of the Malaya Pavilion by reproducing the normative stories of Malays and aborigines for the British public.

Based on the material gathered for the British Empire exhibition and Malaya’s place in it, it is evident that aboriginal peoples were not a major focus of the exhibition. They were hardly mentioned in the materials produced for distribution and no members of the aboriginal community appear to have been present, while Malays who could demonstrate “native” basketwork were sent from Malaya. There were also few photographs of aborigines compared to those of Malays, Malay subjects and industry. In the book souvenir that accompanied the exhibition, *Malaya in Monochrome*, there were more pictures of aboriginal peoples, such of “Sakai” families and “Sakai” women who were bare-breasted and had face paint. In fact, the booklet featured more pictures of Sakai people than text. This souvenir, however, did not sell well and was not widely distributed among the public. The guide to the pavilion, *Illustrated Guide to British Malaya*, had only one picture of a Sakai subject but no text commenting on aborigines other than books recommended on the topic in the bibliography. Pictures of Malays, scenery and agricultural and industrial development were reproduced more frequently than those of exotic Sakai. Though the emphasis on economic subjects clearly reflects the central purpose of the British Empire Exhibition which was “to

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59 *Malaya in Monochrome*, 1-55.
proclaim the economic importance of Empire”, this of course did not preclude the
inclusion of essentialising images of the colonies.\textsuperscript{62} The fact that aborigines were not
chosen as objects for inclusion in the exhibit or booklets points to other targets of
essentialisation, namely Malays, who were sidelined by anthropology for not being
primitive enough.

Research by Elizabeth Edwards and Pinney into the currency of photographs has
alerted scholars to the circulation of images among savants and the public for
consumption by Europeans and others, often to the denigration of the peoples
photographed.\textsuperscript{63} Furthermore, Timothy Mitchell has shown, with regards to Egypt,
that exhibitions such as that of 1924 were a form of disciplined representation of the
colony by European states, staging the “world as a picture”.\textsuperscript{64} Within Malaya, the
sheer number of photographs available on aborigines, and the fact that so few of them
were used in a public presentation of Malaya, raises the issue of the different
circulation and use of photographs of aborigines within anthropological and
governmental spheres, and of the kind of picture of Malaya that emerged through the
exhibition. The combined total number of photographs taken by Italian miner and
early scholar of aborigines, Giovanni Battista Cerruti, in the early 1900s, and by Skeat,

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\textsuperscript{63} See the collection of writings in \textit{Anthropology and Photography 1860-1920}, ed. Elizabeth Edwards

\textsuperscript{64} Timothy Mitchell, \textit{Colonising Egypt} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 6; Charles
Hirschkind, ““Egypt at the Exhibition”: Reflections on the Optics of Colonialism: A Review of Timothy
Evans and Schebesta would number in the several hundreds.\textsuperscript{65} Photographs were taken not only by anthropologists but also by government officials who did not necessarily write on aboriginals. The catalogue of photographs held by the British Association of Malaysia, Cambridge University, contained photographs of aboriginals taken by officials who had served in Malaya, and who were interested in hunting, forestry or who lived close to the forested interior.\textsuperscript{66} Photographs of aboriginals were plentiful, but reflecting the particular energy devoted to aboriginal peoples in the census, their inclusion within the census was related to broader questions about changes in Malay society. In the case of the exhibition, Malays took centre stage, an image not complicated by the introduction of the ‘pagan tribes’.

Evans’ work on the indigenous peoples of Malaya and his role as an anthropologist show the extent to which he was integrated into the profession of colonial officer within the Malayan Civil Service. I have observed that both Evans and Skeat, as colonial officers, were subjected to similar demands. The general similarity ends there, however. Evans’ experience was distinct from that of Skeat because all of the former’s work emerged from his profession as a civil servant and its demands of him. Evans was employed by the colonial governments of British North Borneo and the Federated Malay States for more than 20 years. While in Peninsula Malaya, he was in the service of the museums, and he also assumed the unpaid position of Game Warden because he

\textsuperscript{65} See Giovann Battista Cerruti, \textit{My Friends the Savages} (Como, Italy: Tipografia Cooperativa Comense, 1908); Skeat and Blagden, \textit{Pagan Races}, Vols. 1 and 2; Schebesta, \textit{Among the Forest Dwarfs of Malaya} and the many photographs by Evans in the JFMSM.

\textsuperscript{66} Research at the British Association of Malaysia archives at Cambridge University reveals pictures or notes concerning indigenous peoples taken by many colonial officers. These minor characters included T. R. Hubback, J. B. Scrivenor, H. N. Ridley, Thomas Kitching and A. S. Haines.
had an interest in preserving wildlife. In his autobiography, the details that preoccupied him most were the friction with his superiors and the uncertainty of his position due to the continual threat of restructuring of the colonial budget that would mean the demise of his post; essentially, the primary concerns of a member of any bureaucracy.

His colonial embeddedness also set him apart from colleagues such as Schebesta who found their subjects in Malaya more exotic than they appeared in Evans’ accounts. Evans was influenced by the prominence given to Malays as natives of Malaya, and not by the status of indigenous peoples as constructed by anthropology. Evans was working against a waning or lack of interest in indigenous peoples within Malaya, and chose salvage documentation as his scholarly route. In the case of Schebesta, exoticising Semang Negritos easily tapped into the prevailing tendency in international anthropology and popular circles and established him as a well known and well respected author in both realms. The resurgence in interest in the Semang of Malaya is linked to the reconceptualisation of the Pan-Negrito theory tabled in the early 1800s. At that time, all the ‘wild tribes’ of the Peninsula were assumed to be Negritos or of Negro origin. The next section details the changes in thinking surrounding Negritos globally which reinvigorated interest in the Semang in the 1920s.

Evans, The Years Behind Me: An Autobiography, 185, 228, 389.
The Pan-Negrito Theory Revisited

Evans was one of just a handful of anthropologists engaged in a global conversation about Negritos. While his research covered all the divisions of indigenous peoples of the Malay Peninsula, he himself mentioned his preference for Negritos in his autobiography. He wrote that “[m]y heart goes out chiefly to the little Negritos, much the most primitive of the wild tribes—if one can call them wild—and generally considered to be the earliest comers to Malaya”. He went on to supply an illuminating anecdote:

Negrito means “little negro”, and though they are the remnants of an ancient stock that has inhabited parts of S. E. [Southeast] Asia for untold ages, coming whence nobody knows, they have characters, in their dark skins, curly hair and often rather thick lips, that give them in many instances quite an African appearance. How much this struck a European, who had been in South Africa, but knew nothing of our Malayan Negritos, was shown when he addressed two men, who were under my charge, in Kaffir. When I told him that they were natives of Malaya, he said, “Are they? Do you know I thought that they were Kaffirs, or at any rate, Cape Boys; and so I spoke to them in Kaffir.”

Despite the anecdote, which assumed an equivalence between Negritos of Malaya and “Kaffirs” of Africa, the state of thinking in anthropology very much refuted that connection. In Pagan Races, Skeat expressed the opinion that the Pan-Negrito theory advanced by earlier scholars was no longer in vogue and was not taken seriously by that time. He stated that “De Quatrefages, De Morgan, M.-Maclay, Vaughan-Stevens, and others held what may be called the Pan-Negrito theory, i.e. the belief that all the

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wild tribes were of Negrito origin, and attempted to account for the anthropological difficulties involved by premising the intermixture of these tribes with Malays and certain other races, selected apparently at random, such as Siamese, Papuans, and African Negroes”. At the same time, Skeat conceded that “it is only fair to point out that both Miklucho-Maclay and [A. B.] Meyer regarded both Negritos and Papuans as one stock, and were apparently unable to see the difference of type between them”. Skeat proceeded to argue that scholars “spoilt their case by attempting to identify the Semang with the African negro, an attempt which the marked diversity of type between the two races concerned would alone render little short of absurd”. The related theory of Semang connections to Papuans was also discredited when Skeat asserted that “the characteristics of the Negrito type found among the Semang showed no more trace of derivation from the true negro than they did from that of the Papuan”.

Skeat’s disapproval was worded so strongly that one might be led to the conclusion that he did not support any type of connection to “Negro” races even while he considered the relationship of Semang to African Pygmies in another section of Pagan Races. This apparent contradiction can be explained by taking into consideration the developments in thinking about races in the region from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. When Crawfurd published his History of the Indian

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70 Skeat and Blagden, Pagan Races, Vol. 1, 27 fn 3.
72 Schebesta, Among the Forest Dwarfs of Malaya, 28.
Archipelago in 1820, there were just two divisions identified in the Malay Archipelago, those of the Malay and the Negro, with Negrito and Papuan included together in the latter division. Assumed in this dual distinction was a conception of time that did not reach into the remote past, hence the plausibility of the theory of a wrecked slave ship that might account for the “Negro” population of the Malay Archipelago. This accounts for the fact that Skeat, despite categorically denying any connection between Negritos in Malaya and African Negroes could, nonetheless, compare the same Negritos to African Pygmies.

By 1906, when Pagan Races was published, there were more categories available to scholars, and an expanded conception of time that allowed for deeper and more tentative connections to be proposed. Chris Ballard has pointed out that Alfred Russel Wallace’s theory of human difference hinged on “a hitherto unsuspected temporal depth for human evolution”. At the time of Wallace’s writing in 1880, the idea of a long history of human evolution was only just beginning to gain acceptance among British anthropological circles. By 1906, greater time-depth was a commonplace assumption and connections deeper and more remote in time between Negritos of Malaya and Papuans could be considered. As Skeat wrote, “[t]he only kind of ultimate connection between these races that appears, anthropologically speaking, at all possible, would be that outlined in a suggestion put forward by the late Sir William Flower, who thought that the Negrito might represent the undeveloped type of an

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aboriginal race, of which both Negro and Papuan might be the highly specialised derivatives."^{75}

The complexity allowed for through this temporal extension obviated the need for a direct connection between Negrito aborigines in Malaya and Africans. This enabled ocular comparisons to be drawn without the accompanying assumption of a close temporal relationship, while still retaining the stereotypes of primitivity. In a section in *Pagan Races* entitled “Relationship of the Semang to other Races”, Semang along with the Andaman Islanders and the Negritos of the Philippines were compared to African Pygmies in terms of height, head shape, hair colour and characteristics and skin colour. Skeat argued that “the number of measurements in most cases is far too small to be at all conclusive”, adding that, “the intention is not to prove the connection, but merely to show the nature of the unsolved problem”.^{76} The problem in question was proving the connection of Semang to other groups categorised as Pygmy or Negrito by using physical measurements.

When Schebesta began writing on the Semang, the connection between them and other Negrito groups had already been established through continued scholarship on Negritos globally. By including Semang in his studies, Schebesta brought Malaya back into the debate. The remaining portion of this chapter specifically considers the acclaimed works of Schebesta on the Negritos and the possible reasons for Evans’ relative obscurity in the face of Schebesta’s popularity.

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^{75} Skeat and Blagden, *Pagan Races*, Vol. 1, 27 fn 3. Flower was director of natural history departments at the British Museum from 1884 to 1898 (Kuklick, “The British Tradition”, 56).

Schebesta and the Re-exoticisation of Semang Negritos

International anthropology’s fascination with Negritos had not abated since the early nineteenth century. For British researchers, the work of E. H. Man on the Andaman Islanders from 1869 provided useful material for hypotheses about “The Pygmy Races of Men”, as they were termed by William Henry Flower in 1886. Negrito was an entry in the 1911 *Encyclopedia Britannica* where “Sakais of the Malay Peninsula” were said to be Negritos related to Andaman Islanders and the Aetas of the Philippines. There was research into Negritos of other parts of the Malay Archipelago such as that by the German naturalist Meyer in the Philippines and New Guinea in the second half of the nineteenth century. By 1899, the list of authors who had written on Negritos as given in Meyer’s book, *The Distribution of Negritos in the Philippine Islands and Elsewhere*, showed the breadth of interest in the subject.

Although Negritos were of continual anthropological interest, the Negritos of Malaya were not brought into the purview of international Negrito studies in a noticeable manner until Schebesta wrote about them. In a review of Evans’ *Papers on the Ethnology and Archaeology of the Malay Peninsula*, E.M. Loeb wrote that “[Pater Paul] Schebesta has recently renewed our interest in the Semang of the Malay

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peninsula by the technical and popular publication of the results of his field work". The comparison and the precedence given to Schebesta might appear surprising, given that Evans had been writing about Negritos for most of his career and for many years prior to Schebesta. Evans’ published books were, for the most part, collections of articles that had already appeared in JFMSM and elsewhere. Most notable were *Studies in Religion, Folklore, and Custom in British North Borneo and the Malay peninsula* (1923), *Papers on the Ethnology and Archaeology of the Malay peninsula* (1927) and *The Negritos of Malay* (1937). He was a contributor to the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* and hosted visiting anthropologists to Malaya such as Schebesta and Fay Cooper-Cole. His familiarity with Malaya put him at a distinct advantage in terms of access to indigenous peoples, including Semang, and the time available to study them. Yet he was not as well known as Schebesta on the subject of Negritos. Still more surprising was that Loeb credited Schebesta with reigniting interest in Semang among the international anthropological community. The relevance of Schebesta to his peers hinged on an aspect of his writing and analysis not present in that of Evans, which was the re-exoticisation of Negritos.

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In the early twentieth century, Negritos were still an object of considerable anthropological interest around the world, but the Negritos of Malaya had not been of any particular interest to overseas scholars for many years after Skeat put the Pan-Negrito theory to rest. Skeat's *Pagan Races* did not single out Negritos for particular focus. Initial interest in the question of the possible connection between Negritos and apes had proved to be unfounded. The specific interest in Negritos quickly broadened into a more comprehensive evaluation of all the ‘wild tribes’ of Malaya. The fact that those who could be categorised as Negrito were a numerical minority amongst the aborigines of Malaya meant that subsequent scholars had more contact with other groups of aborigines and wrote on them instead. This was certainly the case in the work of Evans and Kloss.

Evans placed no emphasis on Negritos as a ‘problem’ to be solved. He had little hesitation in drawing on Skeat's ideas of racial division and in linking Semang to other peoples classified as Negrito. In his autobiography, he stated that “[a]ll the non-Malay dialects of the wild peoples have a mon-Annam origin, the Negritos having apparently adopted their speech from the Sakai, and lost their own. The Negritos of the Philippines have suffered a similar loss but in favour of a language of Malayan stock, while those of the Andamans not having been in close contact with outsiders, have retained their own tongue.”

For anthropologists coming from outside Malaya, the interest in Negritos was connected to the global configuration of races and scholarship that addressed such

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connections was received with great interest. Though Schebesta became well known for his work on the Ituri pygmies of Congo, his first scientific expedition was to visit the Negritos of the Malay Peninsula from 1924 to 1925. Prior to this, he was introduced to the subject of inland tribes by none other than Skeat and Blagden. Blagden took it upon himself to teach Schebesta Malay in preparation for his trip, and translated several of Schebesta’s works from German into English, as an avid admirer of Schebesta’s scholarship. Blagden found Schebesta’s non-academic book, *Bei den Urwaldzwergen von Malaya* “readable and interesting” and advocated for an English translation. In the course of Schebesta’s travels in Malaya, he also met Evans and was assisted by him with copies of his articles, though Evans’ work would never be mentioned by Schebesta. The unacknowledged assistance provided by Evans, and the fact that Schebesta did not refer to him as a prior authority on Negritos, instead positioning himself as the path-breaking anthropologist, led to several scathing reviews of Schebesta’s work by Evans.

Schebesta’s subsequent expeditions took him to Central Africa, with a trip to the Philippines to work with Negritos and again to Malaya in the late 1930s. He received an appointment in Egyptology and Anthropology at the University of Vienna in 1926, later becoming Professor in Anthropology, Theology and Linguistics in the Pastor

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86 Evans, “Review - Among the Forest Dwarfs of Malaya (by Paul Schebesta)”, 471.
Missionary Seminary in St. Gabriel, and in the College for Global Trade in Vienna. Schebesta’s writings were mostly in German, with a few texts translated into English and Czech, and included several books on “Asian Negritos” and a few on Pygmies in Ituri, Congo.

Schebesta was able to position the Negritos of Malaya in an especially provocative and interesting manner. Among the Forest Dwarfs of Malaya begins thus: “Dwarf peoples still exist as scattered relics of bygone ages in almost every part of the world. We find them in Central Africa, the Andaman Islands, and the Malay Peninsula in Further India. I lived for many months among those of Malaya …” He relied on the widely assumed commonality between Negritos in Asia and Pygmies in Africa. In a 1926 article presenting his findings on Malaya, he said that the Semang were “rightly reckoned among the pygmy races”, situating them within broader debates in anthropology in a way which Evans did not do.

Schebesta went on to describe aboriginal peoples in Malaya in terms of their relative antiquity. “Malaya is the home of the Orang-Utan, who are divided into three different races. The youngest are the Jakudn [Jakun] in the south of the peninsula … The second stock, who occupy the centre of the peninsula, appears [sic] in distant ages to have changed its home in the far east for the mountainous regions of Malaya … This

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89 Schebesta, Among the Forest Dwarfs of Malaya, 11.
90 Schebesta and Blagden, “The Jungle Tribes of the Malay Peninsula”, 275.
book is dedicated to the most remarkable dwellers upon this tongue of land, the dwarf tribes, who are at the same time the original occupants of the land”. In his 1926 article, Schebesta located Semang as a stage in human development, saying that they had “never reached the stone age ... [and] never emerged from the bamboo age”, identifying them as curiosities and interpreting his ethnographic findings for the reader.

Anthropological endeavours internal to Malaya, however, did not treat Negritos as especially prized anthropological subjects. A comparison between Evans’ and Schebesta’s styles reveals a marked dissimilarity in the way they presented their work. Evans did not write about the place of indigenous peoples of Malaya within a grand racial scheme, preferring instead to devote himself to descriptive ethnography and to taking pictures. Where comparisons were made, they were made internally amongst peoples found in Malaya, such as the closeness of Negritos to Malays, Sakai or Jakun, and he referred to scholars on whose work he built, namely Annandale, Robinson, Skeat and Blagden. Evans did not dwell at length on anthropological problems. He saw himself as a collector, and one whose duty it was to “conserve for the future” that which time would soon destroy. His research publications were thus highly localised and detailed, an aspect noted by Blagden in a muted review of Evans’ work in which

91 Schebesta, Among the Forest Dwarfs of Malaya, 13. Emphasis added.
he stated that Evans’ writing “bears all the marks of scientific accuracy”.95 In another review, this time of *The Negritos of Malaya*, D.S. Davidson observed that “[t]he author devotes so much attention in his text to details that one experiences some difficulty in ascertaining the major conclusions”.96

Evans’ treatment of the subject of Negritos in his scholarly works, and the differences with the writings of Schenstedt’s, point to the place of indigenous peoples in the body politic of British Malaya. Indigenous peoples in general, and Negritos in particular, did not feature strongly in the development-driven logic of colonial officials in Malaya. As part of the cultural stamp of the colony, Malays were the focus of attention as the main population to be reckoned with. In books giving an overview of Malaya, such as R.O. Winstedt’s *Malaya* and *Handbook of British Malaya* published in 1923 and 1929 respectively, “Aborigines” were dismissed from the outset as the “earliest inhabitants of the Malay Peninsula”, their lives glossed over in a few lines in favour of more detail on the Malays as a largely homogenous group.97 In both these editions, the local population was in any case a minor part of the overview, which focused on development and administration of the territories and the various industries. These introductions to British Malaya did not deem the population, much less the aboriginal population, an important aspect for new arrivals to the area to learn about.

In general, Europeans stationed in Malaya, whether they were officials, business people or tourists did not appear to show much interest in aboriginal peoples, if they knew of their presence at all. In several contributions to the locally published magazine *British Malaya*, writer Long wrote about the Sakai and Semang of Malaya. In a 1927 article, he wrote that “[p]eople are too apt, these days, to think of Malaya as one vast rubber plantation, with certain areas reserved for the purpose of tin-mining”. The development of plantation agriculture and the supporting infrastructure dwarfed impressions that there could still be people and places that were ‘wild’ in the Malaya Long was trying to promote. Those articles that featured indigenous peoples in the magazine in 1927 and 1928 presented them as exotic even to those already familiar with Malaya, arguing that there were still people and places untouched by civilisation. At some level, Long’s articles served as tourist accounts and he encouraged fellow British Malayans to visit the more remote parts of the Peninsula where they might be rewarded for their troubles by meeting Sakai.

Evans retired early in 1932 but later returned to Malaya and eventually to North Borneo in 1938 where he remained for the rest of his life, after surviving internment during the Japanese Occupation which began at the end of 1941. Evans’ anthropology was enmeshed in the colonial circumstances of Malaya while he constituted only a minor segment of the global anthropological discourse on

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connections between races. The differences between Evans’ concerns and those of international anthropology indicate the parochialism of his science, which largely failed to find an audience external to Malaya.

Evans appeared to position himself against the tame Sakai category of the colonial sphere and government censuses. He colonised the anthropological register internal to Malaya with his work that mostly presented his scholarship on untouched aborigines. By virtue of being the only consistent writer on aborigines in Malaya from the 1910s to the 1930s, what were his scholarly idiosyncracies became the main anthropological interpretation disseminated within Malaya on aborigines. His domination of the anthropological discourse on aborigines within Malaya shows how the supposed norm of the aboriginal subject came about, either by a random confluence of circumstances which placed Evans as the only authority, or perhaps more insidiously, by Evans’ gate-keeping of the anthropological field of Malaya.

At the same time, his anthropological work was thoroughly inflected by colonial needs, especially when he was called into service for the colonial exhibition. Evans was not above changing the tone and character of his writing so as to appear more palatable to his employer, the British government in Malaya. His catering to the colonial government demonstrates how the public knowledge produced by Evans was determined by governmental needs, in order to fit in with the colonial discourse surrounding Malays as the natives of Malaya.
While determining the character of internal anthropological discourse on aborigines in Malaya, and participating in the perpetuation of colonial common knowledge on Malays, he was less well known in the global anthropological discourse on Negritos. This position came about because he did not address the questions deemed important at the time which were the global racial connections within which Negritos were encapsulated. The whimsical emphasis on this particular segment of aborigines within Malaya, and this particular interpretation of those aborigines, is in contrast to the anthropological climate at the time of Skeat’s expedition and writing that was instead interested in knowing the specific divisions of aboriginal races, and whether any of them could be closer to apes. Under the newer configuration of anthropological emphases, Evans fared poorly relative to Schebesta. Their fates within the field illustrate the fluctuating currency of particular kinds of knowledge, and the extent to which knowledge is only as useful or important as the audience of the time deems it to be.
CONCLUSION

Biology, Archaeology and Orang Asli Race Politics

... in fact “Sakai” comes to mean just what you want it to mean: if you are a missionary the Sakai is an unsociable, simple, unclean creature who cannot count above three: if you are a conservator of game the Sakai is not so simple: he suddenly assumes a terrifying lethal quality. If you are a Malay who has his eye on a choice “dusun” planted up by these people you tell the District Officer how the “Sakai” are “here today and gone to-morrow.” If you are a writer of fiction the Sakai is invariably “cowering in his flimsy shelter scratching his lupus skin as he grows old.”

H.D. Noone (1936)

The period after Evans studied aborigines in Malaya was no less confusing for anthropologists, as H.D. Noone’s quote illustrates. In 1934, Noone, local correspondent of the Royal Anthropological Institute for the East Indies, was commissioned by the Perak government to report on “the welfare and distribution of the northern Senoi who inhabit the mountains between Perak and Kelantan, and to discuss policies of reservation”. Two years later, his report was published in *JFMSM*. In the introduction to his report, he stated that, among the confusion, there is “one indisputable fact, namely the lack of easily available systematic knowledge about the aborigines”. Noone’s presence in Malaya coincided with a period of greater governmental involvement in the lives of indigenous people and, unlike Evans, he was commissioned as an anthropologist of aboriginal peoples to make recommendations.

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on what government action to take with regards to that population. Curiously, throughout his report, Noone used "breed" as a close synonym for "race", "racial type" and "stock", showing that the meanings surrounding race continued to be negotiated within anthropology and government and were inflected with other ideas, old and new.⁴

Noone’s career mapped the changing relationship between anthropology and colonial government in Malaya. In 1931, he became a field ethnographer at the Taiping Museum in Perak, where Evans was his superior. From records of his activities, he appeared to have been more involved in government affairs and aboriginal communities than Evans ever was. Noone was instrumental in creating a Sakai reserve, a tract of land reserved for indigenous people, in the state of Pahang in 1932 with the approval of the District Officer at the time, and also recommended that an aboriginal man be appointed as the head of the reserve.⁵ Noone was also interested in theoretical issues within anthropology and sought to study the "psychological and sociological development" of aborigines in Malaya.⁶

The Japanese occupation of Malaya from the end of 1941 to 1945, their subsequent surrender and the return of European colonial power to Malaya in the form of the British Military Administration were events that involved aborigines in prominent ways in the power struggles of Malaya. Aboriginal knowledge of the forest was suddenly highly prized by all sides involved in the conflict, including the Japanese, the

⁴ Noone, "Part I: Culture, Breed and Language", 1-3.
⁵ Dennis Holman, Noone of the Ulu (London: Heinemann, 1958), 2, 3, 18.
⁶ Holman, Noone of the Ulu, 16.
British and the military arm of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP). Aboriginal communities aligned themselves with different parties in the conflict at various times.\footnote{Leary, *Violence and the Dream People*, 11, 59, 71-72.} During the Japanese occupation, some aborigines helped Japanese forces in Malaya while others joined the guerilla resistance. After the British returned to Malaya, a section of the MCP retained the weapons provided to them during the occupation and used them to launch attacks on the British administration. The communists also enlisted and coerced the help of aborigines among the communities Noone had studied in order to fight in guerrilla warfare.\footnote{Templer, "Foreword", ix; Holman, *Noone of the Ulu*, facing 110, 122.} In 1953, Noone’s younger brother, Richard, was appointed head of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs by the new High Commissioner, Sir Gerald Templer, and Richard’s main duty was to win over the aborigines to the British side.\footnote{Holman, *Noone of the Ulu*, x, xiii; Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, 261.}

The relationship between the brothers, the MCP and the British government is illustrative of the uses of anthropological knowledge for military purposes in this new political climate.\footnote{Richard Noone, *Rape of the Dream People* (London: Hutchinson, 1972), Preface.} Aborigines were valued by all those engaged in struggle, not for their position as anthropologically ‘primitive races’, but precisely for their lifeways. In the contest between Japanese invading troops and the British and communist resistance, and then between the British military and the communist fighters, whoever was able to understand, use and harness the knowledge, people and resources of the jungle, through the aborigines, had an advantage against the other party. Thus, Noone’s earlier anthropological work, which asserted that aboriginal “mode of life
the most consistent basis for classification: the physical types are too scattered.\textsuperscript{11} became the main feature of interest and not physical distinctions among aborigines.

Indeed, in one of the definitive accounts of the events of this period, *Noone of the Ulu*, the distinctions between Jakun, Sakai or Semang (or between proto-Malaya, Senoi and Negrito) were hardly made within the body of the text, and the account was one of few Western writings during the colonial period which individualised aborigines instead of treating them as part of larger racial groups.\textsuperscript{12} The emphasis on lifeway and the major advantages of the knowledge of the forest is reminiscent of Kathleen Morrison’s description of the power relations between local elites and government on the one hand, and foragers on the other, during the Holocene period in South Asia. In both the South Asian situation described by Morrison and the Emergency period in Malaya, groups were more likely to be identified, not based on perceived differences in physical characteristics, but on differences in lifeway and location.\textsuperscript{13} That other sections of anthropological knowledge became privileged demonstrates the interaction between local and global anthropological trends and the unpredictable political and local events that continue to infuse and shape scholarly work and that might make concepts of race, or certain aspects of the concept, of secondary interest at particular times. These developments deserve further enquiry into the relationship between anthropological scholarship, colonialism, and the decolonisation process in Malaya.

\textsuperscript{11} Noone, “Part I: Culture, Breed and Language”, 2. Original emphasis.

\textsuperscript{12} The book did include a map demarcating the “Distribution of the Aboriginal Races” and racial categories were presented early in the book as a way of making sense of Noone’s anthropological interests. However, later in the book, the racial categories of the aborigines were not important aspects to the story, rather their location and rank within their communities were noted instead. Holman, *Noone of the Ulu*, map, 13, 25, 158, 163.

\textsuperscript{13} Morrison, “Historicizing Foraging in South Asia”, 287.
This study provides a history of the ways in which race was understood up until the time of Noone. In Chapters 1 and 2, the production of knowledge on aborigines depended on early colonial encounters with populations identified as Malays and aborigines. These meetings fueled thinking about the divisions of people on the Peninsula in terms of race. As such, this knowledge cannot be approached as purely governmental or anthropological since both arenas were emerging and intertwined at this stage. Instead, there were a variety of factors that influenced racial thinking about aborigines and Malays, including the highly significant ideas about Jakun and orang asal in Malay. The system of differentiation in the colonial sphere that I sketched in Chapter 3 comprised of local usages of Sakai, with the inflections and understandings of orang asal and Jakun in Malay, and the production of knowledge on aborigines that included forms of knowledge specific to government and anthropology. From the analysis of Hikayat Dunia, I showed that the formulation of orang asal and Jakun, though used as approximations in English to original and aboriginal inhabitants, in fact carried other intellectual inflections by incorporating movement in and out of Jakun and distinguishing between positive originality and negative aboriginality. This distinctive way of thinking about peoples in the Malay Archipelago influenced ways of differentiating between aborigines in the colonial sphere. Jakun within Hikayat Dunia, and tame/wild Sakai and Sakai-Malay gradations within the colonial sphere, were similar in that all accounted for movement from one end of the spectrum (Jakun or wild Sakai) to the other (non-Jakun or Malay). All of these systems of differentiation were discerned by government officials, anthropologists and people within colonial society in Malaya from Malays to aborigines and others, pointing to
the ways that local knowledge formed a critical base for subsequent government and anthropological modes of describing human difference.

The variety of ideas on aboriginal races informed the government censuses and influenced anthropology in its systems of differentiation even while both censuses and anthropology essentially constituted the general colonial sphere of understanding aborigines. The two ways of differentiating aborigines shared the common element of being hierarchical systems, whether implicitly or explicitly. Sakai-Malay gradations within the colonial sphere were implicitly hierarchical. Though placement on the Malay end of the scale meant that a person had a ‘higher’ form of culture and civilisation, it also meant that the individual was a ‘degenerate’ form of aborigine as the anonymous author of the comical anecdote in the Selangor Journal of 1894 pointed out, in the same way that “town” Malays were dubbed a degenerate version of “true” Malays by Skeat. The appearance of tame or settled Sakai in the government censuses of 1911 to 1931 formalised a way of discerning aborigines already in use by colonial officers, laypersons, Malays and aborigines themselves, and the government sought to quantify that difference.

Anthropology’s tripartite racial division was explicitly hierarchical, with Semang understood as the most primitive of races and Jakun as the most sophisticated of the ‘wild tribes’ and closest to Malays. Connections between, and gradations within, Sakai and Malay were explicit in the government censuses, while connections between the

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15 Skeat and Blagden, Pagan Races, Vol. 1, 16.
three racial divisions were implicit in the latter since the three-race division was supposed to describe different kinds of aborigine altogether, with no deep historical or racial connection between races unless intermarriage occurred. Despite the assumption of three separate races, anthropologists had to consider the overarching logics within the colonial sphere and government in their work and some individuals incorporated Sakai-Malay gradations to different extents. The emphasis on the hierarchical quality of these differentiations is important to note because the overlap in gradation enabled the use of combinations of both systems.

That the two systems of differentiation brought two understandings, constructions and classifications of aboriginal races illustrates the multiplicity of meanings behind race which were not only popular, practical, governmental or scientific but a combination of all these elements. The duplicity of meanings of race highlights the relativity of knowledge in the sense that knowledge became valid following certain conventions or in operation within a particular sphere. The people who wrote about race and its meanings were aware of the different ways of classifying aboriginal races but since some practitioners used one meaning and then the other or a combination of both, both types of race knowledge co-existed and no outward contradiction appeared to the writers. The different manner of understanding the tame group of aborigines, whether still as aborigines in government censuses or extinct in the anthropological sense, highlights the situatedness of race and the different knowledges in operation. In colonial Malaya, it was possible for different truths on the matter of aboriginal races to exist and one kind of knowledge did not always have to be foregrounded to the
exclusion of the other. Rather, both registers were accessed at different moments, places and situations.

Observing that anthropological understandings of race took into consideration local knowledge surrounding aborigines and governmental exigencies offers a present-day critique of approaches to Orang Asli which continue to foreground an idea of the fixity of race when understood as being a bodily characteristic. The difference in approach to aborigines by anthropology and government is indicative of the relational nature of racial identification of peoples in the British colonial period of Peninsular Malaysia even while race was broadly understood by anthropologists to be fixed in bodies. The shades of Sakai, whether tame or wild, were not static categories but a gradation or scale of stereotypes and expectations about aboriginal behaviour and lifestyle. Depending on which arena was involved, one understanding of aborigines was used often at the expense of the other and without any explanation or clarification. This conceptual fluctuation of aborigines was due to the attempts of each sphere to identify the borders of aborigines within governmental views on the people of Malaya, and in contrast to Malays. Because both spheres recognised different aspects of life as aboriginal, the primary method of accounting for such social relations as they stood was to mobilise different concepts of race. In detailing the way this divergence occurred, this study provides a localised genealogy of the concept of race as it was applied to aborigines in Malaya, breaking the image of a universalising and totalising progression in knowledge or development of the concept of race.
The bodily measurements of aboriginal peoples taken by Skeat, Annandale, Evans and Kloss in order to show racial provenance were the precursors to present-day scientists taking blood samples from indigenous peoples for DNA testing that aim to show their derivations and approximate origins based on genetic similarities and differences from other groups. The aboriginal people and Sakai mentioned in this thesis are now included under the heading of Orang Asli of the Peninsula of Malaysia. While the technology for testing origins has changed, the types of questions asked now and in the past of the Sakai and now Orang Asli are distinctly similar: namely, how are aboriginal people related to each other, to Malays and to other human populations? The present-day method of answering these questions scientifically is through genetic testing on aboriginal people that involves taking samples of their blood and studying, for instance, their mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA). MtDNA is a part of the DNA of an organism usually passed through the maternal line and is a popular genetic marker used by scientists in order to reconstruct the historical origins of populations. MtDNA has been shown to have a high rate of change or mutation and this change is linked to time spans, rendering it an indicator of variation within time for a particular species.\textsuperscript{16} This data is then used to construct gene trees that visualise the relative closeness or distance of groups in terms of genetic derivation.

But as Alan Fix, along with J. William O. Ballard and Michael C. Whitlock, point out, the history of a particular gene is not the equivalent of the history of a present-day

human group.\textsuperscript{17} The use of mtDNA to track similarity or difference between groups has numerous caveats such as the presence of factors other than regular evolutionary mutation that would impact the variation within mtDNA and the fact that each present-day indigenous group studied by scientists is not a sealed evolutionary unit and does not fit assumptions of recent or historical immobility and fixity in the members of the group.\textsuperscript{18} Nonetheless, present studies on the genetic origins, similarities and differences between Orang Asli and other groups of people employ an \textit{a priori} assumption of “continuous divergence after a definitive split”\textsuperscript{19} and original racial divisions when gathering and interpreting evidence, with the present-day biological evidence propping up the historical anthropological evidence to a large extent. Even though the assumption of racial fixity in present scientific studies comes not so much from an overt belief in unchanging races of people, but rather what is seen as a necessary simplification in order to make the genetic testing valid and for conclusions to be drawn from the data, the implications of such simplifications when presenting the data are such that the science appears to support such fixity.\textsuperscript{20}

An example of this logic operating in genetic studies is the study of the genetic distance of Jakun, now called Proto-Malay, from the other two indigenous races and Malays conducted by L. S. Lim and colleagues. Lim’s team collected blood samples in


\textsuperscript{19} Fix, “Genes, Language, and Ethnic Groups”, 14.

order to study the mtDNA of Proto-Malays. But, eerily echoing the practices of the
colonial period, existing categories, employed either by the government,
anthropologists or within the group itself, were used to determine the sample for the
study with the accompanying complications of self- and other identification. Lim’s
team stated that in collecting blood samples, “[t]he origins and ethnicity of each
individual was confirmed for at least three generations through a simple interview.”

One can only wonder how the questions were asked, and observe the similarities to the
ways in which the census-takers in the early twentieth century determined race in
order to complete their census forms. One can also expect similar issues coming to the
fore that would complicate the presumed direct origins of the people from a historic
population such as the different yardsticks of origin and ancestry employed by the
various people involved, and the different definitions of race, ethnicity or group. The
argument for drawing biological continuities from the population of today’s Orang
Asli to prehistoric populations is particularly questionable due to the paucity of
 genetic material that can be tested to achieve more far-reaching conclusions. Mirroring the local and global aspects of racial science in late nineteenth- and early
twentieth-century Malaya, the global interest in mtDNA profiling is applied to Orang
Asli, but the local and specific identity politics and legal racial designations actually
 situate the study and determine its sample, and thus makes the science specific to the

21 L. S. Lim, K. C. Ang, M. C. Mahani, A. W. Shahrom, and B.M. Md-Zain, “Mitochondrial DNA
Polymorphism and Phylogenetic Relationships of Proto Malays in Peninsular Malaysia”, Journal of
22 See, for instance, the different definitions of “origin” in Sandra Soo-Jin Lee, Deborah A. Bolnick,
Troy Duster, Pilar Ossorio and Kimberly TallBear, “The Illusive Gold Standard in Genetic Ancestry
Testing”, Science 325, 5936 (2009): 38-39. See also Nobuta’s instructive rendering of the changes in
classification of “aborigines” from pre-colonial times to Malaysia’s independence. Nobuta, Living on
the Periphery, 41.
23 Alan G. Fix, “Malayan Paleosociology: Implications for Patterns of Genetic Variation among the
Malaysian context. This case demonstrates that new understandings of biology, and the legal and social elements of the context in which studies are conducted, continue to draw on a much earlier history of assumptions about race and the expression of human difference.

The assumption of biological continuity and fixity from prehistoric to present day populations continues to operate when another category of materials is used to reconstruct the history of Malays and aboriginal relations: archaeological findings. Archaeological study of indigenous peoples in Malaysia started in the late nineteenth century from scholars' interest in the cultures indicated by remains in caves, and the possibility of linking the cultures of the present aborigines with the producers of those remains. Interest in archaeology centred on Palaeolithic and Neolithic findings, Palaeolithic referring to earlier, pre-agricultural stages of the Stone Age while Neolithic refers to later agricultural phases. Archaeological study of ancient objects of material culture, human remains and old sites of human habitation began in earnest during Evans' time in the early 1900s and he published numerous articles on his findings in *JF MSM*. In the short bibliography compiled by Evans of articles of Neolithic stone implements, it can be seen that most of the authors were known firstly for their interest in contemporary indigenous peoples.²⁴ Abraham Hale, Jacques de Morgan, Leonard Wray and particularly Evans himself wrote articles on stone implements that they came across in the course of their travels and studies.²⁵

²⁵ Evans, “Neolithic Stone Implements”, 129.
The secondary interest paid to archaeology by many of those who wrote and came into contact with indigenous peoples in colonial Malaya reinforced the primacy of anthropological ideas in archaeology. In terms of sequence, the study of archaeological findings came after the study of anthropology of indigenous peoples of Malaya. This is a defining relationship between the two spheres that cannot be taken for granted. Because the study of anthropology was foremost in the minds of scholars who then studied archaeology, the new field retained many of the same notions current in the thinking of anthropologists during that time. In 1934, for instance, Duckworth analysed human remains from archaeological sites on the peninsula with the assumption that they represented the ancestors of the contemporary aboriginal populations. He thus sought explicitly to compare these remains to Semang and other aboriginal groups on the Peninsula.²⁶

In present-day scholarship, archaeological findings are used to support a variety of migration theories. The remains on the Malaysian Peninsula in particular are part of a wider narrative that seeks to trace the peopling of Southeast Asia and the Pacific, as exemplified by the writings of Wilhelm G. Solheim II, David Bulbeck and Peter Bellwood.²⁷ Yet, archaeology continues to ask much the same questions and describe the same relationships perceived by anthropologists of the early twentieth century.

This is evident when Bellwood asks, like many anthropologists in colonial Malaya before him, whether the differences in today’s “Malay, Aboriginal Malay, Senoi, and Negrito (Semang)” populations can be linked to a single population or to many. In the same article, merely replacing the terms “Austronesian” with “Malay” and “Austroasiatic” with most groups considered to be indigenous peoples of Malaya will yield a narrative very similar to that already proposed in the early twentieth century. The Austronesians (read: Malays) somehow supplanted the Austroasiatics (read: aboriginal people or Orang Asli), and brought with them to the Peninsula (either coming from mainland Southeast Asia or island Southeast Asia) a knowledge of agriculture and their own particular Malayic language which differed from the languages of the Austroasiatics already present.

As a commentator on the anthropology of the Malay Peninsula, Ronald Provencher, states, Bellwood’s work “returns to the old use of migration as the primary ‘theory’ for explaining the way the Malayan Archipelago came to be the way it is”. That the languages and cultures of people known today as Malay, Aboriginal Malay, Senoi, and Negrito can be linked by Bellwood to a similar population 10,000 years ago does not take into account how tenuous those present-day categories are to begin with and how lifeways are not tied to particular bodies. As notable Orang Asli linguist Geoffrey Benjamin writes, “Malayan archaeology is for the most part Orang Asli archaeology.”

28 Bellwood, “Cultural and Biological Differentiation in Peninsular Malaya”, 37.
29 Bellwood, “Cultural and Biological Differentiation in Peninsular Malaya”, 51-52.
He further adds that it is "Melayu archaeology too, for at prehistoric time-depths ... the current distinction between 'Melayu' and 'Orang Asli' fades almost into nothingness". This caveat from a leading scholar of the field warns against reading present-day categories of Malay and Orang Asli into archaeological findings since present-day populations need not and possibly cannot be mapped onto prehistoric populations.

Questioning current and historical scientific practices and analyses is important because explanations that come under the heading of science often carry with them a privileged status. For instance, the occurrence of curly hair in a group that anthropologists argued had predominantly straight hair was presented by scientists such as Skeat, Evans and Kloss as anomalous. This anomaly derived from the assumption that there could be a pairing of bodies with elements of culture and language such that certain body types and characteristics became inextricably tied to cultural habits and languages. The plethora of body types and skin colours make such associations indefensible except in the broadest of strokes and then with numerous caveats, thus necessitating further explanation to recuperate and maintain the validity of the first assumption. The explanation sought by scientists assumed the presence of separate groups with distinct phenotypes that were then introduced to other groups of altogether different phenotypes through intermarriage. While intermarriage within differently organised groups was and is in itself not uncommon, the variability of humans became something to be explained and something unusual, instead of

something taken for granted and within the limits of expectation. That traits labelled as 
anomalous were explained by intermarriage presumes notions of original racial groups 
and their fixity through time, even though traits labelled anomalous cannot be 
explained by intermarriage or racial mixing, the latter again a theory that assumed an 
original static state that cannot be established in the first place.

Analysing the bases of early twentieth century racial thought in Malaya and 
interrogating present-day genetic testing calls into doubt the status of science as a 
realm of knowledge above all other knowledges, as distant and objective and hence 
better than other ways of knowing or truth regimes. My study shows that science was 
and is socialised by the people who produce scientific knowledge, the circumstances 
that allow or constrict its activities, the subjects of study that exceed the bounds of 
proper influence and the intended audiences.\textsuperscript{32} My study also illustrates that the 
methods of science did not always give the desired results, and that the eventual 
interpretation of results was sometimes adjusted to suit the desired outcome of placing 
particular people in certain racial categories. Thus the scientific way of knowing, like 
many others, often amounted to belief and proved to be an article of faith for people 
such as Duckworth and Evans, since as Guha has so aptly stated, “no measurement 
could ever disprove theory”.\textsuperscript{33} The perceived, collected and created data could, in most 
cases, be made to show whatever the scientist, scholar or situation required.

\textsuperscript{32} Donna Haraway, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of 
Partial Perspective”, \textit{Feminist Studies} 14, 3 (1988): 582-583.

\textsuperscript{33} Guha, “Lower Strata, Older Races, and Aboriginal Peoples”, 428.
For both archaeology and genetic testing, assumptions about racial types having defined traits and original homes/places of origin still underpin the analyses. This logic assumes that “pre-defined trait complexes found outside of their homes must have gotten there by colonization or gene flow”, as genetic biologists S. O. Y. Keita and Rick A. Kittles write.34 More tellingly, these ideas and assumptions fit in well with the social, political and economic inequalities that have been met with, and continue to confront, scholars who study groups such as those known today as Orang Asli. For the authors writing in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Malaya, the proposed and endorsed history of racial layer migration provided a biological, temporal and spatially-based explanation for the political and social landscape that they interpreted for colonial Malaya. That landscape involved different groups of non-forest dwelling peoples, whether up-river in villages or downstream where centres of government and administration were located and where the area was more developed, and forest-dwellers or coastal, river and sea-faring people who were marginal to social and political power.

Writers such as Skeat responded to patterns of power in colonial Malaya and his racial categories explained those patterns by identifying them as racial groups having innate characteristics, with interaction described as that between races. He saw sultanates, retainers and forest collectors and proposed a racial history that would fit the mould. Similarly, it is not difficult to continually reinforce the idea of today’s Orang Asli as having different origins from, and being innately different from and inferior to,

Malays when the health, social and political standing of the communities that continue to identify as Orang Asli are appallingly low.\textsuperscript{35} Race continues to be a salient feature of Malaysian and other societies, not only because it is a legacy of colonisation, but also because the term is continually made meaningful through the complex history of post-independence society and politics in Malaysia in which biological ideas of race do not otherwise play a prominent part.

The continued use of race in biological, popular and legal discourses at all levels of Malaysian society and government is in stark contrast to academic efforts to undo discrimination based on race by calling for a renunciation of race. In taking stock of the field of research into race, Claire Alexander notes “the epistemological pitfalls and ambiguities in engaging with a research subject/object that is generally agreed by researchers not to exist”.\textsuperscript{36} The position that race does not exist is based on two interlocking assumptions about the meaning of race and the history of race. Anoop Nayak states unequivocally that “there is no such thing as race” since it is based on the fiction “that there are distinct races with biologically inherent characteristics”.\textsuperscript{37} The non-existence of race, while at the same time researching race, has been noted by Paul Gilroy and Nayak as perpetuating the very construct that scholars seek to dismantle.\textsuperscript{38} The position that race (understood as being biologically embedded) does not exist has been taken by many intellectuals as an ethical position to discredit the

\textsuperscript{35} Rusaslina Idrus, “Basic Human Rights for the Orang Asli”.
naturalising aura around race that is then used to discriminate against certain groups. This primary and very limited understanding of race as a biological concept is, I argue, also connected to a corresponding assumption about the history of race that is “contingent on a basic and historically problematic contrast between a biologized, physiological and somatic racism of the past held up as fundamentally distinct from a more nuanced culturally coded and complex racism of the present.”

My study comments on this on-going discussion by showing, firstly, that biological ideas of race and the development of knowledge on the biology of human differences are both intrinsically cultural. Thus, I posit that displacing race in fact undoes the work of anti-racists since the opportunity is lost to reveal the very cultural bases of biologised and scientific understandings of race and to lay bare the complicities of science with existing or emerging power structures. There are opportunities to question the overall status and truth claims of science and to argue for the thorough socialisation of science and concepts which might have been theorised within its domain. Secondly, the often unspoken assumption of historical understandings of race as always heavily biologized is untrue except in certain circumstances and locations. Thus, the early nineteenth-century usages of race in Malaya were deeply social, cultural and governmental, inflected by local and global anthropological concerns without necessarily appealing to a biological basis of race.

While scholars today may generally agree race is a floating signifier, whether or not based in a (scientific) reality, the exact or approximate parameters of what race

signifies is often not answered. Thus arguing that race does not exist creates confusion when it is not specified which meanings of race scholars think do not exist and which uses of race scholars feel are or are not valid for a person’s or a community’s subject position, or as a topic of scholarship. Stating that race does not exist runs the risk of denying a way of identification for a community, however defined, and also possibly overlooks the undeniable governmental implications of assigning a person’s race that impacts everyday life. The non-existence of race is not a necessary position to take in order to critique racial science or to lay bare the constructedness of popular, governmental or scholarly ideas of race. One should, however, be wary of the dissemination of particular ideas of race within certain circles, when one understanding of race might be foregrounded instead of another, or when varying modes of differentiation are used and not one that employs race.

These questions need to be answered on a site-by-site basis, taking into consideration the local and external flow of ideas that inform the understandings of race. While I have attempted to show the historical interaction that brought about two particular threads of racial thought, the changes in Malaya and Malaysia since the 1930s necessitate more research into how ideas of race have changed further. For instance, in a study of the pressures of Islamisation on a community of Orang Asli in Malaysia, Nobuta observed that government directives to convert Orang Asli were based on the understanding or intention that Orang Asli would be assimilated into the Malay population, effectively erasing Orang Asli as a racial group while expanding the
Malay group. Yet the legal framework that underpins racial classification in
Malaysia today dictates racial constellations other than those envisioned by the ruling
government. Thus Orang Asli who convert to Islam may be seen as Malay by
segments of society, yet legally and constitutionally their identification as Orang Asli
depends not on religious affiliation but on their way of life. Legal race identification
becomes especially crucial when race is paired with affirmative action policies for
some, and discriminatory treatment for others, as is the case in Malaysia today. Within the government bureaucracy, the perpetuation of Malay as a privileged and
preferred category began during the colonial period and in the taking of the census.
While identification as Malay during the early twentieth century, at least within the
government censuses, depended not so much on law but on idiosyncratic observations
by enumerators, the ossification of certain governmental practices over time has
changed the nature of racial classification and identification in the present. From the
discontinuity between government and anthropological ideas of aboriginal races
analysed in this thesis, the present day discontinuity lies between social and political
rhetoric on the one hand and legal classification on the other.

I conclude this thesis with a contemplation of the overlap between the British colonial
government in Malaya and the present-day government of Malaysia as authorities that
bracket the scene in which ideas and categories of race proliferate. While there are
many differences between the expanding British government in Malaya of the
nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the contemporary Malaysian state, the

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commitment to developing resources within the boundaries of the state could be argued to be salient features of both regimes, and it is this feature that continues to have lasting effects on the lives of Orang Asli. Drawing links between the two governments across time entails a consideration of their commonalities that go beyond colonialism as a feature of history to colonialism as part of what David Scott calls

\[ a \text{ form of power not merely coincident with colonialism—}\]
\[ \text{which was concerned above all with disabling old forms of life by systematically breaking down their conditions, and with constructing in their place new conditions so as to enable—indeed, so as to oblige—new forms of life to come into being.}^{42} \]

Making ways of life linked to the forest or the seas untenable is a major feature of the liquidation and control of natural resources in Malaya and Malaysia for the furtherance of development or kemajuan. It is thus telling that the main governmental body in charge of Orang Asli, the Jabatan Hal-Ehwal Orang Asli (JHEOA, Department of Orang Asli Affairs) has been recently targeted in the 2011 Malaysian budget for restructuring into Jabatan Kemajuan Orang Asli (Department of Orang Asli Development).^{43} The change in name of the department, with the emphasis on development or kemajuan, has many observers concerned for Orang Asli who choose not to follow ways of life according to the government’s development standards.^{44} In Wilkinson’s 1959 dictionary, the meaning of the noun kemajuan was given as “headway, prosperity, progress” but also, forebodingly, “of an army advancing”.^{45} The

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42 David Scott, “Colonial Governmentality”, Social Text 43 (1995): 193. Original emphasis. Similar arguments for considering the forms of power usually studied under the heading of colonialism under a larger rubric such as “imperialism” are considered in Imperial Formations, ed. Ann Laura Stoler, Carole McGranahan and Peter C. Perdue (Santa Fe, NM: SAR Press, 2007).
44 Colin Nicholas, pers. comm. (16 October 2010).
latter meaning is especially apt when considering the great reach of the government
and technologies of development today. It is perhaps ironic that the development that
disables ways of being linked to the forest, and dissolves racial categories dependent
on the forest for their definition, at the same time enables genetic research and the
reinvigoration of race as biology, racial science and identities of race. And in the midst
of these technological developments, the global indigenous peoples movement offers
still more possibilities for racial categories to be imagined.46 Race continues to be
thought of in and through all of these circumstances, from the governmental
involvement in creating and destroying racial categories, to the technology that
facilitates different levels of thinking about race and the people who embrace or reject
racial science and discourses of race.

46 Ken S. Coates, A Global History of Indigenous Peoples: Struggle and Survival (New York: Palgrave
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