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CULTURAL IDENTITY
IN
NORTHERN PENINSULAR MALAYSIA



CULTURAL IDENTITY
IN
NORTHERN PENINSULAR MALAYSIA

edited by
Sharon A. Carstens

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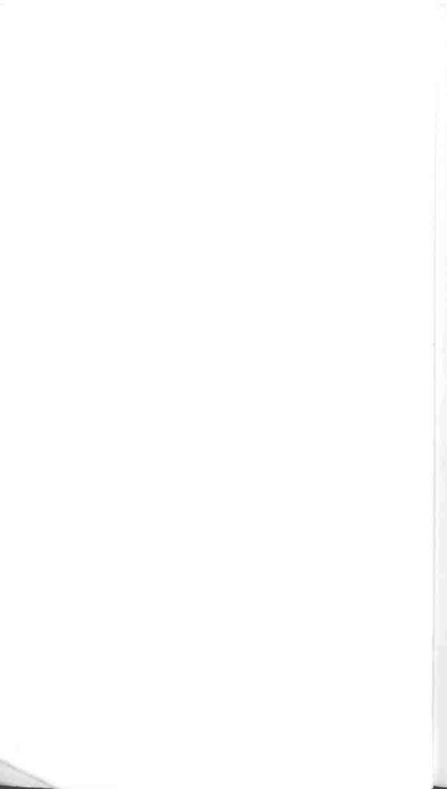
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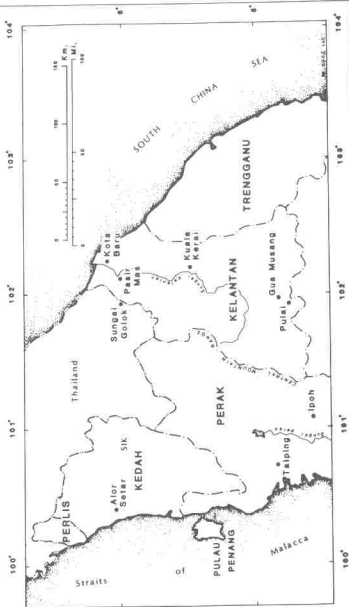
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PREFACE

The papers included in this volume were originally presented at the 79th Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association in Washington, D.C., December 7, 1980 at a panel entitled "Cultural Identities in Modern Malaysia." The impetus for this panel grew out of conversations between Barbara Wright and myself a year before concerning our recent research in Kelantan, Malaysia with Malays and Chinese respectively. Although we had worked at opposite ends of the state in very different communities, it became clear that our findings touched on a number of similar problems having to do with the creation and preservation of cultural identities. Realizing that our individual findings were enhanced considerably by comparisons with research findings from other communities, we decided to seek out other anthropologists who had worked in the area to pursue these issues in a series of papers prepared for presentation at the next annual AAA Meeting. Barbara Wright assumed responsibility for organizing the panel and made arrangements to have the papers published as an edited volume. The final version was made possible thanks to the assistance of many people, including the members of the panel, the secretarial services at Beloit College, and friends and colleagues in the U.S. and Malaysia.

Sharon A. Carstens
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NORTHERN PENINSULAR MALAYSIA



INTRODUCTION

Sharon A. Carstens

The 1970 census for Peninsular Malaysia divides the population into four major groups: Malays (53%), Chinese (35%), Indians (11%), and Others (1%).¹ Categories such as these, however, gloss over the considerable cultural diversity found within these groups, a diversity most striking in the Malay category which includes all bumiputras:² the various Orang Asli (aborigine) groups as well as Malays of Bugis, Minangkabau, Kelantanese and other origin. Chinese may be similarly divided into Hokkien, Cantonese, Hakka or other dialect groups, while Indians include Sikhs, Tamils, Ceylonese and others. Outward signs of cultural differences may be observed within and between the various ethnic and subethnic groups with little difficulty, but understanding how this diversity is perceived and dealt with by Malaysians themselves raises a set of more complicated questions. How, for example, do people from the different ethnic and subethnic groups manipulate and maintain local definitions of cultural identity, a sense of who they are within their own communities as well as in their dealings with outsiders? How do these cultural definitions change from one context to another, and to what extent are they influenced by contacts with outsiders? Answers to questions like these can contribute significantly to our understanding of Malaysian culture and society.

The following papers were prepared by anthropologists who worked with Malays, Chinese, and Thais in the northern Malaysian states of Kelantan and Kedah. The stated topic for these papers was that of cultural identity; the diverse data presented in the following pages reflect the varied approaches taken by individual anthropologists. Despite this diversity, there is more than a geographical and topical continuity which binds these papers together. All of the authors are concerned with the tension between insiders' and outsiders' views of the groups with whom they worked, as well as with the various means employed by villagers to interpret and react to the inevitable challenges received from outside. Furthermore, the forms which these outside challenges

lake are more frequently perceived in terms of urban/rural or government/villager divisions than in distinctions between different ethnic groups. Such perceptions may be related in part to the areas of Malaysia where research was done; a review of the geographic and cultural backgrounds of Kelantan and Kedah highlights the distinctiveness of these areas.

Isolated historically and geographically from the more economically developed west coast states of the Malay Peninsula, Kelantan is viewed by many (particularly the Kelantanese themselves) as one of the last surviving strongholds of traditional Malay culture. Situated in the northeast corner of Peninsular Malaysia, Kelantan's historic development has been closely tied to that of its immediate neighbors, the southern (Malay) provinces of Thailand to the north and the Malay state of Trengganu to the south. Kelantan's distinctive Islamic traditions drew inspiration from the seventeenth century Kingdom of Patani, an important trading center as well as an influential center for Southeast Asian Islam (Winzler 1974). During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Kelantan variously controlled and was controlled by Trengganu and Patani, while concurrently recognizing a loosely structured Siamese overlordship. Siamese jurisdiction over Kelantan was reinforced by British treaties with Siam, first in 1826 and again in 1902, when a Siamese advisor, the Englishman W. A. Graham, was appointed to assist the Kelantanese Sultan, Muhammed IV, with the administration of the State (Emerson 1964). In 1909, Siamese control of the five northern Malay states was transferred to British hands, and Kelantan became part of the Unfederated Malay States, pledged to accept British advice and British advisors in broad areas of administration and finance. While the advent of British administration in Kelantan certainly spelled changes for the Malay polity, the geographic isolation of the area, and its nonintegration with the economic development schemes being pursued on the west coast, meant that changes in Kelantanese society proceeded at a much slower pace than elsewhere in Malaysia.

Kelantan's population has been and continues to be predominantly Malay and predominantly rural.³ Until recently, the majority of the population was concentrated on the six hundred square mile rice-growing plain of the Kelantan River; now large numbers of Kelantanese Malays are moving from the northern part of the state to government development projects in Ulu Kelantan, where vast tracts of jungle land are being cleared and planted in rubber and oil palm. And Gua Musang, the major town in Ulu Kelantan, is projected by some to become the second largest city in the state by the end of the century.

Small in terms of percentages, Chinese (5.6%) and Thais (1%) nevertheless form significant groups within Kelantan. Most of Kelantan's Chinese live in the north and central parts of the

state, about half of them in the Kota Baru district.⁴ Engaged in both urban and rural occupations, Kelantanese Chinese usually work as shopkeepers and merchants in cities and towns, or as padi farmers and rubber tappers in outlying villages. Kelantanese Thai villagers are located in rural areas in the northern and eastern parts of the state. Thais, who are predominantly rice farmers, are also involved in growing rubber, tobacco, and vegetables, and in raising pigs (Golomb 1978).

Kelantan is known throughout Malaysia as an area where distinctive cultural traditions continue to flourish. Certain aspects of Kelantanese culture, such as a fondness for foods like budu (anchovy sauce), and krupuk (fish or shrimp chips), or the use of the distinctive Kelantanese Malay dialect, are shared by members of all ethnic groups -- Chinese and Thais who have lived in Kelantan for generations as well as Malays. Other Kelantanese traditions, such as wayang kulit (shadow puppet plays), main putri (a type of ritual drama), silver work, silk weaving, top spinning and kite flying are identified more specifically with Malays. Outsiders are often impressed by the strong cultural ethos displayed by Kelantanese Malays, both in the continued popularity of traditional Malay arts and crafts, and in their support for fundamentalist Islamic beliefs and institutions, such as pondok schools and the Pan-Malayan Islamic Party (PAS), which controlled Kelantan's state legislature from 1959 to 1978. At first glance, the strength of fundamentalist Islam, with its stricter interpretations of religious dogma, appears almost paradoxical in a region where folk drama and folk arts, based largely on pre-Islamic tales and beliefs, continue to flourish. However, while Islamic authorities have on occasion criticized the non-Islamic character of traditional performances such as wayang (see Wright's paper), the major focus of attention for Islamic fundamentalists in Kelantan has been directed toward political concerns (Kessler 1978).

Malay culture and Malay concerns are the most publicized aspects of Kelantanese society, yet one also finds interesting patterns of cultural diversity and cultural mixing among Kelantan's various ethnic groups. For example, Thai Buddhist temples attract the support of urban Chinese, and Thai magicians are regularly patronized by local Malays (Golomb 1978). Some rural Chinese in northern Kelantan wear Malay dress, eat Malay-style foods, and live in Malay-style houses (Winzler 1972). And some Malays living near the Chinese community of Pulai in Ulu Kelantan, in the past, learned to speak Hakka Chinese (Carstens 1980). General patterns of interaction based on religious and dietary differences define a considerable amount of interethnic behavior, but in some areas local variations, based on particular socioeconomic patterns of ethnic cooperation, have produced what Golomb (1978) describes as "micro-ethnic" identities. Thus, the cultural accommodations of Chinese living in rural northern

Kelantan differ from the cultural adaptations of Chinese in Kota Baru, as well as from the adaptations of the rural Chinese of Ulu Kelantan. Whatever the accommodations made, the extent of cultural tolerance and cultural flexibility found among Kelantan's ethnic groups appears fairly high. This may be due in part to local demography: in terms of numbers, Malays are clearly dominant, erasing a certain amount of ethnic ambiguity. Thus, Kelantanese Malays are more concerned with problems generated within their culture than by seemingly minor challenges from outsiders.

Situated on the western side of northern Malaysia, Kedah, like Kelantan, was a vassal state of Siam until 1909, when it too became part of the Unfederated Malay States. Kedah's economy, like Kelantan's, has also remained largely dependent on agriculture, but its location on the west coast of the peninsula, in close proximity to the urbanizing and modernizing influences of Penang, Perak, and Selangor, has made it much less isolated from national economic and political trends.

While Kedah's population is more ethnically mixed than that of Kelantan, Malays still account for 70.6% of the population; Chinese number 19.3%, Indians 8.5%, and Thais around 1.6%. Most people in Kedah, whether Malay, Chinese, Thai, or Indian, are engaged in padi and/or rubber cultivation. Kedah's cities have as many Malays as Chinese, an unusual phenomenon for the west coast, where Chinese are dominant in most urban areas (Zaharah 1979). Like the Kelantanese, Kedah Malays are proud of their own regional traditions, particularly the Kedah dialect of Malay (used by Shanon in his novels), and a strong and distinctive tradition of performing arts (Rahmah 1979).

Three special characteristics then, set Kelantan and Kedah apart from many other (but not all) Malaysian states: these are their basically agricultural economy, the comparatively high percentage of Malays, and a strong pride in local regional traditions. Four of the following five papers explore questions of cultural identity in Kelantan, where each of these characteristics is especially pronounced.

In the first paper, David Banks uses data from four novels about Kedah by the Malay author Shanon Ahmad to explore the role of Islam in rural Malay society. Banks believes that the world views of the peasants mirrored in these novels provide a more holistic vision of their universe than that obtained through narrowly defined class or communal types of analysis. The novels are set in the Sik district of Kedah, a poor rural area where Malays (who form the large majority here) struggle to earn a living through rice and rubber cultivation. The novels' plots focus on the plights of poor farmers who, in the face of challenges from nature and their fellow man, place a fatalistic

trust in Allah and their Islamic faith. Sik villagers are plagued by problems familiar to rural Malaysians elsewhere: differing opinions about development programs, personal intrigues in village politics, ambivalent relationships with local spirits, and confrontations between landless peasants and certain less-than-honorable government officials.

Banks argues that by looking at peasant responses to these dilemmas, one can learn a great deal about the relationship between Malay religion and politics in Sik. He is particularly interested in understanding the support which the fundamentalist Islamic party, PAS, received in Kedah elections from 1969 to 1978. Banks questions whether support for PAS in Kedah is comparable to that found in Kelantan, where Kessler (1978) has identified PAS's success with its articulation of class interests. Banks sees the Kedah villagers in Shanon's novels using their Islamic faith primarily to help them make sense of the world; Islam for them is an extremely important part of their social and cultural heritage as Malays. PAS appeals to Kedah villagers as a viable political choice in part because of the importance of Islam in their world, but not in a way which unites fundamentalist Islam with the interests of any particular class. Banks observes that Kedah villagers recognize and respond to class antagonisms in secular, not religious ways. Islam may help them understand and live with poverty, but it offers no social programs to help them alleviate it.

A further point made by Banks about Islam and cultural identity relates to issues raised in Barbara Wright's paper on Kelantanese dalang, the puppeteers of wayang kulit. Banks notes that Sik villagers are not bothered by contradictions between the tenets of scripturalist Islam and their beliefs in local spirits; Islam is such a vital part of their Malay identity, it is able to subsume respect for traditional spirits as well. For Wright, the relationship between the traditional pre-Islamic spiritual components of Kelantanese wayang (Wayang Siam) and the Kelantanese identification with fundamentalist Islam becomes problematic when the two are used simultaneously as key symbols of Kelantanese identity.

Wright's paper analyzes the role of the dalang in Kelantanese society, and the perceptions of this role when wayang is used as a symbol of Kelantanese regional traditions. Kelantanese dalang are known as romantic figures who flaunt village traditions, both through their purported numerous love affairs and in their general lack of emotional control. Travels with their troupes from village to village and the physical and psychological demands of their profession place dalang outside the usual bounds of the peasant moral framework. While local Islamic authorities in Kelantan have disapproved of the amoral behavior of dalang and the non-Islamic character of wayang

performances, the dalang themselves claim that they are anything but non-Islamic, and that a good deal of the wayang's mythology is, in fact, derived from Islamic sources. Such criticisms have a long history in Kelantan, where the local popularity of wayang has nevertheless remained strong.

Tensions between dalang and Islamic authorities at the local level are minor when compared to the difficulties which arise when both wayang and fundamentalist Islam are employed as cultural symbols of Kelantanese or Malay national identity. The conservative Malay traditions of Kelantan have not gone unnoticed by leaders searching for national cultural symbols. To be Malay is to be Islamic; certain aspects of the Kelantanese fundamentalist Islamic tradition thus are quite attractive to those interested in promoting a conservative Malay identity. However, problems arise in the political arena with the close relationship between Kelantanese fundamentalist Islam and the major opposition party, PAS. Meanwhile, wayang has also been identified as an important part of the Malay cultural heritage, to the extent that the federal government has, in the past decade, funded research and training in wayang through the Ministry of Culture. What happens when regional cultural symbols such as wayang and fundamentalist Islam are employed jointly as symbols of Malay national identity? Within Kelantanese Malay villages these two cultural traditions may appeal to different social strata or be identified with different sociocultural issues. Taken out of the local context, the contradictions between the two appear far more glaring, and a renegotiation of their meanings seems inevitable.

According to Wright's description, dalang function within Kelantanese society not as reflectors or models of village cultural ideals, but as actors who live out the suppressed desires of their audience within the controlled situation of a culturally recognized profession. Removed from this context, the behavior of dalang can become problematic for government officials or urban dwellers who are tempted to view them as cultural models or as spokesmen for traditional Malay ideals. Given that the meanings of regional cultural symbols are rooted in local cultural contexts, the manipulation of these symbols at the state or national levels must almost certainly result in a transformation or renegotiation of their meanings.

Golomb's discussion of Muslim and Buddhist magico-religious specialists in Thailand and Malaysia makes a similar point about contextual interpretations. Outgroup religious specialists, employed both by Thai-Buddhists in central Thailand and by Malay-Muslims in Kelantan, are believed to possess special prowess in solving certain types of magico-religious problems. Thus, Muslim magic is considered particularly efficacious in predominantly Buddhist Thailand, while Thai-Buddhist specialists are much sought after in mostly Malay-Muslim Kelantan.

According to Golomb, the attractiveness of outgroup religious specialists in these two areas hinges on several factors. For one, the services most commonly sought after are sorcery and love-magic, services which require confidentiality but not intimacy. Secrets, which are not easily kept within small communities, may be safe in the hands of local out-group specialists. Rather than traveling a long distance to a practitioner who is unknown to one's neighbors, one may safely seek magical assistance from a nearby specialist outside of one's own group. Golomb argues that the availability of nearby out-group religious specialists is particularly important to Thai and Malay women, who find it difficult to travel long distances, but who frequently find themselves depending on love magic to retain their husbands' loyalties.

The types of services offered by outgroup specialists in the occult, such as sorcery and love-magic, typically fall outside of the codes of public morality (one should not need to bewitch one's spouse or neighbor), but while publicly disdained, they are privately much sought after. Golomb implies that such services offer a type of safety-valve for people living in face-to-face communities, where neighborly cooperation is highly valued, but not always easily achieved. Here, the presence of ethnic diversity takes on a constructive social function; the presence of outsiders allows Malays and Thais to continue to articulate their ideals of community cooperation, while taking advantage of opportunities for resolving local tensions outside of the community.

Questions of cultural flexibility among Kelantanese Malays are addressed more directly by Raybeck, who observes that definitions of cultural identity may be clarified by looking at how group members define and deal with culturally deviant behavior. Raybeck, like Wright, notes the disparities between regional cultural ideals and those articulated by the central government. For example, certain activities labeled illegal by the government, such as bullfighting, smuggling and certain types of gambling, are valued as positive labels of Kelantanese identity by local villagers.

According to Raybeck, Kelantanese villagers make distinctions between desired behavior within and outside of the village, and also distinguish between the treatment of insiders and outsiders. Behavioral rules within the village place a high premium on harmonious personal relations, and Kelantanese Malays are governed by elaborate codes of courtesy behavior. However, because of the high value placed on village harmony, people often remain quite flexible in their evaluations of deviant behavior within the village. Raybeck looks in some detail at how village Malays handle three categories of deviant behavior: the mentally ill, homosexual transvestites, and prostitutes. He notes the

tendency to avoid labeling a fellow villager as deviant for fear of offending that person's relatives and friends. Evaluations of deviant behavior are frequently segregated from overall evaluations of people, allowing villagers to praise people's good points in spite of their bad. Finally, villagers who give up their deviant behavior are fairly easily reintegrated back into village society.

Raybeck argues that the maintenance of cultural identity depends upon the reinforcement of cultural ideals within a group. Because individuals cannot and will not always live up to these cultural ideals, the management of deviant behavior becomes an important problem. Kelantanese Malays deal with this dilemma in two ways: by keeping participation in most deviant behavior, such as drugs, prostitution, and gambling, outside of the local community, and by adopting flexible attitudes towards deviants within the community in order to maintain village harmony.

The flexibility so central to the maintenance of cultural identity among Kelantanese Malays is of similar importance to the Pulai Chinese discussed in Carstens' paper. Using data from a Hakka Chinese community in Ulu Kelantan, Carstens suggests that complex and even somewhat contradictory definitions of a group's identity can at times be manipulated to a group's advantage.

Carstens focuses on two questions in her analysis of Pulai Chinese cultural identities. First, she asks whether Chinese Malaysians cannot feel loyalty towards both Chinese and Malaysian traditions, and if so, how this is possible. Secondly, she questions whether male and female perceptions of cultural identity might not be expected to differ, given that the public sphere, where such identities are usually displayed, is commonly controlled by men.

In exploring answers to these questions, Carstens begins by highlighting patterns of local ethnic differentiation and interaction. Pulai, a former gold mining settlement, was founded by Hakka Chinese miners many generations ago, and the presence of cultural accommodations in the Pulai community reflect in part their long history in the local area. Looking at differences between outsiders' and insiders' views of Pulai, she argues that local isolation has generated issues of cultural identity which relate more importantly to how community members define themselves within their own community, rather than to how they relate to outsiders. Pulai Chinese value two somewhat different sets of cultural ideals, which include their ties to conservative Chinese cultural traditions and their ties to the local Malaysian soil as well. These loyalties are expressed through differing sets of cultural symbols, in two different contexts, the public and the private.

Differing public and private definitions of cultural loyalties are connected to public and domestic spheres, identified as the primary domains of men and women respectively. While men may be more articulate spokesmen concerning both public and domestic definitions of cultural identity, changes in female behavior in the domestic sphere have become important markers of Pulai Chinese ties to the local environment. By expressing different identities in two separate spheres, Pulai Chinese are able to identify simultaneously with conservative Chinese traditions as well as with local cultural accommodations associated with their Malaysian residence.

The cultural constructions of Pulai Chinese cultural identities are highly complex and allow for considerable behavioral flexibility. Themes of cultural complexity and behavioral flexibility are important considerations, in fact, in all the papers in this volume. It is both interesting and significant that the anthropologists writing about cultural identity have focused more on the tensions between insiders' and outsiders' views of their groups than on ethnic problems between members of different ethnic groups. Undoubtedly, this is due in part to the ethnic proportions found in Kelantan and Kedah, yet it appears to be related even more clearly to changes taking place in the larger Malaysian society.

In Malaysia, as elsewhere, the socioeconomic changes associated with industrialization and expanding urban populations have frequently created a nostalgia for the village life left behind. Village cultures are often believed to straightforwardly reflect the traditional values which many urbanites fear they are losing. People who attempt to recall the exemplary patterns of village cultures do so in part to keep a sense of who they are by remembering where they have come from. The views thus constructed of village life, however, tend to be both oversimplified and static. The cultural symbols which convey meaning to villagers in rural environments do not carry the same significance outside of their local context, leading to marked differences between insiders' and outsiders' views of "traditional culture." Perhaps one of the more important challenges facing both rural and urban Malaysians today is the construction of new cultural identities, which, retaining the complexity and flexibility of the identities of the past, help them to understand what it means to be a Chinese, Indian, Thai, or Malay Malaysian living in a particular part of Malaysia in the last quarter of the twentieth century.

Notes

¹ These figures, rounded off, are from The 1970 General Report Population Census of Malaysia. All population figures used in the following pages are taken from this report.

² Bumiputra, a Malay word which translates as "son of the soil," is used to distinguish the indigenous population of Malaysia, Orang Asli, Malays, (and many Indonesians) from immigrant groups such as the Chinese and Indians. The bumiputra category is used in granting special consideration for education, employment, investment, and other opportunities.

³ Of Kelantan's population, 92.4% is classified as Malay; this includes the Orang Asli. In 1970, 15.1% of Kelantanese lived in urban areas of 10,000 or more; 24.1% lived in areas of 1000 or more.

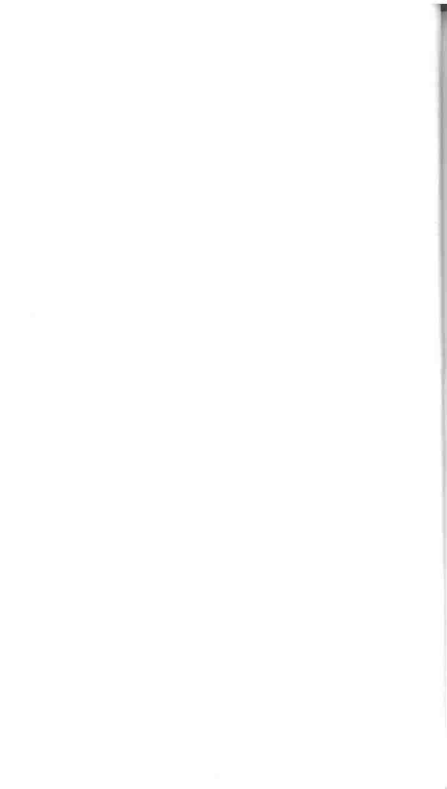
⁴ In 1970, of Kelantan's 36,668 Chinese, 18,171 lived in the Kota Baru district. Chinese living in Ulu Kelantan numbered only 5293.

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ISLAM AND POLITICAL CHANGE IN RURAL MALAY SOCIETY:
SHAHNON AHMAD'S NOVELS AS DATA

David J. Banks

An anthropologist rarely has the opportunity to compare his ideas and insights about a peasant community with those of a major novelist who has focused his works on the same area. The novels of Shahnon Ahmad have offered me this opportunity with respect to the Malay peasants of Sik, Kedah. Shahnon was born in Sik and educated in Malaysia and Australia.¹ His four novels about Sik address problems concerning the structure of the Malay moral landscape and provide materials for assessing the role of Islam in Malay rural society. Shahnon's view of Malay society and its prospects for change contrasts with the recent work of Kessler (1978) which regards fundamentalist, scripturalist Islam as exemplified in the Parti Islam Sa-Tanah Melayu (PAS) as a direct ideological expression of Malay class consciousness. Islamic fundamentalism does not figure in Shahnon's novels about poverty. He presents a holistic view of Islam in Sik and a secular view of Malay class consciousness. This look at four Malay novels as social science data is useful because it will redress the tendency of anthropologists to regard their own oral documents as definitive and to disregard the informed opinion of local intellectuals.

The Context

Shahnon's novels about Sik were written during the tumultuous period from 1965 to 1978. This period saw anti-Chinese riots in Georgetown, Penang and peasant demonstrations in Sik caused by food shortages in 1974. During these years, representation for Sik in the state assembly passed from the ruling Alliance (later National Front) government to the Pan-Malayan Islamic Party (English name for PAS). The novels discussed here do not deal with these events directly, but they do occur in post-Independence Malaya, and all of their plots deal with the rural crisis of landlessness and poverty.

Sik is one of the poorest districts of West Malaysia. Its population is overwhelmingly Malay and rural. Sik's padi fields have Kedah's lowest rice yield classification, which accounts in part for the importance of smallholder rubber there. Over half of the cultivated lands in Sik are planted with rubber, with the greatest expansion of rubber lands having occurred in the period since the Second World War. Many residents are landless tappers of smallholder plots. A typical prosperous farmer household in

Sik owns under five relung [a relung is .711 acre] of padi land and under seven relung of low yielding rubber trees. The monthly gross income from this hypothetical prosperous farmer's rubber trees was well under \$US50 per month during the year prior to the 1969 election.

Poverty in Ranjau Sa-Paniang Jalan

Although Ranjau Sa-Paniang Jalan (hereafter Ranjau) is not Shanon's first novel about Sik (Rentong appeared one year earlier), it is his most influential to date, due to its English edition entitled No Harvest But a Thorn, distributed by Oxford University Press. The translator remarked that Ranjau is the first detailed, clear and realistic view of village life in Malaya.² The story is simple. Lahuma is a poor peasant with fourteen relung of padi land he inherited from his father, Haji Debasa. (Lahuma lost six relung to the Chinese money lender.) He has seven daughters. Each will receive two relung through inheritance when he is too old to cultivate. Lahuma realizes that his grandchildren will be paupers. As the reader follows Lahuma, his wife Jeha and their children through one year of life, the author shows how several chance events conspire to destroy their life together. First Jeha is bitten by a cobra, then Lahuma steps on a thorn. Jeha recovers. Lahuma dies after a massive infection. Jeha reacts to Lahuma's death by gradually losing her mind. She is placed in a cage in her own house. Her eldest daughter will carry on.

Through this simple, depressing story line, Shanon details poverty through obsession: the obsession of the peasant farmer with the success or failure of his crops. The book discusses the problems of padi farming in a low fertility region in agonizing detail. Will the seedlings be eaten by crabs? Will the rice grains be beset by birds? Will there be insect damage? What variety should one plant this year? Beyond these problems there is the demoralizing need of people without tractors to work constantly in the mud for several weeks and suffer leech bites, face dangerous snakes and bend over the land with the hoe-adze to cut away weeds and thick roots. As Shanon presents it, there is no joy in the peasant round, only liability. There are no mechanisms to deal with crisis other than debt.

For Shanon, the independent nuclear family household is the center of social life in Sik. Once a man is married, he and his wife must face the future of declining prospects with their own personal resources. There are no helpful neighbors, brothers and sisters or government services to significantly lessen the burden of their independence. When Lahuma's foot becomes infected, he does not seek out the local clinic, even though there must be one in the age of tractors. Instead, his wife wonders

(Shahnon 1972a: 67) why the local Penghulu (mukim or parish leader) has taken no interest in his foot. To act independently would be forward and would risk shame in the eyes of the community. Such passivity appears at first to be excessive, but my own experience tends to confirm that unnecessary deaths resulting from not using clinical facilities are a common feature of peasant life.

Status differences and Islam render Shahnon's peasants passive. There is no clear statement about the structure of social levels in this novel. The poor are ashamed to ask those capable of helping them for assistance, but the wealthy are not made to look malevolent. There is too much poverty for their resources to go very far alleviating it. Belief in God is a second important factor that renders Shahnon's peasants passive.

Life and death, dearth and plenty, are in the hands of God. In the hands of Allah the Almighty

Joy and good fortune are received in utter thankfulness. Received with a thousand Allhamdulillah--Praise be to Allah. And when suffering and calamity befall them, these are also received in thankfulness. Also with a thousand Allhamdulillah. Thus Lahuma and his wife, Jeha (Shahnon 1972a: 1).

I would suggest that it is this utter belief in God, their weakness and their strength, that accounts for the deeply emotional reaction that this novel evokes among its Malay readers. Lahuma and Jeha pray regularly and ask God for guidance. They hope that He will smile upon them with good fortune, but they do not blame Him for their pain. Lahuma's father was a Haji, but Lahuma is too poor to think about a trip to Mecca. There is no discussion of an organizational role for Islam here nor any concept of social conscience other than in the Penghulu who tries, by lending Jeha his tractor after Lahuma's death, and taking away Jeha for a while to treat her madness to protect the community from the results of their household misfortunes. The reader is not told about the Penghulu's feelings other than that he is upholding community standards.

Village Politics in Rentong

Shahnon began his novels about Sik with Rentong (Scorched) (Malacca 1970), a story which explores the relationships between villagers. The presence of Lebai Debasa (Lahuma's father?) suggests that the novel is set some years before Ranjau but still after independence. The story concerns the treatment of Semaun, a tough-minded villager driven into the position of outcast in his own village as a result of unfortunate incidents and

rivalries. When the villagers have a meeting to discuss planting two crops of rice a year they fear that Semaun will not support their plan, and since unity is essential to getting aid from the government, they send the village headman, Pa' Senik, to convince Semaun. When Pa' Senik approaches his house, Semaun tells his younger sister in response to her suggestion that the headman may be coming to help them:

"How many times have people here helped us in the past?" Semaun continued. "They have never given us as much help as one bit of rice. All they know how to do is criticize me. I'm wild. I'm the village tiger. I'm a demon. They'd all like to see us move away." (Shannon 1970: 29, my trans.)

He refuses to cooperate with the village program because he thinks that the villagers should be thankful for the current fertility and level of productivity of their lands. They are greedy to want more. Why insult the land that has given them life and livelihood for hundreds of years? This is also the feeling of Semaun's ailing father, but there is other background to the rejection. Semaun suspects the headman of corruption in distributing government cattle stock earmarked for the village and in destroying his family's coconut trees in the construction of a road around the village, also a part of the local development plan.

The headman is not at fault, neither does he share the negative opinions of other villagers about Semaun. The avaricious Dogol, who seeks to replace Pa' Senik by discrediting him through identification with Semaun, is the cause of the moral action in this tale. Dogol has been given the government cattle for distribution. He is waiting until two of them bear calves before distributing them, thereby keeping a handsome profit for himself. Dogol accuses Semaun of attacking his cattle and cutting their legs with a parang knife. If the villagers destroy Dogol's rivals, Semaun (also said to be interested in husbandry) and Pa' Senik, the way will be clear for Dogol to profiteer through the development program.

The denouement begins when Semaun's father, Pa' Kasa, dies as a result of a lung infection. Pa' Senik is present at the death and takes care of the household through the crisis of burial. Semaun is impressed with the sincerity and kindness of the headman, which he thinks goes well beyond self-interest and greed. Pa' Senik is glad to be able to bring Semaun back into the fold through kindness. He thinks that the best interest of the village is served by the government plan, and his own kindness is bound to soften Semaun's attitude. Meanwhile Dogol is raising a mob, including Lebai Debasa, who will burn down Semaun's house and expel him from the village for killing one of

the government cattle. The denouement concludes with the discovery that there is a tiger loose on the fringe of the village who has been killing the cattle. A hunt to catch and destroy the tiger ends with the tiger killing Dogol, and Semaun killing the tiger. The novel ends on a note of optimism.

Rentong portrays views of life familiar to observers of Malay rural society. The first chapter describes a meeting at the home of the village headman to discuss the rural development program in the village. Villagers drop in on one another, if only to scheme and plot. These characterizations of Malay rural society contrast sharply with the stark portrayals in Ranjau but do not indicate a very different perspective. There is little altruism here. Village cooperation centers around economic interest. The only example of goodwill is the headman's concern for Semaun's family after the loss of the father, and this is a tempered altruism at best. The headman is a broker between peasants who receives status and obvious economic advantages in return. Nevertheless, Rentong is a much more positive and hopeful novel than Ranjau for it holds out the possibility that village institutions do not absolutely forbid vision and progress toward greater economic security. Pa' Senik symbolizes such vision.

Islam does not play a leadership role here either. Semaun and Pa' Kasa do not invoke God to support their unwillingness to change ancestral ways, although they might have. Instead they appeal to the sanctity of their ties with their ancestors (datok nenek moyang) (Shahnon 1970: 38), to custom (adat) (*ibid.*: 39) and to the sanctity of the land itself (*ibid.*: 40). Lebai Debasa, the pious elder, becomes a tool of the evil designs of Dogol. His knowledge of Islam and respect in the village as a result of that knowledge do not prevent his being used when Dogol raises a group of villagers to expel Semaun. In this work, vision and progress are implicit only in the role of headman, not in Islam.

Islam and the Spirits in Srengenge

Shahnon returns to the problems of landlessness and progress in Srengenge (1975), the third of his novels about Sik. While Rentong used a rural development program as stimulus, Srengenge uses a farmer's personal struggle to free himself from poverty and landlessness through individual action.³ More than this, however, Srengenge is Shahnon's most complete depiction of life in Sik. This novel contains the sights and sounds of Sik, even its smells. The mysterious beauty of the hills and their sudden dangers make this a magical tale, its magic alluded to in the title, the name of a local spirit cult.⁴ Shahnon is at the height of his creative powers in this work. Srengenge fully

realizes the potential indicated in Ranjau. The story is told in Sik dialect, perhaps purer than that of Ranjau, which creates the impression that the reader is hearing the tale from a local storyteller.⁵

Awang Cik Teh is a land-hungry peasant who wants to expand his livelihood by opening a nearby hill to cultivation: Srengenge. Knowing that the villagers fear Srengenge and believe that its spirit is responsible for their successes and failures, Awang Cik Teh tries to gain their support in clearing this hill and applying to the government for permission to permanently occupy it. He first looks to the local Imam, Hamad, and his wife, Haji Munah, for support. The Imam has his doubts about the plan because he is a hunter and uses the hill, with the permission of its spirit, to catch birds for sport. Hunting is the Imam's passionately pursued avocation. One day, shortly after his meeting with Awang Cik Teh, when the Imam is hunting doves with his friend Diah and his decoy dove Jebat, a hawk frightens Jebat. Imam Hamad is furious at Jebat and in his frustration at the bird's cowardice, tears the bird apart, slinging its associated trap into the fire. Suddenly seeing the hawk and realizing what he has done, the Imam returns home in shock. Diah is puzzled by all of this. Why is the Imam so distraught? Imam Hamad blames Srengenge and decides to go to Awang Cik Teh's house to agree to cooperate in its clearing.

Then, suddenly, the Imam falls ill, probably from a stroke, and lies paralyzed on the floor of his house attended by his wife. His wife fetches the local homoh, Useng, who goes into trance to determine the cause of the illness. Useng hunts on Srengenge, as does Imam Hamad, but for deer. He wishes to maintain the good relations between the village and the hill. He falls into trance and determines that Srengenge is at the root of the trouble; therefore, he decides to have an exorcistic feast on the hillside in the middle of the night to cure the Imam. There follows a colorful description of this ceremony. The men move through the night in terror with the offered items (roast chicken on spits) carrying torchs made of banana fronds. After reciting several spells they drop the items in a pile and head back home. The Imam's condition is unchanged.

Imam Hamad's illness causes consternation in the village. As the villagers gather to pay their respects and to treat him, they display their guilt over having abused their relationship with Srengenge. The author takes the reader into the Imam's dreamworld where he relives with horror his cruelty to his pet bait dove. Then the homoh makes a last attempt to exorcize the spirit by talking to the Imam. They raise him and ask him who caused his sickness. Meanwhile, Awang Cik Teh remains aloof from all of this because he believes that Muslims should be more concerned for the livelihoods of their children than for

Srengenge, even though he does not completely reject the beliefs upon which their guilt rests. Awang Cik Teh renews his resolve to clear the hill. He goes to see the Imam to convey this information. He arrives while Useng is performing his shamanly operations. The Imam dies.

Here Shahnnon sees the dilemma of backwardness as a dilemma of the human conscience. When do Malays exercise their conscience? In Srengenge the villagers express their guilt toward nature and the spirits of nature easily. They think they have abused their privileges and damaged the natural balance as each of those approaching the hill violated the terms of relationship with it: Imam Hamad in his bird catching and Useng while hunting deer. Cruelty toward animals is a symbol of all that is wrong in their lives. The significance of Awang Cik Teh is his suggestion that this concern and guilt would be better directed toward their own children who will face an uncertain livelihood in the future. The Srengenge cult is an expression of suppressed feelings of helplessness in their relations with their own children.

Shahnnon contrasts the role of Islam as a traditional part of village life with a potentially new and revolutionary role that it might have in the future. In the past, Islam was tied to village rites, particularly rituals of sickness and death. Beyond that it established status credentials in village society. Imam Hamad is a respected villager; hence it is logical that Awang Cik Teh seeks his support for a radical proposal. The Imam does not immediately confront the issue of clearing the hill as a dilemma of moral conscience; he brings up the difficulties involved: the clearing process, the likelihood of government opposition. When he finally agrees it is because he thinks that the spirits of Srengenge have turned against him, but the reader also suspects that the Imam's change of mind indicates that deep inside he knows that Awang Cik Teh is right and that he, the Imam, has a responsibility to act upon that realization.

The Landless Confront Their Government in *Seluang Menodak Baung*

Seluang Menodak Baung⁶ carries the theme of Malay landlessness another step. This novel depicts a serious attempt by young, landless Malays to improve their lot by getting government permission to clear new land. There are two main characters. The first is Suman, a poor village youth of Kampung Terenas. He is one of a family of six children, all of whom suffer from hunger and malnutrition. They have no land and tap the trees of Pak Yet which are old and weak in latex production. They must seek additional livelihood by gathering bamboo in the forest and selling it to Chinese in the town and collecting bitter roots (ubi sadung) to supplement their diet. The first sixty pages deal graphically with their everyday problems and frustrations.

Suman's mother, Piah, is about to have a baby and her husband, Salam, has no plans for improving their livelihood to provide for it. Suman, their oldest son, wants to get some new land which they can call their own and begin to clear and cultivate it. The villagers of Kampung Terenas have already requested land in the hills surrounding their best padi fields, but the government has not yet acted upon their requests.

Fatah is the second important character. He has left Sik to work in Penang as a trishaw driver who escorts prostitutes between the hotels in which they work. His hopes for improving his livelihood by moving to Penang have proven illusory. He lives with his wife and children in a squatter shack soon to be demolished by the town government. They find their situation in Georgetown hopeless and decide to return to Sik to tap rubber. Upon his return Fatah decides, together with Suman, to plan a march on the district office to demonstrate the desire of the villagers for the land that they have requested. When Suman's father finds out about the plan he is furious and beats his son with a stick, but the boy does not back down. Piah gives birth to a son whom she names after the Malay warrior Hang Jebat, who fought against his own sultan because that sultan was unjust. Piah is sympathetic with the plan. Salam opposes the demonstration because of his traditional religiosity. He says:

All these activities are wrong. They violate custom, are treasonous to the king and everyone else. They are a means of personal aggrandizement, and this is wrong. No matter how one's livelihood is denied by God, so be it (Shahnon 1978: 200).

The father's opposition stems also from his vulnerability in the local economic and status systems. What if Pak Yet finds someone else to tap his trees?

The denouement comes when Lebai Karim, a prominent villager who supports the request for land but opposes the demonstration, goes to the local legislator to tell him about the plans going forward in the village. The legislator, panicked by the news, tells a friend that he never informed the district officer of the villagers' requests, even though he had told the villagers that he would act upon them. The legislator gains status in his world by keeping peasant requests to a minimum. Lebai Karim feels compromised when he discovers the legislator's stealth, but he enjoys patronage of the powerful man too much to oppose him. Instead Lebai Karim goes to the district officer to inform him of the planned demonstration. When the district officer hears of the planned demonstration he too panics and goes straight to Fatah to agree to his demands. Meanwhile the villagers plan a festive demonstration, completely unaware of its likely consequences: riot and arrests. Fatah decides to have the

demonstration anyway, but instead of at the district office they will have it at the home of the legislator. The chapter describing the demonstration consists of a description of a savage storm leveling his house.

Islam and the Rural Crisis

PAS won the state constituency election in Sik in the May 1969 general election and has maintained control of this constituency through the 1978 elections. One suspects that Shahnnon would not be surprised by these events even though they are not foreshadowed in his four novels. Why? First, Islam appears in each of the novels as an important part of the identities of the characters. They think of themselves as Muslims, even though Islam does not seem to offer them clear alternatives when critical problems arise. The PAS program would certainly not repel them because of its Islamic identity. Second, the PAS offered a political alternative that was not outlawed by the government. Voting behavior here represents a choice between realistic alternatives. Malaysia has had, over the almost quarter century of its independence, a number of well publicized imprisonments of radicals who have come from the noncommunal, socialist oriented secular parties. The showing of the noncommunal People's Party (Partai Rakyat) in elections in Trengganu, another poor northern Malaysian state, belies any dismissal of socialist parties as anti-Muslim or anti-Malay (cf. Kessler 1978: 243). Under other circumstances Sik might have chosen a socialist party.

The first point requires deeper scrutiny. What does Shahnnon tell us about Malay Islam in Sik? What part does it play in the peasants' lives? We may discern several concepts of Islam in these novels. In Ranjau, Islam is the all-consuming fatalistic monotheism of Lahuma, who takes the good with the bad. For Lahuma, Islam is belief in God, the All-knowing and Almighty. Such unquestioning faith accepts and does not comment upon the social order. When Lahuma assumes that the Penghulu will not help him out of his difficulties, he does not suggest that the Penghulu is a bad man. Lahuma identifies Islam with his total society and the difficulties that it imposes upon man. Shahnnon develops this theme of Islam as the Malay social totality in Srengenge and Seluang Manodak Baung. In Srengenge, none of the characters dismiss belief in the sacred mountain as evil or shirik (a sacrilegious personification). Instead they have incorporated belief in Srengenge with the rest of their lives. Useng, the homoh in Srengenge, even associates the spirit cult with Islam:

Why didn't Useng bring Awang Cik Teh along [to the exorcism]? It could be because Awang Cik Teh harbored evil intentions toward Srengenge. Evil intentions would be

enough. How else could one look upon the plan to level every merbau and meranti tree on the hill. This would be the same as undressing Srengenge. The same as knocking down a prayer hall [madrasah]. The same as pulling out a grave stone. Or tearing up the Quran (1975: 224, my trans.).

They use Quranic verses to supplicate the spirits there, and even the Imam regards Srengenge as part of the world, all of which is given to man by God. In Seluang Menodak Baung, Salam, Suman's father, believes that opposition to the government's refusal to alienate additional land for peasant occupation is a violation of his religious faith. There had never been demonstrations before, even though he implies that the government took less concern over occupation of unused lands in the past. In each of these cases, Islam is seen as part of the total social and cultural heritage of the Malays. Local practices are therefore, by definition, permitted by Islam, if not required.

Shannon also identifies Islam with the rituals that it requires. He tells us that some of his characters pray the required five times a day, although he does not insist that all of them do. Prayer ritual is one indicator of the degree of a man's piety. Other religious rituals represent Islam in villagers' lives, as in the reading of the Surat Yassin to command Imam Hamad's soul to God in Srengenge. We may assume that other rituals, some calendrical such as alms, celebrations, and fasting, constitute Islamic associations that are particularly strong as do rites of passage, such as circumcision, funerals and demonstrations of excellence in Quran reading (berkhatam).

Finally, Islam is a scholarly religious tradition with learned exponents. The religious leaders in Sik described in these novels do not appear to be men of great erudition if one uses modern standards of accomplishment. They seem to have been trained by traveling religious teachers or to have studied religion in some other area of Malaya. Imam Hamad's wife has taken the Haj as has Lahuma's father, but this implies no special level of higher understanding. Sik's religious leaders are traditionalists who do not believe that their lifestyle is open to question. Formal scripturalist institutions do not figure in any major way in these novels. One does not observe the activities surrounding local mosques, nor do important strategy sessions take place in local prayer halls (madrasah). Here Shannon emphasizes the backwardness of Sik, an area whose inhabitants have lived without facilities found in other parts of Malaya. There is no Kaum Muda or modernist Islamic faction that has translated the dilemmas of modern poverty and landlessness into moral problems for which their religious teachings hold answers.⁷

There are three characters in these four novels who are learned in religious affairs: Lebai Debasa in Rentong (who is mentioned briefly in Ranjau as the father of Lahma), Imam Hamad in Srengenge and Lebai Karim in Seluang Menodak Baung. Each of them is unsure of himself when presented with the crises in Shahnon's plots. Lebai Debasa is gradually swayed by the iago-like defamation of Semaun in Rentong. He participates in the intended burning of Semaun's house. Imam Hamad opposes Awang Cik Teh's plan to level the foliage on Srengenge so that he can continue to hunt doves. Lebai Karim in Seluang Menodak Baung plays the role of informer for the self-seeking legislator who had hidden the village's requests for land.

There is some evidence that Islam does not support progress and change in traditional village life. Awang Cik Teh and Suman represent the potential for change through new ideas that they feel must be supported by Islam, but we are not given any indication that these men connect their realizations with political ideas outside their villages. Both of these characters are presented as individuals who must draw followings through appeal to their own interests. For each of them, the quest for additional land and alleviation of their oppressive poverty becomes a moral duty that each feels is not contrary to religious law. When Awang Cik Teh presses his claims his fellow villagers look at him as if he is violating Islam, but he steadfastly maintains:

Srengenge deserves only the ax and the flame. Its merbau, meranti and pinang trees must be lopped off. There is no need for feasting it with five or six roast chickens. There is no need to worship it. Srengenge is no God. Srengenge is only a hill (Shahnon 1975: 220-221, my trans.).

When Suman thinks over his father's opposition to the planned demonstration, Shahnon concludes:

Suman found it hard to accept his father's reasons for declaring his activities forbidden [haram]. How they were haram he did not know. Haram can only mean that they violate Islamic law, but that wasn't the case. The people would only demonstrate to show the truth and claim their rights. This is not haram, rather it is legitimate (halal), save if they were to enter the forest and cut down trees without a reason (Shahnon 1978: 202, my trans.).

The motivation for change that appears in all of these works comes from the villagers' perceptions of their own poverty and helplessness to change it without petitioning their government. Islam does not provide them with any special tools for coping with that realization. The villagers have a class

interest in common which expresses itself without the medium of Islamic scripturalist ideology. Shanon's descriptions of poverty in Sik and the reactions to it show that even without external information, a man knows when he is poor and how close he is to starvation. A man is also conscious of the implications of present poverty for future generations, and this adds legitimacy to his struggles.

The Outcome

Shanon is optimistic about the outcome of these struggles against rural poverty. This optimism is indicated in two works. Seluang Menodak Baung has a happy ending with the district officer promising the peasants land. In another novel outside of our corpus of works, Kemelut (Crisis) (1977), Shanon presents a confrontation between a fishing village on the coast opposite to Penang and a polluting factory. Here the villagers threaten to burn the factory down if it is not closed, and the government accedes to their request. In both cases, the government is depicted as more than aware of the legitimacy of the peasants' claims. Each time, the government is afraid to oppose these claims and backs down. Shanon presents this confrontation between peasant anger, frustration, and hunger and government guilt and fear as the usual avenue by which resolutions of peasant demands take place.

The validity of this model of accommodation appears supported by the attempts of the National Front government to eliminate poverty in its national planning and to guarantee every citizen a decent livelihood (cf. Malaysia 1973: 2-8). Shanon's argument implies more than this. It implies that there is a covert understanding between the Malay administrative elite and their rural charges that the legitimacy of the former depends upon their ability to prevent the latter from sinking to the depths of poverty.

Conclusions

In his novels about Sik, Shanon presents a picture of Malay political development and change which contrasts sharply with the pattern described for Kelantan. The contrast is significant because there has been a tendency in writings about Malay society to identify Kelantanese culture and the changes that it has experienced as prototypes for Malay political development in other regions (cf. Nash 1974: 7).⁸ In the Kelantan pattern the chronically underpaid and underemployed religious elite provide leadership for the peasants and articulate their demands. Scriptural concepts and controversies concerning them become rallying points for the rural poor who see

themselves as neglected and exploited by the ruling elite. Shahnon's picture of Sik's poverty and political dissatisfaction emphasizes secular, grass-roots leadership coming from the midst of what one writer has called "the beautiful little people" (Mohd. Yusof 1979: 7).⁹ The isolation and economic neglect of Sik account for the extrabureaucratic origins of its political leaders. In Shahnon's view, such leaders reflect a deeply Islamic conscience and consciousness which his novels expound. He suggests that religion can be a powerful transforming force in society even outside of its usual institutional channels, and his representation of the rudimentary religious elite in Sik as weak and often compromised and vacillating is based upon observation. He does not recommend it as a model for his fellow Muslims.¹⁰

Shahnon's model is optimistic. He stresses accommodation between the rich and poor through a process which sometimes involves confrontation. This accommodation may be reached because of the background of shared values and moral constraints. He does not concentrate upon issues of social class or communalism. These novels constitute an important critique of the class and communal models of Malaysian society because they bring the positive roles of altruism, brotherhood, and cooperation into the foreground of analysis while other views present these factors as ideological expressions of obvious economic interests and social resentments.

Notes

1 "Shahnon bin Ahmad was born in 1933 in the remote village of Bangul Derdap in the state of Kedah in north-west Malaysia. He was educated at a Malay school and at an English-medium secondary school until the age of twenty. He joined the teaching profession in 1955 and taught Malay Language and Literature for eight years. In 1968 he completed a correspondence course in Journalism from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, and in 1971 he graduated from the Australian National University, Canberra, majoring in South-East Asian Civilization" (Shahnon 1972: rear flap).

2 Abidah's valuable introduction places Ranjau Sa-Paniang Jalan within the context of other Malay novels written after World War II. I found this translation excellent, conveying much of the feeling of the original, without imposing an excessively quaint cast on the dialect used in the novel. The vocabulary and syntax of the original resemble the style in which yarns are told

by storytellers in *Sik*, complete with the repetition of key phrases for emphasis.

3 Abidah appears to consider the use of the rural development program as awkward (Abidah 1972: vi). I would argue that the development program was a means by which Shahnnon could approach the problem of future development and progress, a way to go beyond the problems of poverty and backwardness that he describes in *Ranjau*. As very often happens in literature, Shahnnon has been most successful in depicting problems naturalistically, while his nationalism draws him to search for solutions.

4 The name Srengenge appears to be a Malay rendering from the Tamil. There have been several groups of Tamil workers in *Sik*, mainly road and bridge workers but some rubber tappers working near cemeteries and other areas thought to be frequented by spirits. The violent deaths of some of these workers have created a series of stories about spirits of the land that disapproved of their behaviors. Perhaps Srengenge is such a spirit.

5 Some Malay readers seem to have been deterred from reading Shahnnon's *Sik* novels because of the obvious vocabulary difficulties that they present. I do not feel, however, that this bad publicity has affected many committed readers of Malay literature. Shahnnon has acquired a similar reputation among the Malay literati to the one that Faulkner has among Americans. Reading the *Sik* dialect is considered part of the literary experience. We must also look at Shahnnon's use of Malay in light of the uninformed condescension in which Malay is held in some foreign and non-Malay circles in Malaysia. Shahnnon has made the case for an aesthetically appealing modern rural narrative tradition.

6 The title is a play on words: *Selaung* is a small classification of fish found in inland regions, of the genus *Rasbora*. *Baung* is the classifier for inland catfish. The connecting verb *Menodak* comes from the noun *Todayak*, the classifier for garfish that have long, sharp beaks (cf. Tweedie and Harrison 1970: 106-107; 120-122). The intent here appears to be of the little fish skewering the big fish. One should also bear in mind the Malay proverb:

Ta' sunggoh seluang melaut, akhirnya balik ke tepi juga.

Even if the *selaung* goes out to sea, it eventually comes back to shore (Iskandar 1970: 1048, my trans.).

7 Awang Had Salleh's *Biru Warna* deals with *Kaum Muda* and its implications for change in rural Malaya but indicates that its influence was not yet strong in coastal Kedah, even after independence (1976: 97-101).

8 The extent to which Shahnnon's model or a modified form of it could be applied in Kelantan is found in Husin Ali (1978). Husin Ali argues that the organization of PAS through village schools in Kelantan accounts for its political strength much as does Kessler, but that support for PAS is not an inevitable result or expression of class consciousness. While Husin Ali concedes that the success of PAS is related to its ability to strike resonances with a variety of peasant values and homilies, he suspects support for PAS will be temporary as its members and the groups it represents filter upward into the ruling elite. He also notes that PAS has included a heavy dose of ideology concerning inter-ethnic exploitation and the betrayal of fellow Muslims to its conception of the just Islamic society (1978: 68-72).

9 It is interesting to note that Bailey, who has done fieldwork in Sik and on the East Coast of Malaya has grappled with the problem of the difficulty of organizing rural development projects in Sik. His monograph presents a picture of Sik's political leadership pattern through informal networks based upon personal qualities (*pengaruh*) that is not at variance with Shahnnon's in any major respect.

10 Several other studies of Shahnnon's work have appeared in Dewan Sastra: Achdiat on Ranjau Sepanjang Jalan (1972), Johns on the theme of the compassionless world in Shahnnon's novels (1971) and Shahnnon on Rentong (1972b).

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THE ROLE OF THE DALANG IN KELANTANESE MALAY SOCIETY

Barbara S. Wright

Introduction¹

Dalang, the puppeteers of the Kelantan Malay Wayang Siam shadow play, occupy both a unique and necessary position in Kelantanese society and culture. As performers of an extremely popular art form, they combine the roles of film star and magician. With little fear of remonstrance, dalang may break the rules of their village society and indulge in behavior forbidden to most Kelantanese. Puppeteers are an embodiment of a distinctive cultural tradition. Whereas urbanized Malays ascribe the preservation of "real" Malay adat (traditional law) to Kelantan, Kelantanese, no longer observing their own regional custom, relegate its practice to dalang.

The Art of the Dalang

The dalang is the star performer of the Wayang Siam,² the Malay version of the Asian shadow play complex which reaches its greatest elaboration in Southeast Asia.³ There are several genres found in Kelantan alone: Wayang Jawa, a Kelantanese court version of the Javanese Wayang Purwa; Wayang Gedek, the Kelantanese variant of the Thai Nang Talung;⁴ and Wayang Siam, the folk or village Kelantanese shadow play. Wayang Jawa and Wayang Gedek are ostensibly foreign forms whose devotees pride themselves on the stewardship of non-Malaysian tradition, while performers and audience believe the Wayang Siam is authentic Kelantanese entertainment, though it, too, has absorbed influences from myriad sources.⁶ Its name, Wayang Siam--literally, Siamese Drama--is taken from its purported Siamese origins; dalang's lore describes the arrival of the shadow play in Kelantan, brought by a Thai woman, Mak Erik or Mak Erok, or perhaps a Thai couple, Mak and Pak Erok. The historical origins of the Wayang Siam are obscure, though contact with Java is evident.

Wayang Siam plays are based, however loosely, upon the Malay oral variant of the Hindu Ramayana, entitled Cerita Mahraja Wana (Mahraja Wana's Story).⁷ Dalang refer to it as the ibu (mother) or trunk story; the repertoire is represented by an arboreal motif. The "mother" tale is infrequently performed on Kelantan's shadow screens; "branch" stories featuring the same principal characters in different settings are far more popular. Mastery of the Cerita Mahraja Wana is an essential task of a student dalang. His expertise must extend beyond the plot, to

the nature of the characters themselves; their origins are explained in the tale, and through this knowledge, a dalang can control their spirits.⁸ The "trunk" tale is considered history, and dalang rarely, if ever, make purposeful changes in the "text."⁹ Cerita ranting ("branch" stories) are held in no such esteem; dalang routinely compose their own using common Kelantanese folklore motifs as well as personal inspiration.

A dalang receives his¹⁰ repertoire from his teacher(s), other dalang, books, and whatever is available as a creative inspiration. Tales of the Wayang Siam are passed down in narrative form, as bare outlines of the plot. The dalang creates his own characterization and subplots, composes his dialogue as he performs, imitates the voices of all the characters, and tailors the evening's entertainment to the audience's mood. He learns the techniques of his art from a teacher (tok guru); it is the rare dalang indeed who becomes professional with no formal study.¹¹ A teacher first instructs his pupil (anak murid) in "external knowledge": manipulation of the puppets, voice and repertoire. Only after a teacher is assured of his pupil's loyalty will he entrust him with ilmu dalam (inner knowledge), magic and ritual which are no less important a course of study for an aspiring dalang than more visible theatrical skills. Dalang commence every performance with incantations designed to call the semangat (life-force) of the puppets to them, beguile the audience and protect the place and performers from malignant influences.¹² Their practice of magic is not limited to the stage. Dalang famed for their "inner knowledge"--and the more technically talented a dalang, the more likely he will be considered an expert on the occult--often earn much of their extra-Wayang Siam income working as bomoh (magicians, curers), dispensing jampi (spells), azimat (amulets) and advice, as may Manora (stars of the Thai dance-drama), Tok Peteri (Main Peteri mediums) and bidan (mid-wives), all of whom must practice magic in their vocations.

The Dalang and His Art in Traditional Kelantan

Wayang Siam is the most popular of the Kelantanese traditional performing arts¹³ and the most visible representation of an abiding Kelantanese regionalism. It is performed in Kelantanese dialect, which, unwritten, is most creatively used in performances such as Wayang Siam. Shadow play repertoire, especially the Cerita Mahraja Wana is considered sejarah (history, also used to mean "folklore"), Kelantanese history. Local aficionados are familiar with the form as well as content of Wayang Siam, and comprise an educated audience for theatrical presentations. While other media such as television, radio and cinema are identified with the West, or at least the west coast of Malaysia, Wayang Siam is unabashedly local entertainment.

Dalang represent the Wayang Siam in both their personal and professional capacities, and as the art is an emblem of Kelantanese custom, so too is the dalang. He must be extremely knowledgeable about local tradition in order to pursue his livelihood; most dalang are not only well-acquainted with regional customs and entertainments, but often participate in other Kelantanese theatrical genres as well.¹⁴ They commonly act as mediums (Tok Peteri) or "spirit guides" (Tok Minduk) in Main Peteri exorcisms, as the magic and ritual of Wayang Siam and Main Peteri is quite similar when not identical.¹⁵

The Dalang and Islam

Dalang cut rather romantic figures in Kelantan, not in the least because of their superior magical abilities. They possess the technology for seduction, and they are often suspected of using it. Indeed, spells cast to beguile Wayang Siam audiences are part of a larger corpus of ilmu pengasih (attracting magic) used for attracting lovers. Dalang are rumored to be irresistible to women; in fact, many report meeting (at least one of) their wives at performances. A puppeteer recalled first glimpsing his wife "peeking into the PANGGUNG (performing hut)." On the whole, dalang marry more often than the average man in a society where people may routinely marry two or three times.¹⁶ Their reputation for immorality springs in part from increased opportunity: dalang are more often free from the scrutiny of neighbors and kin as they travel from one PANGGUNG to another.

Dissipation of this sort is presumed not only of dalang, but of performers of all kinds. Kelantan's religious authorities appear particularly concerned with the threat to public morality posed by traditional arts. The Imam of Kota Baru¹⁷ averred that his objections to Wayang Siam were based on the mingling of men and women in the audience, and male and female puppets on the screen. Were the sexes segregated on and off screen, he felt there would be no further demur from the Islamic quarter. Religious concern is not a recent development. In 1914 the Majlis Ugama (Religious Council) of Kelantan passed a resolution forbidding the mixing of men and women at public performances (Sweeney 1972:14). It was never obeyed.

Orthodox Muslims regard the dalang's art with suspicious disapproval based chiefly upon the status of Pak Dogol, the god/clown of the Wayang Siam. With his companion, Wak Long, Pak Dogol acts as a servant to Seri Rama, the hero of the shadow play. His humility belies that Pak Dogol is in fact the dewa Sang Yang Tunggal, highest of all the (Hindu) demigods. In his capacity as the One Great One (the meaning of Sang Yang Tunggal), and as the Kelantanese incarnation of Semar,¹⁸ Pak Dogol routinely receives pujian (praise) addressed to him by dalang at

the start of every performance. To strictly Muslim eyes, veneration of Pak Dogol¹⁹ appears distressingly close to the sin of shirik, giving a partner to the one God. Although dalang today deny it, dalang of a previous generation often confused the identity of Allah and Pak Dogol.²⁰ The presumed heterodoxy in shadow play "philosophy" leads to the condemnation of dalang by many doctrinal Muslims, who further opine that Wayang Siam performances are haram (forbidden) or berdosa (sinful). Dalang counter these accusations by appealing to the mythology surrounding much of the shadow play--including the character of Pak Dogol himself--which attributes to it a Muslim origin.²¹ Dalang are generally no less observant of their religious obligations than their fellow Kelantanese, though they are often alleged to be less--and occasionally, to be more.²²

Kelantan and Dalang: Projections of the Wider Society

For many Malaysians, Kelantan is a state of mind. Geographically remote, economically underdeveloped, yet culturally vital, Kelantan's reputation as a preserve of Malay tradition is enhanced as increasing numbers of Malays move to urban areas, leaving behind customs associated with village life. The widespread conviction that Kelantanese are in some way impervious to changes affecting Malays elsewhere seems to have gained currency among the Malaysian intelligentsia and analysts of Malay society.

Until 1978, Kelantan's state government was controlled by PAS (Pan-Malayan Islamic Party): a party in opposition to the national ruling coalition for most of its existence, whose platform emphasizes adherence to Islam as a method of administration.²³ PAS was closely identified with Kelantan; though it won electoral victories in other Malay states,²⁴ only in Kelantan did it remain in power uninterruptedly for eighteen years. Kelantan's political isolation intensified its geographical and cultural distance from centers of power on the west coast. It reinforced Malaysian stereotypes of Kelantan as the antipodes: isolated, xenophobic and reactionary. Malaysian political scientists²⁵ attribute PAS victories to Kelantanese regionalism, religious fanaticism and "Malay-Muslim chauvinism." While this view has been criticized (Kessler 1978), it reflects the perceptions of these writers who superimpose on Kelantanese their own preconceptions of Malay peasant life and political preferences.

In much the same way, strict Muslims within Kelantan impute a far more anticlerical stance to dalang than actually prevails among them. Islam is an integral aspect of Malay and Kelantanese identity, and a significant ethnic marker in Malaysian life. The syncretic Islam of Kelantan's villages tolerates local

interpretation at variance with Muslim "great tradition";²⁶ reformist Islam, looking to the Arab world for its inspiration, has not been so lenient in its judgment of what it perceives as un-Islamic observances²⁷ and in its condemnation of the potential heresy lying in Melayu Asli (genuine Malay) custom as opposed to Islamic canon. The prevailing wisdom in Kampung Malaysia assumes a distinction between Malay and Muslim practice, and piety precludes an active role in accustomed Malay pastimes.²⁸ To adopt Islam as a primary orientation is to forswear other no less salient features of Kelantanese culture. This may be cause for some ambivalence on the part of village alim (learned men), who condemn Wayang Siam as sinful and dalang as immoral while they proudly note the vitality of Kelantan's shadow play, and assert that Kelantan's reputation as the Malay heartland is due in part to the presence of shadow puppetry.

Fervent Kelantanese Muslims paint dalang in uncompromisingly heterodox colors, which bear little resemblance to the individuals so described. But dalang here are the opposite of "devout Muslims," as much of Malay adat (customary law) is deemed antithetical to Islamic canon.²⁹ Though Kelantanese may turn to fundamentalist religiosity with absolute sincerity, they cannot disown without qualms other facets of Kelantanese custom. Urbanized Kelantanese turn to the world outside the state for their inspiration; in turn, both groups seek to find in dalang the repository of Melayu Asli (genuine Malay) tradition they have renounced.

The Dalang Outside Kelantan

Although dalang represent regional Kelantanese culture,³⁰ they exert a significant cosmopolitan influence. In the search for work, many dalang have traveled to other areas of Malaysia, or even abroad under the aegis of the Ministry of Culture.³¹ As a result, dalang have had to adapt themselves to varying circumstances, and as a group, they are more aware than most of their neighbors of the world beyond their villages.

The PAS government was, at a certain level, a statement of Kelantanese parochialism in which most dalang did not participate.³² PAS's rigidly Islamic stance prevented any sympathy for Malay--in so far as Malay is here defined as non-Islamic--ritual and entertainments, and dalang perceived PAS as contrary to their interests. Almost all dalang interviewed³³ supported the Barisan Nasional (National Front) UMNO coalition in the 1978 elections.³⁴ They explicitly justified their political affiliation by reference to PAS's censure of Wayang Siam, and their hope that a Barisan Nasional government, avowedly more secular, would support the arts.³⁵ It appears so far their hopes may be justified.

Village Norms and the License to Flaunt Them

Dalang, like their audiences, are villagers and commonly define themselves as residents of their kampung (villages). Kampung ideology³⁶ stresses harmony among villagers and discourages overt displays of competition or strong emotion. The ideal personality, described as lemah lembut (soft and gentle), exhibits a modest and unassertive demeanor. This ethos forms a standard by which behavior and events are judged; it is enforced by the constant personal interaction entailed in village life. Dalang, who are away from their kampung more often than their neighbors, have more opportunity to break the rules if they are so inclined.

The mechanics of performing require the dalang to summon his reserve of emotion to portray the variety of moods persuasively. Dalang frequently become quite involved in the play, weeping at the character's distress, becoming angry while depicting a battle scene (Sweeney 1972:54). Inherent in a dalang's artistic integrity, then, is an assertive bearing incongruent with typical village demeanor. Consequently, dalang are recognizably more gregarious than their neighbors.

The effect of the plot upon the dalang's sensibilities is heightened by the influence of the characters themselves. Dalang confess themselves sensitive to the semangat (spirit) of their puppets, especially bellicose, brawling characters such as Seri Rama's son, the royal ape Hanuman Kera Putih (Hanuman the White Monkey) and his numerous progeny. One performer³⁷ vowed never again to perform branch stories featuring Hanuman Kera Putih's son, Hanuman Kebesi and his son, Hanuman Kebatu. He recalls finding himself inexplicably enraged during a presentation of Hanuman Kebatu, and blames the influence of the hot-tempered ape, whose spirit was invigorated by the presentation of his story. He attributes the bizarre behavior of his musicians on other occasions, when cerita ranting (branch stories) starring one or another of the Hanumans were on screen, to the vitality of the puppets freed during the performance.³⁸ Other dalang warn of the dangers of sleeping over the particularly powerful puppets--Pak Dogol and Maharisi Mata Api (Great Sage Fire Eyes)--lest one be taken ill, or afflicted with headaches.³⁹

Dalang are often more openly emotional than their village peers. They have been so since childhood; many dalang recount their youthful amateur performances for friends and relatives.⁴⁰ Their status as the leaders and founders of their troupes permits them to display a relatively imperious attitude towards their company.⁴¹ This is accepted, even expected by musicians, many of whom are loyal admirers of their dalang.⁴² Occasionally puppeteers overstep the bounds of propriety, even as it applies to them. A border dalang,⁴³ already possessed of a reputation for

truculence, stabbed one of his musicians during an argument in the panggung. The subject of professional gossip for some time afterward, his colleagues roundly condemned his action,⁴⁴ though the musician took no action against the dalang, and merely moved to another troupe.

Dalang compete professionally in main tewas (or main ber-tewas: play to defeat, contest); two dalang build adjacent panggung and endeavor to attract the larger audience. Rivalry is openly indulged and often intense. Contests are hard-fought; they may result in accusations and counter-accusations of sorcery. Partisan enthusiasts use less esoteric methods; they sprinkle sugar in front of an adversary's performing hut and allow the ants to disperse the spectators (Sweeney 1972: 290). Overt rivalry and consequent bitterness is rarely countenanced in the Kelantanese kampung; the dalang's indulgence underscores its absence elsewhere.

Summary

In the body of this paper I have examined the anomalous role of the dalang in Kelantanese society and culture. He is closely identified with regional tradition as a performer of one of its most popular arts. He typifies a uniquely Kelantanese way of life, yet he has license to violate--within bounds, to be sure--many of the rules governing that life. In his public expression of unbridled emotion, overt rivalry and professional self-aggrandisement, he is remarkable in Kelantanese village society, even as he is exceptional in his talents.

Within Kelantan, the idealized dalang exists apart from actual puppeteers. Kelantanese who have turned from the practice of local custom, be it to the Arab world for religious inspiration or to the West for a general orientation, envision the dalang as the guardians of the Malay beliefs they have abandoned.

Notes

¹ This paper is based upon material collected during 19 months of field work in Kelantan (1977-1979), funded by the Yale Concilium for International and Area Studies whose help is hereby gratefully acknowledged. I owe a considerable debt of kindness to the dalang of Kelantan whose interest and good nature made this research possible.

2 The dalang is accompanied by a troupe (kumpulan, puak) of musicians.

3 Throughout Southeast Asia the shadow play tradition draws upon the Hindu epics Ramayana and Mahabharata as the sources of its primary repertoire. Every national tradition has adapted these tales to its own taste and introduced indigenous folktales or motifs into the plot. The origin of shadow play technique is obscure: most scholars argue that the most probable sources are either India or Java. The Javanese tradition is perhaps the best known and most complex of the region. The most popular repertoire is based upon the Mahabharata, and the names of the Pandawa heroes and their retainers are familiar and often venerated throughout Java. The Javanese wayang kulit (shadow play) is a keystone of alus (refined, court) arts and a subject for much mystical speculation; see Mangkunegara (1957), Anderson (1965), Brandon (1967) and Becker (1979).

4 Wayang Purwa (Ancient Drama) is the Javanese shadow play which performs the Mahabharata cycle.

5 Nang Talung is southern Thai shadow play and takes its name from the southern Thai district of Pattalung. The figures of the Nang Talung, like those of the Javanese Wayang Purwa and Kelantanese Wayang Siam, are articulated, but Nang Talung figures are as a rule presented en face, while Kelantanese and Javanese are depicted for the most part in profile. The hide from which Nang Talung puppets are made is scraped thin, so their color shows through the screen. Traditional Kelantanese puppets cast only black and grey shadows.

6 Java and Thailand have exerted the strongest foreign influences on the Wayang Siam. A Javanese source is clear in much of Wayang Siam repertoire: cerita ranting (branch stories) feature Prince Panji--called Raden Inu--and the incorporation of Javanese folktales into other plots (See Sweeney 1972: 22-25). Kaw Mada (young school) Wayang Siam dalang display a great deal of Thai influence (Wright 1980: 130-139), and more so than traditional Kaw Tua (old school) dalang have adopted Nang Talung puppet convention. Nowadays, both Kelantanese and Thai puppets of this type are often made of plastic, and are dressed in current Western styles, such as Levi's jackets and jeans. The influence of the Nang Talung on the Wayang Siam has been to the "modern" in puppet and presentation styles. Nang Talung (called Wayang Gedek in Kelantan) performances feature western music, different colored lights illuminating the screen and a distinctly jazzy ambience.

Traditional Kelantanese dramatic forms, including Wayang Siam, Wayang Jawa, and Wayang Gedek, comprise a recognizable complex, identifiable by a distinct style, repertoire, and the

movement of personnel among the arts. The forms include: Mak Yong, Malay dance-drama; Manora, Thai dance-drama; Main Peteri, spirit exorcism; and Dikir Barat, choral chanting. Wayang Siam reflects these other forms in its music: Mak Yong tunes are often used; puppet shape: Seri Rama and his younger brother, Laksmana wear Manora-inspired saya sandang (wings) on the hip; and ritual: often conducted in a Main Peteri idiom; see Sweeney (1972: 273-287), Wright (1980).

7 The Hakavat Seri Rama (Seri Rama's Story), the Malay literary version of the Ramayana, is the subject of works by Winstedt (1910) and Shellabear (1964). The Cerita Mahraja Wana (see Sweeney 1972) tells of Seri Rama and his younger brother Laksmana, incarnations of heavenly beings (Seri Rama is an avatar of Visnu), who are born to Sirat Mahraja, ruler of Siusia Mandarapura. Mahraja Wana, the demon king of Langkapuri, covets their mother, Sirat Mahraja's wife. She succeeds in passing a model of herself to Mahraja Wana, and with this mode he fathers a daughter, Siti Dewi. Warned that she will cause his destruction, he sets Siti Dewi adrift; she is found and adopted by Maharisi Mata Api. When she is grown, her adoptive father sponsors an archery contest to determine Siti Dewi's husband. Seri Rama, aided by his brother, wins Siti Dewi. Mahraja Wana admires her and, unaware of her parentage, vows to take her for his own. Seri Rama returns with his wife and brother to Siusia Mandarapura, but during the journey Mahraja Wana succeeds in kidnapping Siti Dewi. He is halted in his flight by Jentayu, a bird ally of Seri Rama. Mahraja Wana kills Jentayu but not before the bird has told Seri Rama of Siti Dewi's abduction. Seri Rama meets Hanuman Kera Putih (Hanuman the White Monkey), his heretofore unknown and unacknowledged son. Hanuman Kera Putih offers to assist in his mother's rescue and, with the help of other apes and their armies, builds a causeway to Langkapuri, and Siti Dewi is rescued.

8 The theory that power over spirits is gained by knowledge of a spirit's origin is evident in much of Malay magic; see Skeat (1900), Winstedt (1961). In the Cerita Mahraja Wana a dalang discovers the essence of characters in more frequently performed cerita ranting; he can control these characters through their histories, gleaned from the "trunk story"; see Sweeney (1972: 45).

9 Within the oral tradition of the Cerita Mahraja Wana, however, exists a great deal of variation; see Sweeney (1972).

10 There are currently no female dalang in Kelantan. They make their (very) occasional appearance as a distinct oddity (cf. Sweeney 1972: 33-34).

11 Dalang regard their colleagues who have not studied formally with scant respect (cf. Sweeney 1972: 41). Untaught dalang are subsumed under the category dalang tiru (copying dalang) who imitate the performance of other dalang. Dalang budak are child dalang who commonly perform only for friends and neighbors; dalang tajali claim their skill descended upon them by revelation.

12 Every Wayang Siam performance begins with a salutation to local spirits, ghosts, gods, guardians of the four compass points and the puppets themselves. The recitation of lampi (spells) with accompanying offerings, called kenduri (feast) is conducted by the dalang before the introductory music. Buka panggung (opening the panggung) incantations are read after the kenduri on the first night of a specific series of performances in one place. Those spells are jealously guarded and are often used in personal magic; see Wright (1980: 107-111). They are more idiosyncratic than the standard greetings of the kenduri.

13 State law demands that all performances be licensed, though perhaps 10-20% are given without benefit of law. In 1977 for all of Kelantan, traditional performances were licensed as follows: Wayang Siam 359; Main Peteri (spirit exorcism) 215; Dikir Barat (choral chanting) 199; Silat (martial arts) 67; Mak Yong (dance drama) 44; Manora (Thai dance drama) 28. Each license is good for three nights of performing.

14 Karim, a well-known dalang of the last generation was also active in Tarik Selampit story telling (Sweeney 1972: 61). Wayang Siam musicians move between genres, accompanying Mak Yong, Silat, Manora, and Main Peteri performances. The magic of the shadow play is similar to magic of other kinds of Kelantanese theatre, and dalang routinely study ilmu dalam (inner knowledge) with performers of Main Peteri, Mak Yong, and Manora; see Sweeney (1972: 461), Wright (1980: 179).

15 Berjamu (literally "entertainment") is Wayang Siam exorcism performed as Main Peteri for the Wayang Siam troupe, performers and puppets alike; see Sweeney (1972: 273-287). It is conducted every three to seven years at the discretion of the dalang concerned. The berjamu dispels malignant influences gathered around the dalang and his equipment and revitalizes the semangat (spirit) of the puppets.

16 See Sweeney (1972: 34). Kelantan's divorce rate was 77% in the years 1948-1957 (Gordon:n.d.) and 56.6% from 1967-1970 (Tsubouchi 1975: 141).

17 My thanks to Mr. John-Paul Davidson for his interview with the Imam in March 1979.

18 The Javanese shadow play tradition is extremely influential and greatly admired in Kelantan. Kelantanese dalang identify Pak Dogol with Semar, the god/clown of the Javanese shadow play Wayang Purwa, in incantations addressed to him at the start of a performance. Wayang Jawa dalang deny the validity of these claims and insist Semar is the more powerful and legitimate figure.

19 Dalang consider the puppet representing Pak Dogol to be keramat (sacred), and adorn it with a necklace of benang mentah (virgin thread), a token of divinity. It is stored separately from the common puppets: wrapped in a yellow (the royal color) cloth with small offerings placed before it. Pak Dogol is occasionally used in curing (Main Bagih) ritual; see Gimlette (1929: 100-103).

20 See Sweeney (1972: 127) for a dalang's version of the Cerita Mahraja Wana which begins, "Sang Yang Tunggal is Chief Dewa. Has 99 names." See also Sweeney (1972: 209) on confusion between Pak Dogol and Allah.

21 The unperformed mythology surrounding Pak Dogol identifies him as Haji Mula (the first Haji), an angel in Allah's heaven; see Wright (1981).

22 A Ministry of Culture official commented to me: "Dalang are very pious men, more pious than we."

23 The PAS state government fell in October 1977, when the state assembly voted no confidence in the Menteri Besar (Prime Minister) Haji Mohd Nasir. Protests turned to "riots" and Kelantan was placed under curfew. In a special election held in March 1978, a Barisan Nasional state government was elected; see Subky Latif (1977) and Alias Muhammad (1978) on the Kelantan crisis.

24 PAS's most notable victories were in Kedah and Trengganu, whose histories and populations are similar to Kelantan's.

25 Ratnam (1965), Chee (1971); see Kessler (1978: 32-33) for a more complete survey of the literature on PAS in Kelantan.

26 Ratnam (1965: 339) remarks, "Kelantan and Trengganu are characterized by isolation, predominantly Malay populations, economic backwardness (accompanied by a great resentment of Chinese middlemen and money lenders) and a general simplicity of life. They also represent the most traditional areas of the country, where religious leaders exert a great influence in social and political life." Chee (1971: 327) adds, "the PMIP (PAS) and Kelantan Malays see their mission as the spreading of the

true gospel of Malay-Muslim nationalism to their corrupted brethren in other states."

Kessler's analysis suggests economics and class played the more decisive role in Kelantanese support for PAS; Kelantanese perceived UMNO and its Barisan Nasional coalition as the party "of the blue-bloods, of the towns folk and wage-earners, and of their friends who sit comfortably lending money and buying land, while others labor in the fields" (Kessler 1978: 296). Relations between Malays and Chinese are actually more cordial in Kelantan than on the west coast (see Raybeck 1980); peasant resentment is directed against Malay landlords--protected by the Malay Reservations Act of 1930, which alienated land ownership for Kelantan Malays--rather than against Chinese (cf. Kessler 1974: 289-291); see also Husin Ali (1978: 68-72).

27 To be a Malay is to be Muslim, both according to Malay custom and the constitution of the Federation of Malaysia. However, while on one level these two identities are indistinguishable, especially in dealings with non-Malays or non-Muslims, on another level "Malayness" is contrasted with Islam: viz., "Malay" customs (of Hindu origin) such as the marriage ceremonies bersanding, berinai, etc., the "Malay" shadow play, "Malay" dress, and sometimes "Malay" (as opposed to Islamic) magic.

28 The role of bomoh (magician, curer) is considered antithetical to Islam by the pious, though not by the bomoh themselves. Annandale (1903: 90) reports a tale of bomoh supernaturally barred from entering Mecca. It is believed that if a dalang were to make the pilgrimage to Mecca, his mind would be wiped clear of all knowledge of the Wayang Siam; see Wright (1980).

29 See Peacock (1978) on reformers and traditionalists in Southeast Asian Islam and on the problems in reconciling traditional and Muslim law.

30 Salient features of this culture include: kampung (village) life, magic, Islam, dialect and the complex of Kelantanese arts; see Wright (1980).

31 The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (Kementerian Kebudayaan, Belia Dan Sukan), in its effort to nationalize regional folk arts, Wayang Siam prominent among them, has adopted Kelantanese dalang and encouraged them by word and deed to perform in the "national" style advocated by the government.

32 This is not necessarily to say that a religious orientation must imply a parochial one, or that a cosmopolitan outlook is always secular; see Regan (1976, 1977).

33 None of the dalang I spoke with supported PAS. I interviewed thirty dalang: ten intensively over the entire period of my fieldwork, and twenty more casually. All active dalang were interviewed. I estimate the total number of dalang in Kelantan (only), including all those who are able to perform, irrespective of their present activity, at one hundred. Sweeney (1972: 7) estimated the number of dalang in Kelantan and the Besut area of Trengganu to be three hundred in 1968.

34 United Malays National Organization is the Malay party and ruling partner of the National Front Alliance, whose other primary parties are MCA (Malaysian Chinese Association) and MIC (Malaysian Indian Congress).

35 The state government can control performances insofar as it must issue a license for a performance to be legal. Licenses are usually granted for three nights at M\$5.00 per night.

36 For a thorough study of Kelantanese values, see Raybeck (1975); see also Wright (1980).

37 The dalang Hassan Omar (Kg. Kedai Buluh, Kota Baru district).

38 Dalang and their troupes often sleep in the panggung during engagements; one night after a performance of Hanuman Kebesi, the dalang awoke to find one of his musicians still asleep, crouched above him wielding an axe. The dalang woke and disarmed the man, but was badly shaken.

39 Maharisi Mata Api is a sacred figure, though not of the stature of Pak Dogol. Originally an aspect of Siva (Singaravelu 1974: 39), Maharisi is neither known nor acknowledged as such in Kelantan. Firth (1974: 207) also mentions the belief that puppets, especially Pak Dogol, may cause illness if not treated properly.

40 Dalang Budak (child dalang) are youngsters who perform without any training. The most popular dalang in Kelantan now, Abdullah Baju Merah (Kg. Demit, Kota Bharu district) began his career as a dalang budak; when he decided to pursue a career as a professional dalang, he commenced formal study with a teacher.

41 Sweeney (1972: 30) comments, "Exploitation of troupe members by dalangs [sic] is not uncommon. Awang Lah, perhaps the best known dalang of the last generation, was keen to form a dalang's association until I explained that this would also protect the rights of the musicians!"

42 Many dalang muda (apprentice dalang) serve as musicians in their teachers' troupes. Musicians (anak panjak) who begin

following a dalang as youngsters are more likely to be loyal to "their" dalang than those who begin their association as adults.

⁴³ "border dalang" are active on the Malaysian-Thai border, particularly in the Sungai Golok-Rantau Panjang area. Their style reveals a strong Thai (Nang Tulang) influence: puppets are plastic, modern and violently colored. Hindustani pop songs and other modern melodies, as well as standard shadow play tunes, compose the musical accompaniment. Kelantanese audiences consider border dalang somewhat outlandish due to their predilection for experiments with lighting (colored electric light bulbs behind the screen) and their revue style of performing, which turns their performances into comic skits minimally held together by a plot.

⁴⁴ Kelantanese, as a rule, tend to condemn particular traits rather than the individual person; see Raybeck (1975: 92).

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ETHNIC MINORITIES AS MAGICAL/MEDICAL SPECIALISTS IN MALAYSIA AND THAILAND

Louis Golomb

If we are to understand fully the formation of ethnic identities in plural societies like that of Malaysia, it is sometimes helpful to examine ethnic relations that extend beyond the political boundaries of the state we are considering. For example, certain facets of a group's ethnic identity may hinge upon specific demographic ratios that do not become apparent when we focus on only one society. Here I illustrate how our understanding of relations between Malay-Muslims and Thai-Buddhists in Malaysia can be enhanced by broadening our ethnographic scope to include comparable intergroup relations to the north in Thailand.

In the plural societies of Malaysia and Thailand there are various situations in which people choose to interact with others precisely because they are members of contrasting ethnic groups. In seeking the services of a curer-magician, for instance, clients often prefer less familiar or less accessible outgroup practitioners, sometimes because the latter's esoteric techniques offer greater promise of success, sometimes because these outsiders are in more favorable positions to protect confidentiality. Here we will consider some of the circumstances under which many members of Muslim and Buddhist communities in Malaysia and Thailand cross ethnic boundaries to consult socially distant outgroup practitioners.

While working among the Thai villagers of Kelantan, Malaysia, I noticed that this tiny Buddhist minority (about 1% of the population) has been both feared and respected by neighboring Malay Muslims and other outgroups for its superior magical powers.¹ The Thais' magical prowess appears to stem in part from their identification with romantic dance-drama performers who reportedly possess remarkable love charms. Saffron-robed monks, ceremonial processions, and merit-making activities at ornate monastic compounds also regularly remind outsiders of the Kelantanese Thai commitment to their Buddhist religious observance. These distinctive and conspicuous cultural traditions emphasize the Thais' unique relations with the supernatural and enhance their image as representatives of the formidable occult arts practiced to the north in the predominantly Thai culture area.

In central Thailand, and particularly in Phra Nakhon Province (where the Muslim minority makes up about 6% of the population), alien cultural origins and religious piety are

similarly offered as folk explanations for what is regarded as the superior magic of Muslim minority practitioners. Islamic symbols such as segregated mosque parishes, strict dietary taboos, and fasting during the month of Ramadan continually remind the Buddhist majority of their Muslim neighbors' religious devotion. As heirs to the power of local Muslim saints, central Thai Muslims are characterized by their Buddhist neighbors as bearers of alien Malay-Arab magical knowledge. Many of the most fear-inspiring elements of local sorcery and love-magic traditions are also identified with Malay-Muslim antecedents from the south.²

At both ends of the long boundary where Thai-Buddhist and Malay-Muslim cultures meet, ethnic minority practitioners have been overrepresented in the occult arts. Often their magical prowess has been generalized in the perceptions of local people to include special expertise in the traditional healing arts as well. Members of the Malay and Thai majorities have turned to ethnic minority magicians for assistance in achieving firmer control over their world and in averting suffering. The perceived religious piety of the two concentrations of minority specialists and the mysterious quality of their alien supernatural knowledge surely contribute to their popularity among outgroup majority clients.³ Yet, a closer look at the typical services that minority practitioners furnish for majority clientele reveals a more fundamental, demographic reason for the evolution of these ethnic minorities as specialists in magic and curing.

The core services provided by Thai-Buddhist magicians for the Malay-Muslim majority in Kelantan--namely, those requiring confidentiality but not intimacy--are remarkably similar to those performed by Muslim practitioners for the Thai-Buddhist majority of central Thailand. In fact, all along the Buddhist-Muslim cultural boundary from Kelantan, Malaysia, to central Thailand, people have secretly sought the assistance of outgroup practitioners in attempting to influence the behavior, emotions, or welfare of some third party with the aid of supernatural power.

Both Buddhists and Muslims have conceptualized health, emotional stability, and interpersonal relations as comparable unpredictable phenomena that are subject to the whims of forces beyond the control of individuals.⁴ Not only a person's health but also his or her emotions and actions have been viewed as susceptible to the meddlesome manipulation of magicians or spirits. By the same token, should one desire to tamper with the feelings or behavior of another party, one need only commission a competent curer-magician to do one's bidding.

The target of these illicit magical operations is usually a member of the client's own ethnic group. The client generally lacks the power or daring to influence the victim through more

direct channels. In a majority of cases the client seeks to win the love and devotion of a jealously guarded or coveted love object. Love charms may be obtained from the outgroup magician to make the love object sympathetic toward the client. In a few cases, sorcery may be requested to help eliminate romantic rivals either by harming them directly or by causing the love object to react toward them with disfavor. Parallel magical techniques are also employed to manipulate people in nonromantic social relations such as when clients desire the approval or patronage of a respected superior or when clients wish to punish despised adversaries in inheritance disputes or business. Love magic and sorcery are by no means the only magical services provided across ethnic boundaries but they are probably the most common and the most important for introducing clients to outgroup practitioners.⁵

The fact that love magic figures so prominently in the occult arts of Thailand and Malaysia can be explained in part by examining the status of women in Thai and Malay society. Women constitute the majority of the clients of love-charm practitioners along the Thai-Malay cultural boundary.⁶ Like other indigenous Southeast Asian women, Thai and Malay women have traditionally enjoyed considerable economic power in both rural and urban contexts.⁷ However, while women may exert their influence in the management of household budgetary affairs, they have seldom enjoyed the marital security or sexual freedom that their husbands or lovers have. Malay-Muslim men are permitted by Islamic law to take up to four wives at a time and to divorce any of them whenever they please without paying alimony. Their women, in contrast, are allowed but one husband at a time, and may not initiate divorce proceedings. Adultery involving a married woman is regarded as among the most heinous of crimes among Muslims.

Polygamy is officially outlawed among Thai Buddhists but is practiced with impunity by large numbers of Thai men, especially in urban areas. Wife-desertion has also been a relatively common fact of life in Thai society, where women's rights have seldom been reinforced with legal sanctions. Because Thai and Malay wives have had little recourse in the past when their husbands have taken up with minor wives or paramours, they have frequently resorted to love magic in their efforts to dissolve their husbands' extramarital or polygamous relations.⁸

Employing a magician to produce love magic or to unleash malevolent supernatural forces in an attack against one's rivals can be a very hazardous undertaking. Those who learn or suspect that they are being victimized in this manner--for instance, errant husbands--may respond with increased animosity, violence, or counter-sorcery. It is therefore crucial that such magical services be contracted as discreetly as possible. Socially

distant practitioners are recognized as the safest since they are not likely to come in contact with the intended victim or that victim's associates. Geographically distant members of the client's own social group are commonly consulted, especially by highly mobile individuals in culturally homogeneous areas. However, where socially isolated ethnic minority practitioners live close at hand, their services are often preferred, particularly by female clients whose mobility is restricted. A disgruntled wife can call upon a magician in a residentially segregated but nearby outgroup community without arousing the suspicions of her straying spouse. For both female and male clients such inter-ethnic consultations also mean reduced travel expenses and less inconvenience.

Interaction between members of contrasting ethnic groups is generally most intense in impersonal urban settings where various kinds of business are transacted (Furnivall 1948). In the case of love-magic transactions, the greatest activity seems to be concentrated in rural villages surrounding urban centers. Both among Muslims and Buddhists, polygyny is a function of economic status. Most men who take minor wives or mistresses are affluent enough to be able to support more than one household. The heaviest concentrations of polygamists are to be found among bureaucrats and merchants in towns and cities. Concomitantly, concentrations of love magicians tend to form around urban centers to meet the needs of the polygamist's neglected but well-heeled wives.⁹ Thus, impressive numbers of Thai women from predominantly Thai-Buddhist Bangkok neighborhoods have come to patronize Thai-Muslim practitioners in rural Muslim communities surrounding the metropolis. Several Muslim villages I have studied near the town of Ayudhya are among these communities. In a similar fashion, Thai-Buddhist minority practitioners in villages outside the town of Kota Bharu, Kelantan, cater to the needs of the Malay-Muslim majority's womenfolk.

To ascertain the importance of minority status in the development of the occult arts as an ethnic occupational specialty, I have also examined two intermediate points along the Muslim-Buddhist demographic continuum, namely, Pattani and Songkhla in southern Thailand, where the proportions of Muslims and Buddhists are much closer to equal (roughly three-to-one and one-to-four, respectively). In the town of Songkhla, large numbers of Buddhist- and Muslim-Thai women consult outgroup love-magic practitioners in outlying rural communities. The same sorts of inter-ethnic consultations take place around the town of Pattani, although to a lesser extent, owing to the strained relations between Malays and Thais there. At these two intermediate sites the same services have commonly been provided across ethnic boundaries, in both directions, but neither ethnic group is generally recognized as having better overall magical skills.

A small ethnic minority, it would appear, benefits considerably from being the major practicing outgroup. Members of that minority may actually seek the same services from majority practitioners, but since their own people handle so heavy a volume of majority customers, they become far more conspicuous as suppliers of these services. The size of a practitioner's clientele is a principal criterion for judging his or her prowess. Consequently, minority practitioners automatically achieve superior reputations, not necessarily because of their success rates, but owing to the sheer numbers of their outside clients. Then, in a spiraling fashion, outsiders flock to these popular specialists for other varieties of magical/medical services.

Shibutani and Kwan (1965: 189-195) have categorized medical practices along with the role of the merchant as "service occupations" which are commonly open to members of outside groups in traditional societies. Still, they offer no clues as to any general process wherein certain ethnic groups gain recognition as magical/medical specialists. The data presented in this paper shed some light on this process in Malaysia and Thailand. Here, ethnic minority practitioners have achieved their occupational prominence at least in part by supplying core services that are publicly disdained but privately in great demand among more numerous majority group members. Comparable developments might be traced in other traditional plural societies such as those of medieval Europe where Jewish and Arab practitioners enjoyed a similar supremacy as specialists in Greek medical techniques while the Christian Church tolerated no such activities among its followers.¹⁰

Notes

¹ The data for this paper were collected during two periods of field research: one in Kelantan, Malaysia from October 1973 to December 1974; the other in Phra Nakhon, Ayudhya, Pattani, and Songkhla Provinces of Thailand from March 1978 to December 1978. These field trips were funded by grants from the National Institute of General Medical Sciences, the National Institute of Mental Health, and the Center for Research in International Studies at Stanford University. An expanded version of this study will appear in my forthcoming monograph entitled An Anthropology of Curing in Multiethnic Thailand, University of Illinois Press.

² See also, Textor (1973: 147,160).

³ For members of an ethnic minority to receive continued recognition as superior curer-magicians, there must exist a certain amount of what Levine and Campbell (1972: 159) have called "socially structured bias in inter-group perception." Minority practitioners must be perceived consistently as occupants of specific roles during inter-ethnic interaction. By avoiding prolonged social interaction with their outgroup clients outside consultation contexts, love magicians and sorcerers protect their clients' secrets but also safeguard their one-dimensional presentation of themselves as specialists in the occult. Practitioners and clients who chat cordially during an inter-ethnic consultation may ignore one another entirely during a chance meeting in a market the next day. Not only are the interaction contexts for these actors restricted, but such contexts may call for maximal displays of cultural differences. The minority practitioner commonly preserves the aura of mystery that surrounds his practice by emphasizing foreign languages and imported paraphernalia in his rituals. In both central Thailand and Kelantan the professionalism of minority practitioners is also touted by their co-ethnics who recount the wonders of their groups' magical traditions.

In addition, the diagnoses of ingroup exorcists and the testimonies of alleged victims of spirit aggression regularly implicate outgroup magicians in cases of otherwise inexplicable or undeserved suffering. Attributing supernatural aggression to outsiders reduces conflict within the victim's own group. Socially and/or geographically distant sorcery suspects are seldom approached regarding such accusations of foul play.

⁴ See also, Phillips (1965: 80ff.), Textor (1973: 412-413), Klausner (1972: 60), and Fraser (1960: 178-179).

⁵ While outgroup practitioners are readily chosen for other confidential magical operations such as the tracing of stolen property through divination, they are not usually preferred as healers in cases of routine physical illness or spirit aggression unless no appropriate ingroup specialists are available. Outgroup curer-magicians are believed to possess powerful magic but primarily for use in illicit enterprises such as love magic and sorcery rather than in curing. Only in very stubborn cases of spirit aggression, for example, are Pattani-Malay possession victims brought to Thai-Buddhist monks for exorcisms. When familiar ingroup practitioners fail to exorcise an intrusive spirit or alleviate chronic physical discomfort, outgroup curers are eventually consulted as a last resort. Ingroup practitioners sometimes refer stubborn cases to outgroup contemporaries in order to conceal their own failures from other ingroup members.

⁶ See, for instance, Golomb (1978: 64-67).

7 See, for example, Skinner (1957: 302), Kirsch (1975), and Firth (1966).

8 Students of Thai-Buddhist culture have noted how villagers employ indirect means to control or criticize other people and how they thereby maintain a facade of friendly social relations. See, for example, Bilmes (1977: 161), Klausner (1972), and Phillips (1965: 185). Such means include the testimonies of intrusive spirits, hostile remarks addressed to inanimate objects, and gossip. Yet most scholars seem to have underestimated the importance that Thai have placed on the use of magic as an instrument of indirect social control.

9 Some single women, of course, also consult love-charm practitioners in order to win the hearts of male love objects. The latter may be single or married men.

10 See Ackerknecht (1955: 86) and Szasz (1970: 83,91).

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THE ELASTIC RULE:
CONFORMITY AND DEVIANCE IN KELANTAN VILLAGE LIFE*

Douglas Raybeck

Cultural identity is manifested in such phenomena as values, belief patterns and other distinctive elements which members of a society or ethnic group regard as their own. These values and belief patterns supply cultural participants with conceptions of what one should be and how one should behave. Conversely, they indicate, implicitly or explicitly what one should not be and how one should not behave. Those who depart significantly from cultural prescriptions may be viewed as deviant and threatening to the social order. Their actions may call for formal or informal sanctions which often represent collective statements concerning the importance of relevant values and beliefs. These reactions suggest that deviance and its management may provide a useful means of assessing cultural identity.

Cultural identity rests on distinctive content, but it is also established and maintained through the perception of contrasts. Cultural participants exposed to alternative cultural patterns are often made more aware of their own cultural identity and are in a better position to affirm that identity by actively choosing one pattern over another. For ethnic and subcultural groups embedded in a wider cultural context, such choices can also help to maintain group solidarity as elements of the surrounding culture are modified or rejected. Given cultural differences, it is possible that a behavior considered to be deviant in one cultural context may well be a celebrated act in another. Thus, members of a subculture or ethnic group may affirm their cultural identity through participation in behaviors regarded as deviant by the wider culture.

The phenomenon of deviance has interested sociologists and anthropologists in the past because it illuminated areas of social and cultural importance. Many earlier sociological treatments of deviance tended to view it as an absolute,

*The information on which this paper is based was gathered during 18 months of fieldwork beginning January, 1968, in Kelantan, Malaysia. I am grateful for the National Institute of Mental Health Grant (NH 11486) that supported this research, and I also want to express my appreciation of the efforts of Ms. Lynn Tveskov who assisted me in a review of the literature on deviance.

ptomatic of problems in the social organism (cf. Clinard 1974: 14). Anthropology, however, adopted a more relativistic view congruent with its comparative perspective (cf. Malinowski 1964). Presently, deviance is generally defined as relative to behavioral norms and cultural ideals; however, it still serves as a post indicating prominent aspects of culture and society.

In the early 1960s the writings of Lemert, Becker, Matza and others led to a new sociological perspective on deviance: labeling theory. In labeling theory, the focus is on the manner in which society defines and creates deviance:

Social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance, and by applying those rules to particular people and labeling them as "outsiders." From this point of view, deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an offender. The deviant is one to whom that label has successfully been applied; deviant behavior is behavior that people so label (Becker 1963: 9).

This emphasis promotes an examination of how judgments of deviance are made by society's members and what the effect of the label "deviant" is apt to be on an individual.

Matza terms the process of labeling an act or actor deviant signification, and one of his and Becker's principal concerns with the interaction between the actor so labeled and those who label him (Matza 1969; Becker 1963: 14). One result of the labeling process is often to place the deviant in the position of "outsider" where his ability to interact with and influence the wider society is limited. However, the responses of others to a deviant act are not fixed and are influenced by such factors as whether he commits the act, the circumstances under which the act is committed and, importantly, the degree to which the act is visible (Becker 1963: 11 ff.). Similarly, the responses of the deviant are variable: he is conceived of as actively engaged in the creation of his self-concept and capable of selecting from among the reactions he encounters. Generally, however, it is argued that the label "deviant" encourages a person who has committed deviant acts to become more marginal in response to the judgments of others (Clinard 1974: 174).

It is apparent that labeling theory could be quite useful for analyzing many of the questions that anthropology deals with concerning simple societies. Yet, with notable exceptions (e.g., Malby 1974), anthropologists have made little use of this perspective. It is often asserted that folk or peasant societies possess homogenous norms and values (cf. Clinard 1974: 7) and that pressures for conformity are particularly intense in such

societies, especially at the village level (Foster 1965, 1967: 143; Wolf 1966: 97-98). Thus, peasant societies would seem to provide promising contexts in which to examine the labeling process by which individuals are categorized as conformist or deviant. Such an examination should provide insights into the nature of the social system that produces this process.

The principal concerns in this paper are twofold: to examine the process by which village level Kelantan Malays label acts and actors deviant and, on the basis of this examination, to account for the following two features of Kelantan society. First is the marked disparity between definitions of deviance employed by the state and those which exist at the village level; second, is that, even where there is no ambiguity concerning the deviance of a particular act, Kelantanese display considerable reluctance to label fellow villagers as deviant. I will argue that, in attempting to explain these aspects of Kelantanese society, account must be taken of the self-concept of Kelantanese villagers and the labeling process they employ.

Village and Values

The village is the largest unit in which a Kelantan Malay is involved in daily social interaction. Geographical village boundaries exist and are recognized but village membership is more realistically determined by patterns of interaction. Villages serve as centers for a number of activities and people who participate in these are often functionally, even if not geographically, members of the village. Thus, when I refer to villagers in the following pages the reader should understand that this reference is to an interaction group.

Part of the importance of village membership relates to past economic and political factors which can be but briefly considered here. The little that is known of Kelantan's history indicates the existence, as recently as the end of the last century, of an oppressive feudal system in which the individual peasant had few rights and little security (Chan Su-ming 1965). The individual enjoyed only those rights and privileges which he was able to secure within his residence group. Appeals to the Sultan for assistance in times of difficulties were usually ignored or answered by the Sultan's armed fighting men, whose cure was often worse than the complaint (Chan Su-ming 1965: 165-166). Also, the relatively undifferentiated economy did not promote interdependence or much in the way of trade between villages. As a result of these political and economic factors, villagers kept their affairs and problems to themselves and had little to do with the state government. This is largely true today as well.

The village is also important to the peasant because it is the milieu in which his identity is established and maintained. Most face-to-face interaction occurs within the village: it is the place where most friendships are formed and it is here that the individual is socialized. Socialization involves immersion in the distinctive culture of the Kelantan Malay and the delicate social relationships that reflect that culture.

Elsewhere (Raybeck 1975), I have argued that the Kelantan Malays' social and cultural values reflect an inordinate sensitivity to interpersonal relations. I have also noted that they place considerable emphasis on the importance of maintaining interpersonal harmony, sesuai, within the village context. There is an ethic that the dignity and importance of each person should be recognized and maintained through demonstrations of proper respect. To this end, there is an elaborate code of courtesy behavior, budi bahasa, which can be used to display subtle and un verbalized nuances of interpersonal regard. Those who, through clumsiness or intent, give affront and those who receive it usually feel malu, an affectively charged state of marked discomfort which is akin to embarrassment but much more intense. These social and cultural values are mainly manifested among Malays within the village. It is significant that villages regularly distinguish between members and nonmembers: members are orang ini, "people of here," while nonmembers are orang luar, "people from outside." There is a strong proclivity to view orang luar as suspicious persons, although this tendency is reduced if they are related to village members or if they live in the general vicinity and can display a knowledge of mutual acquaintances. A stranger who lacks ties of kinship or friendship to village members will generally identify himself by reference to his village e.g., "Saya orang Gajah Mati" or "I am a Gajah Mati person").

Village members behave toward one another quite differently than they behave toward orang luar and this is thought to be quite proper. Within the village one may expect honesty, respect, and interpersonal sensitivity and various forms of support ranging from mutual assistance pacts (gotong royong) to the provision of psychological and material comfort in times of stress. In contrast, beyond the moral modicum of respect accorded everyone, outsiders can expect none of these things. Villagers are reluctant to discuss village affairs with orang luar and if pressed for information they will lie shamelessly. Similarly villagers feel free to delay payments of money owed to outside traders.

The Definition of Deviance: The State and the Village

At the level of the state, Kelantan, and the nation, Malaysia, deviance is defined by a legal code based largely on the British legal system. The laws are interpreted by a system of superior and subordinate courts which generally employ English in their operation, making them less accessible to unsophisticated Malay villagers (cf. Suffian 1975). In addition to the federal courts, most states, including Kelantan, have a system of Muslim religious courts empowered to deal with religious offenses. In both systems a deviant is essentially a law breaker.

The laws are enforced by a well-trained, largely Malay police force, the members of which are not posted to states in which they were reared. The intent of this policy is to reduce opportunities for favoritism and graft, and the generally good reputation for honesty enjoyed by the police would seem to indicate that this practice is successful. However, in Kelantan, and perhaps elsewhere, this practice has some unintended consequences: police experience considerable difficulty with the local dialect and they are often unaware of important elements of Kelantanese adat and culture. Thus, police are almost invariably viewed as orang luar and most rural villages are reluctant to deal with them for these and other reasons which will be apparent shortly.

Within the context of the village in traditional Kelantanese culture, activities that are labeled "illegal" by the nation and state may be positively valued and may even serve as avenues for increased respect. This is true for a variety of behaviors which, although they create problems for supravillage social units, do not threaten village solidarity. These activities include smuggling, bull fighting, a variety of gambling activities, and others.

Smuggling is a fairly common phenomenon, especially in those areas of Kelantan adjacent to the border with Thailand. The village in which I worked was 15 miles from the Thai border and was connected by rail with Sungai Golok, a Thai market town well known for smuggling activities. While there is some traffic in drugs and other controversial items, most village Malays who participated in smuggling moved more innocuous contraband, long-grained Thai rice. Smuggling is undertaken because such rice commands good prices in Malay markets and Kelantanese wish to avoid government import duties which most villagers perceive to be unjustified. Such smuggling is participated in by a wide range of villagers, but many of the more established smugglers are middle-aged women with extensive trading networks (cf. Raybeck 1981). The smuggling tends to be relatively small scale and seldom is more than 300 pounds of rice brought in by a villager at one time.

Villagers who acquire reputations as successful smugglers regarded as clever (pandai) and are respected for their possession of special knowledge (ilmu). One such respected and enterprising middle-aged woman had established a well organized system in which bags of rice purchased in Thailand would be ferried across the Sungai Golok River that separates Thailand from Kelantan. The rice would then be transported on bicycles by messengers to a small village beyond Rantau Panjang, the first urban settlement on the Malay side of the border and the place at which the immigration authorities and police generally leave the train. At this village stop, the youths would pass the rice through open train windows, and with the help of other passengers our middle-class entrepreneur would store it safely in a restroom for which she had secured a key. When she reached her village, the restroom was unlocked and the rice passed out the window to a waiting trishaw. Her profit from the sale of the rice was usually between M\$10-15, and she would perform this complex feat once or twice a week. Villagers respected her organizational skills and took pleasure in the manner in which she consistently outwitted state authorities.

Bullfighting (pelaga lembu) is a traditional sport in Kelantan and was probably introduced from southern Thailand. The fact that Malay peasants tend to wager heavily on bullfights led to these contests being outlawed in the thirties (cf. Osman). Kelantanese bullfighting consists of bringing two bulls head-to-head in a compound and letting them contest their dominance. It is essentially a shoving contest and the bull which is pushed back or withdraws three times is declared the loser. The contest is seldom brutal, though often spirited as trainers and observers are allowed to shout encouragement to the bulls. Training a fighting bull involves physical conditioning and encourages aggressive behavior. It is time-consuming and the expense of maintaining such an animal is, by village standards, considerable.

Despite the illegality of bullfighting in Kelantan, several individuals in the village where I worked owned and trained bulls and many villagers regularly attended these contests during the harvest period in May and June. The special demands of bullfighting require a large compound with tiers of seats for the audience and, since this makes adequate camouflage and security difficult to ensure, bullfights are held just across the border in southern Thailand. Trainers are aware of the illegality of their operations and will walk their bulls to the border, avoiding main roads by using village paths, and then swim the river that separates the two countries. Kelantanese spectators travel to the border by several small kampungs at the river where there are illegal ferry services that will transport people across the river for M15 cents without the bother of passports and visas. If a

trainer's bull is successful, the trainer can win from M\$50 to M\$500, depending on the nature of spectator wagers.

The successful trainer stands to gain not only money but respect for his skill. A local Chinese in the village was highly regarded for his success in training a number of fighting bulls over the years. Kelantanese villagers know bullfighting is regarded as illegal by the state and that it is disapproved of by religious authorities; however, they view the sport as legitimized by long practice, pleasurable to watch and of no threat to the village.

Other illegal activities involving gambling such as cockfighting (pelaga ayam) are also common in Kelantanese villages. In the case of traditional contests such as cockfighting or top-spinning, what the villagers respect is performance skill rather than success at gambling. A person who successfully trains fighting cocks is believed to demonstrate his capacities of intelligence, patience, understanding and strategy. Within the context of village social life, such pastimes provide means for even poor villagers to achieve a modicum of respect and a reputation for a valued form of special knowledge (ilmu). That several of these practices are labeled illegal by the state has relatively little effect on most villagers.

While villagers are somewhat concerned about violations of civil and religious laws, they are still more concerned with the maintenance of village harmony (sesuai), described above. Thus, threats to this harmony are viewed as highly deviant. Numerous interviews with Kelantanese villagers revealed that violent behavior directed at fellow villagers, (orang sini), was a very serious offense.

This emphasis on the importance of maintaining good interpersonal relations within the village is very apparent in child-rearing practices. Children are viewed as perfectable, and how they develop is a direct reflection on their parents. Parents have a responsibility to the community to rear children who are polite (halus) and skilled in the display of courtesy behavior (budi bahasa). The means by which parents achieve these goals are quite permissive, and children are rarely struck except for the most serious offenses. Children are constantly admonished to avoid fights, and if a child becomes involved in one he is apt to be punished even if the fault is not his. The most grievous offense a youth can commit is to be disobedient and strike a parent or other relative. Significantly, such behavior is termed derhaka, a word which can mean disobedience but which also means treachery and is the common term for state treason. A youth known to be guilty of this offense will be strongly sanctioned by his relatives and other village members. If a youth persists in behavior that is disruptive of village life, such as fighting and

...t, he will be warned that he will be turned over to the police if he doesn't cease such actions. In extreme instances the threat is carried out. I have recorded four such instances which occurred over a twelve-year period in the village where I carried out my research, and it was usually the father who rebuked the youth as this was viewed as his responsibility to the wider community. Such occurrences, while rare, serve to emphasize the importance attached to public opinion and to maintaining village harmony.

I have noted that Kelantanese villagers make a strong distinction between co-villagers (orang sini) and outsiders (orang luar). Outsiders are often the subjects of strong, simplistic, and often negative stereotypes but this is hardly ever the case with the inhabitants of a rural village. The small population of such a village and the variety of ties that bind people together insure that villagers know one another quite well. This factor and the emphasis placed on village harmony combine to make Kelantanese reluctant to label fellow villagers as deviant.

I am not arguing that villagers always speak well of one another or that personal shortcomings and deviant acts are not a stimulus for gossip. On the contrary, gossip is a favorite village pastime, and the high visibility of a village member coupled with the often intense interest of others in his behavior assure an active and often critical information network. People who violate village norms, especially those relating to village harmony, can find themselves the target of intense criticism. Such gossip and criticism frequently motivates relatives of an offender to attempt to alter his behavior.

The response of villagers to a deviant act is a complex one. The initial reaction is to curb the deviant behavior by employing a variety of sanctions which range from gossip, through increasing social exclusion, to expulsion from village society. Violating this concern with conformity to village norms is an intense interest in maintaining functional interpersonal networks within the village. Villagers are aware that publicly labeling someone a deviant tends to place him at the periphery of or outside of society and, because of the many cross-cutting kindred ties, this can have serious consequences for village solidarity. Therefore, villagers usually attempt to promote conformity in a manner that does not permanently damage the social persona of an offender.

Two important influences on village attitudes towards a deviant act are its persistence and its seriousness. If someone steals rarely, he is not usually called a thief, though villagers are not reluctant to discuss his theft; rather he is described accurately as someone who occasionally steals. If he curbs his deviant acts in response to social pressure he will generally

encounter few problems with other villagers. However, the nature of any deviant act, such as a theft, is also something that villagers will weigh. Kelantanese distinguish between taking things, such as chickens, which are found outside someone's house, entering the house for the purpose of theft, and violent theft (*rompak*) in which people are injured or abused. If the offense is sufficiently serious, especially if it is not the individual's first, he will probably be labeled a thief and reported to the police.

A third influence on the reaction of villagers to deviance is its visibility. This refers both to the manner in which the act is committed and to the treatment it receives in the village. If the deviant is discrete and the offense is not a serious one it may well be overlooked or at least tolerated. Kelantanese are quite capable of compartmentalizing contradictions between ideal and real behaviors in a fashion that allows them to manage what would otherwise be a very dissonant situation (cf. Raybeck 1981). However, if something occurs to force village recognition of a deviant act, such as a public indictment by another villager, then the situation requires a suitable response. Depending on the nature of the offense and on whether or not the offender has violated similar norms in the past, the village may expel the individual or, as we shall see below, cooperate in a social fiction to restore the individual to acceptability.

While Kelantanese villagers are usually reluctant to label covillagers as deviants, this is not always the case. If an individual persists in a visible pattern of serious deviant behavior, or if he possesses attributes which prevent him from participating fully in village social life (cf. Goffman 1963), he is likely to be labeled as a member of a deviant category. However, even in such circumstances, if a member of such a category remains a co-resident, other villagers seldom treat the individual in the dichotomous fashion suggested by Becker (1963) and other labeling theorists. Instead, there is often recognition of and value for other statuses the individual occupies. Factors influencing these discriminations are best revealed by an examination of some deviant categories and the reactions of villagers to occupants of these categories.

Deviant Categories

There are a large number of deviant categories that could be discussed here but space limitations allow consideration of only a few. I have chosen to discuss the mentally ill, homosexual transvestites, and prostitutes, a range which include both involuntary and voluntary deviants.

The Mentally Ill. This is a complex category which cannot fully treated here. Kelantanese recognize many forms of mental illness ranging from rather mild dysfunctions to incapacitating states (cf. Resner and Hartog 1970). People who exhibit delusional behavior often associated with violence are called orang gila and are regarded as dangerous to themselves and others. Such individuals are generally confined to their homes by a member of the family. Kelantanese villagers regard orang gila as beyond the social pale, and in this instance labeling does lead to exclusion from village society. Indeed, such individuals are often regarded as having lost their humanity, and they can, in some instances, be treated more like animals than human beings. One older woman who growled rather than spoke and reacted violently to others was kept in a pen beneath her family's house. Whether or not violence is a part of an orang gila's behavior has a strong influence on village reactions. One older man who hallucinated and appeared quite paranoid was attended with one of his sons who looked after his needs and supplied him with cigarettes and occasional treats. Although not socially restrained he tended to remain at home, and neighbors commented on his sad plight, regarding it as the consequence of earlier misbehavior. Whether orang gila are violent or not they are generally taken care of by relatives within the village. It is felt to be improper to turn over someone to state authorities for hospitalization.

In addition to serious disorders such as gila there are a variety of mental problems which are viewed as far less serious which do not result in exclusion from village social life. One of the more colorful of these is latah, a trance-like state occasioned usually by a sudden noise. In latah the individual, usually a middle-aged woman, manifests compulsive imitative behavior which may include dancing, echolalia, echopraxia, etc. Villagers do not regard this condition as an illness requiring treatment, and beyond difficulties with children who delight in "setting off" this reaction, a latah encounters few problems of social acceptance.

Village members who are mentally deficient and/or are unable to function normally in social life fall into a variety of categories that are judged in reference to an assumed village norm. Thus, one of the most common terms for someone whose behavior is eccentric and perhaps somewhat retarded is tiga suku, a phrase which translates literally as "three-quarters." The concept behind this term is that the individual is three-fourths functional or normal. Similarly a person who is severely retarded may be termed setengah bodoh, meaning "half stupid," or kurang sehat, "possessed of an insufficiently healthy mind." In all these cases the label indicates a diminished ability to participate in village life, and this is reflected in

the lessened regard that villagers display toward such individuals.

The mentally disturbed are generally cared for by their families or more distant relatives and are very seldom institutionalized. Resner and Hartog support this last observation but argue that the reluctance of Malay villagers to institutionalize these deviants is "just another form of rejection and isolation to protect the family and community image" (1970: 379). I disagree strongly with this position since the members of such a village and of neighboring villages would be well aware of the situation. Indeed, institutionalizing the individual would reduce the visibility of the problems and lead to less, rather than more, embarrassment. Mentally impaired individuals are still members of the village and have some claims, albeit attenuated ones, to social membership. I have seen parents remonstrate with their children for teasing a tiga suku, and on several occasions it was emphasized that he was, after all, an orang sini.

Homosexual Transvestites. Kelantanese are aware of male homosexuality but tend to believe female homosexuality does not occur, at least not among Malays. Male homosexuality is made particularly visible through the institution of male transvestite performers (pondel or papak). Islam forbids women appearing in public performances, and their role has been taken over by a class of female impersonators. Many of the impersonators are quite skilled, and during the postharvest season when there are many and varied forms of entertainment, they can make as much as M\$30 a week, which is two to three times the income for a peasant family.

Most homosexuals do not remain in their natal villages, possibly because of the objections of others to them and partly because there are few opportunities to pursue their sexual interests. Such individuals generally leave the village and move to one of several specialized homosexual villages in or near the state capital. These villages appear externally similar to other kampungs save that children are absent. Many houses contain a "married" male couple who model their behavior on that of a heterosexual couple. It is common for such a household to be supported by one male, who is often a female impersonator, while the other, wearing women's clothing, takes care of domestic duties.

The attitudes of villagers towards homosexuals is less complex than those toward prostitutes, discussed shortly. Villagers regard homosexuality as peculiar, different and even somewhat humorous, but they do not view it as an illness or as a serious sin. Homosexuality is perceived as the result of fate (takdir) rather than as an expression of personal choice. Thus, villagers

hold a homosexual responsible for his sexual preference, they are quite opposed to homosexual practices within the village. Anyone who engages in such behavior will be the object of considerable gossip, and he may find himself excluded from the life of social life. I knew of only one homosexual residing in a rural village, and he was quite careful to limit the visibility of his sexual behavior. Responses of other villagers were mixed, but he was reasonably well accepted, and the villagers pointed with pride to his skills in making bird and training songbirds, two traditional activities in rural villages. It is risky to generalize from a single example, but it would seem that Kelantanese villagers are capable of incorporating a member of this deviant category if the visibility of deviant behavior is low and if the individual can otherwise participate normally in the interpersonal network of the village.

Prostitutes. In conservative Islamic Kelantan, femininity and fidelity are highly valued. Likewise, premarital and extramarital sex are strongly disapproved of and often censured.

Although there is no reliable data, the frequency of such misconduct in Kelantan is probably fairly low. The close-knit nature of villages, coupled with an active gossip network, works against such occurrences. So too does the young age at which a girl marries and the attention her parents and later her husband pay to her behavior.

In those rare instances when a young girl does become involved in a premarital affair, her behavior will result in shame for herself and her relatives. Nonetheless, her parents and her waris are expected to support her and try to find her a husband. It occasionally happens that a particularly rigid family will seek to disown such a daughter or make life so difficult for her that she will flee. When a girl in these circumstances leaves her village, she has few options. She may seek menial employment in an urban center, which is very difficult to obtain, or she may become a prostitute. The latter is often a somewhat gradual process beginning with a waitressing job in a coffee shop, an occupation that is barely respectable. After a few years in such affairs a girl may gravitate to a full-time house of prostitution. A more common source of prostitutes than unwed girls are divorcees (buang). The reasons for this are varied and range from an inability to contact a satisfactory second or third marriage to actual sexual delinquency. The fact that the majority of Kelantan prostitutes are divorcees is reflected in the term "buang," which is used colloquially to mean prostitute as well as divorcee.

When a girl or woman becomes a prostitute it is likely that traditional support mechanisms have broken down. Her welfare and that of her children are the responsibility of her family, her relatives, and the village, in that order. Consequently, although a divorcee

turned prostitute may occasionally remain in her natal village, it is more likely that she will take up residence in an urban center.

Questions concerning the prostitutes' motives for moving to Kota Baru, the state capital, elicited a wide range of responses and varying degrees of frankness. The most common answers listed the greater amount of personal freedom in the city and the exciting pace of life there. However, a few women did state that remaining in their village would have been too difficult in view of their profession and their relatives. One girl in particular detailed the problems stemming from her father's anger and the rejection of her maris because a love affair of hers had become a topic of village gossip. Only four women stated that they would prefer to live in a village setting if they had their choice. This preference probably reflects a good deal of rationalizing, but it does contrast markedly with the typical attitude of most Kelantanese.

While the majority of women labeled as prostitutes leave the village, those who remain generally do so for good reason. All but one of the seven prostitutes I encountered in village settings were involved in caring for and supporting families which sometimes included aged relatives. The exception was an outspoken middle-aged woman who had inherited her mother's house and who steadfastly ignored the disapprobation of relatives and neighbors. All of these prostitutes commuted to the state capital three or four times a week for business purposes, and none entertained clients within the village. Such a practice reduces the visibility of the prostitute's occupation and allows other villagers to be more accepting of the individual than they would otherwise be. Residents of two villages in which a prostitute resided displayed a complex regard for these women. One woman was the sole support of three children, and an elderly mother was acknowledged to be a prostitute (perempuan pelachor), but villagers, emphasizing that she was a dutiful daughter and caring mother, also termed her a good person (orang baik hati). The other prostitute was also engaged in supporting a family but her reputation for a short temper and sharp tongue led to a more ambiguous response by other villagers. They approved of the manner in which she cared for her children, emphasizing that these were well behaved and skilled in courteous behavior, but they termed the mother a weak person. Significantly they discriminated between her sexual behavior and her irascibility in making this judgment. It is apparent that a known prostitute who limits the visibility of her profession and who exhibits behaviors congruent with important village values, can be reasonably well integrated into village society. Villagers tended to compartmentalize her deviant behavior and to discriminate rather carefully in assessing her total social persona.

The complex reaction to deviance described above is characteristic of rural Kelantanese villages, and it is also reported of other peasant villages (Selby 1974; Wolf 1968). For such situations Douglas employs the term "rationalization" which he can "provide a social bridge for other people to avoid the down of social relations that can come from shame" (1977:). The motivation for villagers to build such a bridge is perception of the investment they have in the fuller social life of the deviant.

Most prostitutes maintain many of the traditional values and beliefs held by rural villagers. Semantic differential responses collected from both prostitutes and villagers indicate that the cognitive distance between these two samples is relatively slight (Raybeck 1975). One result of this is that prostitutes do see themselves as deviant and do not become proud of their involvement in their profession, a phenomenon which Douglas notes does occur in Western societies (1977: 65). Indeed, the majority of the prostitutes I interviewed looked upon their participation in their profession as a temporary one. Most were anxious of marrying again, having a stable family life, and were saving money in hopes of opening a small coffee shop or selling land. I was unable to get a reliable estimate of prostitutes who managed to leave the profession, but perhaps as many as half of the younger women accomplished this goal. There were numerous examples of friends who, through savings, had set themselves up in small businesses and later married. Spot checks of several of the stories revealed that they were accurate. Thus, it is apparent that members of this category, while perceiving themselves as engaged in a deviant activity, believe they have the right and ability to rejoin the wider society and many do so. Their reintegration back into society is facilitated by the Kelantanese practice of assessing the whole person rather than just a single attribute.

The ability of Kelantanese to reintegrate deviants into village society is marked and, as the following section will demonstrate, it emphasizes again the distinction between insiders and outsiders. The manner in which deviance is curbed, social control maintained, and the relative autonomy of the village protected can be seen better through an examination of deviant acts, the sanctions they elicit, and the social resolution that results.

Deviance, Sanctions and Social Process

The social pressures described above readily explain why villagers who engage in deviant activities, even of a minor sort, seek to limit the visibility of such behavior and engage in it in the shade of the village. One result of this is that locations

have developed which specialize in deviance. Sungai Golok, mentioned earlier as a smuggling center, is also a town where one can find a wide variety of drugs, prostitution, night clubs, gambling houses, etc. On a more modest scale there is an area of the state capital where one can encounter similar vices. Interestingly, residents of a given village will tend to patronize a particular establishment. Thus, village residents who drink are generally known to one another, though not always to other residents. Low visibility is assured since one village deviant, fearing reciprocity, is unlikely to betray another.

People who can minimize the visibility of their deviant behavior can, as we have seen, be reasonably well accepted by village society. But should deviant acts impact upon the village, there are a range of sanctions which may be employed. I have already discussed most of the sanctions, such as gossip and social exclusion, to which a village member may be subject, but there is also a range of sanctions which individuals may, somewhat warily, employ. If an individual feels another has seriously wronged him, he may arrange to have friends in another village waylay the offender outside his village and give him a beating. In more serious cases a man may be hired to give the offender a beating, again outside of the village, using a heavy stick bound with cord at each end. This stick is called an enam sembilan (six-nine) a traditional weapon, the cord of which leaves the subject with a distinctive set of patterned bruises which are readily recognizable by other villagers. (This device and its function are so well known that the capital's newspaper, Minguan Kota Bharu, carried a political column highly critical of the national government which was headed by the logo "Enam Sembilan.")

A person who engages in such individualized sanctions is generally careful to avoid being directly associated with the act. Other villagers, including the subject of the sanction, may have their suspicions, but they are unlikely to challenge him without evidence. Villagers usually regard the employment of such sanctions as deviant, even when there are clear reasons for them. Disputes within the village should be resolved peacefully through a process of negotiation which is usually carried out by influential members of the village. The individual who undertakes his own sanctioning places the harmony of the village in jeopardy, and other villagers are apt to respond with sanctions of their own if they become aware of his actions.

Village disapproval of violent sanctions does not extend to their use on outsiders. For nonvillagers the possible sanctions range from beatings to death. If one or more villagers want to sanction an outsider for an offense, there are "professionals" they may hire to administer a beating with an enam sembilan or, in extreme situations, a small hatchet (kapok kecil). The kapok kecil is a traditional murder weapon in Kelantan, and there are a

of professional assassins living in the Tanah Merah district who for M\$50 to M\$80 will dispatch an enemy. While such acts are not common, when they occur they are widely disapproved, and people are very conscious of this rather final form of sanction.

Outsiders who enter a village for the purpose of theft are aware that they are taking considerable risks. If they are caught they will be severely beaten and perhaps killed. On one occasion four men entered a neighboring village at three in the morning and were observed walking off with three water buffalo belonging to various members of the village. The villagers, alerted by an observer's shouts, turned out and were soundly beating the subjects when the police arrived. The police dispersing the villagers somewhat, prevented one of the owners of a water buffalo from striking the suspects with a machete and, then administered a sound beating of their own. As they were walking past the suspects through the village in which I resided, several men shouted encouragement to the police, and one woman, a notably gentle soul, called out to the police that she hoped they would not hurt their hands on beating up the thieves. This example illustrates just how clear is the dichotomy between covillagers and outsiders, and it indicates that, while Kelantanese are strongly opposed to displays of violence within the village, their opposition is to the disturbance of village solidarity rather than to violence per se.

Under some conditions village members who aggress against outsiders may find their actions well regarded by fellow residents. This approval can arise from situations in which the aggressor acts in the interests of the wider village. In the village where I did research, a young married village male, Daud, borrowed some money by a youth from another village who had also borrowed small sums from a number of Daud's covillagers. One evening, when the youth was attending a wayang kulit performance in Daud's village, Daud sent word around that he was seeking the youth. This resulted in approximately 20 village spectators gathering beside the path at the entrance to the wayang kulit performance. At the termination of the wayang kulit performance, the youth emerged with several companions, Daud and four friends were waiting on the path. Daud stepped forward, grabbed the youth by the shirt and slapped him several times, demanding in a loud voice that the youth repay all his debts to various village members. The presence of Daud's friends and the spectators helped to avert an actual fight and the youth and his friends left after promising repayment of the loans. Later tales of this encounter exaggerated Daud's strength and courage and he was consistently portrayed as someone engaged in defending the interests of village members against an outsider.

The preceding examples deal with sanctions for deviant acts committed by an outsider. When a village resident engages in violence within the village, the situation is far more complex, and because of the interconnecting ties of kinship, potentially far more serious. In such a situation involving an otherwise respected person, villagers will attempt to sanction the offender in a fashion that curbs his behavior and yet allows reintegration of the individual into society. To accomplish this latter objective it is sometimes necessary for villagers to cooperate in a social function.

Two brothers-in-law, Ali and Ismail, had been quarreling for several years when one afternoon they became involved in a misunderstanding concerning Ali's disciplining of one of Ismail's children. Ismail lost his temper and, grabbing his kelewang, a long machete-like instrument, he struck Ali several times. Ali walked to the nearest police post, reported the incident and was taken to the hospital in the state capital. Ismail, on the advice of his relatives, who did not want police in the village, turned himself in, was jailed and then released on a bail of M\$300, which his relatives had to raise. Ali filed a formal complaint and professed his desire to place the matter before the district court.

The situation created a serious problem for the village since the dispute involved cross-connecting kindred ties which could force other villagers to choose sides, thus increasing the probability of more friction. The problem was aggravated by the involvement of the state, something which the villagers would have preferred to avoid.

In an attempt to resolve the problem, one evening the local Islamic priest, the head of the village and an influential resident related to both Ali and Ismail visited both men's houses and stressed the importance of maintaining village harmony. They asked Ali to withdraw his charges in return for a gift of M\$200 and an apology from Ismail. Both men agreed to these conditions and, being illiterate, both hired a letter-writer to petition the court to dismiss the case.

Ismail's portion of the letter stressed that he was not responsible for his actions as he had suddenly been invaded by the spirit of the devil. Such beliefs are common in Kelantan and Ismail probably meant his claims to be taken literally. The court, however, was not persuaded, and it fined Ismail M\$500, a sum which was ultimately paid by the relatives of both men. Thus, the village was once again confirmed in its prejudice regarding outside involvement in village affairs, and several people blamed Ali rather than Ismail for this intrusion.

Although the court was not impressed by Ismail's defense, villagers found it a means to rationalize his behavior by putting responsibility for his deviant act to the spirit.

As might be expected this resolution did not result in immediate re-establishment of harmonious relations between two antagonists. What followed in the next few months was a fully orchestrated series of efforts by villagers to repair, as far as possible, the damage caused by Ismail's loss of temper. Both men were invited to the same feasts and both were reassured by relatives and friends to renew their interaction. It is unlikely that these efforts eliminated the ill will between the two men, but they did succeed in reducing the immediate threat to village harmony.

Conclusion

The preceding discussion of Kelantanese deviance has been selective. I have not dealt with several aspects of Kelantanese culture that would be included in a thorough discussion of village-level deviance. In particular, the influence of adat and Islamic rules for behavior has barely been mentioned, a discussion of the important roles of magic and corollary beliefs concerning supernatural agencies has been omitted. Finally, I have focused upon general properties of Kelantanese deviance and the labeling process manifested at the village level, illustrating these with specific examples where appropriate.

The reluctance of Kelantanese villagers to label covillagers as deviant is a phenomenon I have emphasized throughout this paper. It has often been argued that definitions of deviance and the existence of appropriate labels help to illustrate important social and cultural values (cf. Clinard 1974). I have tried to demonstrate here that the process of labeling can serve a similar function and reveal aspects of Kelantanese culture and identity. The reluctance of villagers to dichotomize other village members into deviant and nondeviant categories emphasizes the interdependent nature of village life and the importance attached to maintaining functioning interpersonal networks.

I have also stressed some of the disparities between state definitions of deviance and the definitions which are of significance at the village level. The relativistic manner in which Kelantanese judge rule-breaking behavior illustrates the complexity of village membership and the role this membership plays in the self-concept of villagers. It can also be argued that the differences between these definitions reflect important aspects of Kelantanese ethnicity. Kelantanese villagers consciously define themselves and their interests by their endorsement of

several traditional practices, such as bullfighting, which the wider society views as deviant.

I would like to be able to argue for the originality of the preceding assertions. However, in the process of writing this paper, I encountered Selby's excellent study of Zapotec deviance (1974) in which he is also concerned with the labeling of deviants in peasant village society and which contains several arguments that parallel those I have presented here. Given the anthropological arguments for the existence of similarities among peasant societies (cf. Diaz and Potter 1967; Foster 1965; Wolf 1966) it should not be surprising if the dynamics of deviance in these societies are found to be homologous. It is apparent that the rules which define deviance at the level of village life in Kelantan, and perhaps in other peasant societies, are both more variable and more elastic than many of our classic etic models would lead us to expect.

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PUBLIC AND PRIVATE DEFINITIONS OF CULTURAL IDENTITY
IN A CHINESE MALAYSIAN SETTLEMENT

Sharon A. Carstens

The ideas presented in this essay have been generated by two slightly different sets of concerns about the nature of ethnic expressions and about the ethnic status of Chinese in Southeast Asia. On a theoretical level, I have wondered whether there are not significant differences between male and female understandings and expressions of ethnic identity. If we define ethnicity as the organization and public display of cultural symbols to express a group's distinctiveness vis-a-vis others¹ and if politics and the public domain within a particular culture are effectively controlled by men, might we not expect differential awareness of and concern for ethnic symbols by men and women? My second concern focuses on the political nature of Chinese ethnicity in Southeast Asia and asks why Chinese culture cannot be allowed equal status among others within the culturally heterogeneous nation states of Southeast Asia. Is it not possible for Chinese Southeast Asians to retain and further develop a distinctively Chinese cultural identity while concurrently expressing loyalty to their Southeast Asian homes? Or, as many would argue, must assimilation with the local culture (or cultures) be the inevitable outcome for Chinese who hope to survive in the Southeast Asian milieu?²

In seeking an answer to these questions I will explore in some detail expressions of ethnic and cultural identity³ within the Chinese community of Pulai in West Malaysia.⁴ Before turning to Pulai, however, a few brief comments are in order on my theoretical approach to questions of ethnicity and my understanding of the political nature of Chinese culture in Southeast Asia.

Research in Southeast Asia over the past thirty years has led to an appreciation of the flexibility of ethnic group membership and ethnic markers in the region. Leach's (1954) seminal analysis of the fluctuating membership and boundaries between Burmese hill tribes challenged earlier tendencies to classify groups in terms of static cultural inventories and encouraged an appreciation of the shifting interpretations of cultural symbols.⁵ As the focus of research changed from identifying "cultural wholes" to exploring fluctuations and individual differences, the methodology of research similarly shifted to more diachronic, larger-scale approaches which sought to elicit the self-ascriptive aspects of group culture, noting differences between individuals as well as changes over time. Situational dynamics were now seen to influence what particular identity an

individual might choose to assume among a choice of several (Nagata 1965; Nagata 1974). While the new ethnography generated this approach is both exciting and suggestive, our understanding and appreciation of the dynamics of shifting identities is not complete. One variable which has not been adequately addressed is that of gender differences. If ethnic identities are understood through the self-ascriptive categories of groups, our data must be gathered through a combination of observation of group and individual behavior, followed by conversation with group members who interpret or comment on these actions. And if we find these conversations consistently dominated by male members of the group, we cannot help but wonder what, if anything, the women think about questions of ethnic and cultural identity.

Turning to the political aspect of Chinese culture in Southeast Asia, it is necessary to distinguish between the ideal on which I propose and the political "facts of life" as viewed by Southeast Asian governments. Put very simply, cultural heterogeneity, in the eyes of Southeast Asian governments, is a serious threat to national unity throughout the region. Though attempts have been made to win the loyalty of diverse ethnic groups through the creation and public display of symbols of national culture, questions and dilemmas about the treatment (and possible assimilation) of national minorities continue to plague national politics. The Chinese in Southeast Asia present another and somewhat different problem in the creation of national unity. Most (although not all) early Chinese residents in Southeast Asia considered themselves (and were seen by others) as sojourners whose real home remained in China. Such persons changed gradually with the Japanese invasion of China and the communist victory in 1949, which made the return of these immigrants to the mainland practically impossible. Also at this time, many Chinese could trace two or even three generations of family in Southeast Asia, making the area, for all practical purposes, their permanent home. Yet if indigenous ethnic groups are often considered a thorn in the side of national unity, how much more so the Chinese, who carry with them (largely as a result of their application) the threat of attachment to a larger and potentially dangerous foreign power, namely mainland China.⁶ Thus, Southeast Asian governments who may not demand or even advocate the assimilation of heterogeneous indigenous cultures into a single national culture have, in some cases, such as Indonesia, limited or curtailed Chinese books, newspapers, and schools -- in effect, all public expressions of Chinese culture. Even in Malaysia, where freedom of religion and freedom to use one's native language are guaranteed by the federal constitution, overtly Chinese-style political expressions tend to be branded as Chinese separatist, thus communist and thus subversive. It seems that a major impediment to official recognition of the legitimacy of Chinese culture in Southeast Asia is the common perception that

political and cultural loyalties cannot be divided, and that Chinese culture belongs naturally on the Chinese mainland.⁷ Materials from Pulai demonstrate that this is not necessarily so; and I will argue that Malaysian Chinese often exhibit strong attachments to their local areas of residence in Malaysia.

Any understanding of local interpretations of ethnic and cultural identities must be predicated on an understanding of the cultural dynamics within a particular area. The following sections introduce the cultural mixes found in the Gua Musang/Pulai area and serve as a background to a more detailed examination of the questions outlined above in terms of the Pulai Chinese community.

Mixed Impressions: Ulu Kelantan, 1978

Gua Musang is the largest town on the rail line between Kuala Lipis and Kuala Krai: a single street of weather-beaten two-story shophouses which dead ends into the New Village. About three quarters of Gua Musang's 3000 shopkeepers and New Villagers are Chinese; the larger population of the surrounding hinterland, with the exception of the Chinese settlement of Pulai to the south and the Orang Asli much further to the west, is close to one hundred percent Malay.

Gua Musang developed as the center of a rubber producing region, created by the construction of the East Coast Railroad in the 1930s. Although the Gua Musang regional economy continues to center on rubber, the town itself has become local headquarters for some of the largest logging operations in Kelantan state. Reflections of this mixed economy are evident in the diversity of residents on the main street of town.

The Chinese logging bosses in Gua Musang originate almost entirely from outside the region and travel regularly to their Kota Baru, Kuala Lumpur, or Singapore offices. Dressed in loose-fitting shirts and trousers, loggers gather frequently in offices or open-fronted coffee shops to exchange local and national news in English or Hokkien. Typical conversations touch on such issues as recent government rulings about business investment, problems of getting work permits for Chinese workers, the possibilities of legalized public dancing in Kota Baru under the newly elected UMNO State government, or who won last night's mah-jong game.

Groups of local Malay or Chinese men also gather in the Chinese coffee shops or small Malay kedai to exchange views in Malay, Hakka, or Cantonese.⁸ Although local Malays and Chinese rarely mix, topics of conversation in both groups center on such standard issues as fluctuating rubber prices, the newly opened

te health clinic, or the perennial tardiness of the morning train.

Chinese and Malay women, dressed in loose-fitting trousers Malay sarongs respectively, are rarely seen in coffee shops, appear in the local market place, baskets in arm, to bargain the day's supplies of vegetables, fish, and meat. These frequently stop in the small shops on the main street to ease additional items and to exchange news about family matters or other local gossip with female customers and sales attendants from their own ethnic group.⁹

The ebb and flow of activities, the mixed languages, clothing styles and postures, and the different interests and concerns of the various groups create an impression of considerable diversity amidst the relative harmony of daily affairs.

Impressions: Pulai 1978

On the road south from Gua Musang to the old Chinese settlement of Pulai, massive lorries filled with lumber destined for Kuala Lumpur and Singapore spread thick layers of dust on roadside trees and bushes. The regular rows of rubber trees at the head of the valley soon give way to padi fields which surround scattered attap houses and outbuildings. In the distance, men and women can be seen harvesting the newly ripened padi, and along the dusty road, groups of uniformed school children, dismissed from their daily lessons at the Pulai primary school, are seen to wend their way home.

At the Pulai center, some eight miles south of Gua Musang, a Chinese temple to the Goddess of Mercy, Guan Yin, is being topped with a new dragon-topped roof, designed and constructed by a young Pulai man and financed with money from the government. Meanwhile, in a side alley, Chinese men in shorts and shirts gamble noisily over t'ien kao, slapping the domino-style tiles on the wooden table. A sarong-clad older Chinese woman visits one of the small Pulai shops to purchase dried fish, soy sauce, and a bottle of budu, a Malay anchovy sauce. She asks the shopkeeper in Hakka whether the rubber dealer from Gua Musang is expected to come to Pulai soon to purchase local rubber. Their conversation is interrupted by the entrance of three police field force soldiers who request soft drinks and peanuts. As the woman prepares to leave, the Pulai shopkeeper greets his customers in heavily accented Malay.

Cultural Adjustments: Past and Present

The social and cultural diversity of the Gua Musang and Pulai areas so evident in the above descriptions provide the stage and the backdrop for most enactments of Pulai Chinese cultural identity. While the specific cultural adjustments and local interpretations of these adjustments might apply only to the local Pulai area, the cultural logic used to formulate these interpretations has wider applicability.

The Pulai area was first settled by Hakka Chinese goldminers sometime during the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries, long before the great influx of Chinese immigrants to the west coast of the Malay Peninsula in the mid-to-late nineteenth century and sometime after the establishment of a Chinese community in Malacca (Carstens 1980a). The indigenous population of Ulu Kelantan at this time consisted mainly of Orang Asli living a nomadic existence in the hills with a few scattered Malay families settled in the valleys. The Chinese miners were taxed by the Kelantanese Malay Sultan on all gold extracted from Kelantanese land, and their compliance was enforced through royal monopolies on the shipment of rice and other provisions into the interior. Such arrangements led, at least on one occasion in the early 1800s to serious quarrels between the Malay royalty and the Pulai Chinese, and to the virtual destruction of the Pulai settlement. This, however, did not deter other Chinese miners from entering the area and rebuilding the community once again.

Like Chinese elsewhere in Southeast Asia, early Pulai miners did not plan to settle in Malaya, but hoped to earn a quick fortune with which to return to China. Such dreams frequently did not materialize; when gold supplies dwindled in the area, rather than returning to China penniless, the miners began to plant rice and pursue other economic activities. It was probably around this time that Pulai Chinese men began to marry Orang Asli and Siamese women, creating an isolated and more stable community. By the turn of the 20th century, Pulai was considered the largest and most important settlement in the Ulu Kelantan region. People say that Malays living in the area spoke Hakka Chinese in communicating with their neighbors, while the Pulai community imported school teachers from China to give their sons a traditional Hakka education and during the 1920s began to import Hakka wives from China as well. Pulai Chinese were not untouched by the environment in which they lived however, for many of the men became enthusiastic jungle hunters, learning to use Orang Asli blowpipes to kill small game and pursuing animals in the jungles for weeks at a time.

During the 1940s, the isolation and stability of the Pulai community were shattered, first by the Japanese occupation of Malaya and later by the Malayan Emergency, which began in 1948.

ing a series of communist guerrilla incidents in the area, families were evacuated and resettled in three different villages in Trengganu, Johore, and Gua Musang. Here they had to support themselves by tapping rubber and doing odd jobs but as soon as the Pulai area was declared safe in the early 1960s, most families chose to return to their land in the valley, where they resumed their lives as subsistence padi farmers and began planting rubber trees.

Pulai Chinese today resemble in some respects earlier Chinese immigrants in Indonesia and Malaysia who married local women and became acculturated but not assimilated with the local populations. The selective adoption of local cultural practices by these groups created new and distinctive communities known in Sabah as the Peranakans and in Malacca as the Babas. For both Peranakan and Baba Chinese, the most visible departures from Chinese culture appeared in housing styles, dress, food, and language. Within Pulai one sees similar changes in some but not all of these areas, and never to the same extent as changes among the Peranakans.

Housing styles in Pulai have remained clearly Chinese. The homes are built on the ground and are oriented according to Chinese geomantic principles. On entering Pulai homes, one finds a central guest room flanked by bedrooms on the sides, with the entrance to the side or back. Ancestral altars, with family genealogies written on red paper and pasted to the wall, form the focal point of the k'ia t'ing or guest room. Names on these ancestral altars include all male ancestors who lived in Pulai and their wives, going back as far as five or six generations. It is significant that all women listed on these genealogies, including Chinese, are remembered with Chinese surnames; for Orang Asli or Siamese wives, this marks their final ritual incorporation into the Chinese community.¹⁰

While Pulai houses remain distinctively Chinese, changes do occur in other key areas. Many Pulai women (particularly older women but some young married women as well) wear sarongs around the waist on a daily basis. In the past, these sarongs were worn in a traditional style with one piece of cloth tied around the bodice and another around the waist, but today they are usually worn as a sarong skirt with a casual fitted blouse on top--in a more Malay style. Younger, unmarried women, who rarely wear sarongs except when bathing in the river, identify sarongs with the dress and life style of older married women, which they acknowledge they may someday adopt. In the past, Pulai men wore Chinese-style pants and shirts; today men dress in casual western-style clothing and only signs of local influences are the Malay-style head coverings worn as protection from the hot sun when working in the fields.¹¹

Foods served in Pulai homes among family members include local influences such as budu (the Kelantanese Malay anchovy sauce), asam (tamarind usually cooked with fish), mild curries made with packaged curry powder, or soups delicately flavored with jungle herbs. Some Pulai women prefer eating with their hands rather than with chopsticks when in the privacy of their own homes. Malay-type snacks such as kerupuk (shrimp or fish chips), pineapple with hot chilies, and cakes made with coconut milk are also popular among young and old.

Language changes are more difficult to assess. Certain standard Malay words such as susah meaning difficult or pandai meaning clever are incorporated into daily Hakka speech. But the number of such words is limited to about a dozen, and most Pulai people speak little or no standard Malay. Younger people who have worked or lived outside of the area often speak some Malay or Chinese dialects other than Hakka, but most older people, particularly Pulai women, are basically monolingual. No one who lives within the Pulai community speaks English.

Finally, although religious practices and beliefs within Pulai remain clearly Chinese in organization and style, local Malay spirits (called la duk) have been incorporated into the Pulai Chinese pantheon. Acknowledged as Malay spirits of the soil, the la duk are worshipped at the annual temple festival with special Malay-style vegetarian offerings. In addition, the bureaucratic concepts of religious hierarchy so familiar to Chinese religion have been transposed to the Malaysian setting, so that the god of heaven, t'ien kung, is often compared to the Malay Sultan instead of the Chinese Emperor, and the city god, sh'eng kung, is likened to a Malaysian district officer.

Outsiders' Views of Pulai

These then are the major cultural changes observed by an anthropologist during a year's residence in the Pulai community. Before examining Pulai interpretations of these cultural changes, it is important to take a brief look at the reactions of other Malaysians to the community, for we need to consider to what extent Pulai ethnic and cultural identities are constructed in reaction to the views of others.

The views of Malays and other Chinese who visit the Pulai area are influenced by the unique aspects of the settlement cited earlier: that is, Pulai's long history, the ownership of rice land by Pulai farmers, and the continued dependence on padi cultivation and subsistence farming. Due largely to geographic location, the Pulai and Gua Musang area also earned a reputation for leftist terrorist activities during the early days of the Malayan Emergency in the 1950s. This political reputation has

ed on and was reinforced in 1976 when about twenty Pulai were arrested and accused of supporting communists (politically or morally) in the nearby jungles.

Malays, who rarely if ever visit the Pulai settlement, tend to describe it as a community of conservative and subversive Malays. The political fears of Malays override any practical assessment of Pulai Chinese culture. Most contacts between Malays and Pulai Chinese occur in the Gua Musang government office or with Malay field force soldiers who patrol the surrounding jungles. Because these Malays are usually outsiders to the settlement, there is little chance of building up long-term relationships or friendships between them and Pulai Chinese, even if this were considered desirable by both sides.

Chinese from outside the Gua Musang area who have heard of Pulai know of it either in the context of its long history, or have heard of the efficacy of the gods in the Pulai Guan Yin Temple. Gua Musang Chinese often comment on the non-Chinese cultural characteristics of Pulai people, which they link by imputation to cultural changes as well. Pulai Chinese are viewed as socially and culturally conservative, as well as economically backward, living off on their own land in attap houses which lack electricity and running water.

Racial Constructions: Pulai Hakka Chinese Malaysian

How then does the Pulai community see itself? The isolation of the Pulai settlement means that many Pulai people rarely leave the community and thus have little contact with outsiders who do not visit Pulai. The major exceptions, of course, are dealings with Gua Musang shopkeepers, many of whom were formerly Pulai people. Hence the relevant stage for Pulai identity--the place where most behavior is seen and interpreted--is in Pulai itself. This is an important observation, for the public statements that Pulai people make about their culture, whether they may be in reaction to their perceived views of outsiders, are as much for the benefit of the Pulai community as for the rest of the world.

The cultural categories of most significance to Pulai people are those associated with the labels Pulai Hakka Chinese Malaysian.¹² Each of these labels signifies specific social and cultural meanings of varying intensity depending in part on the situation and the individuals involved. The categories Malaysian and Hakka are of least importance. With Malaysian national identity so closely tied to symbols of Islamic Malay culture, national identity is considered important to Pulai people mainly in terms of citizenship and land ownership. Yet on the local level, worship of the Malay la duk signifies Chinese recognition of

a Malay spiritual component to the Pulai soil. Hakka identity is expressed primarily in the use of the Hakka dialect, and language (as opposed to other cultural markers) is often considered the most important feature separating Hakkas from other Chinese dialect groups.¹³ Being Chinese and being a Pulai person are both expressed in a rich repertoire of cultural symbols. "Chineseness" is commonly associated with the preservation of the patrilineal family which is evidenced, among other things, in ancestor worship, observed at all major Chinese holidays throughout the year. The emphasis placed on Chinese education and the worship of Guan Yin and other Chinese gods in the Pulai temple are other important symbols. Being a Pulai person relates to long-term historic ties to the Pulai area, expressed most clearly in oral traditions about the former goldminers and the problems overcome by the community in the past. Pulai people also describe themselves as being like one big family, pointing to strong traditions of mutual help found among community members.

Persona and Context of Cultural Identities

If local interpretations of cultural identity dwell on the "Chineseness" of the Pulai community, does this imply that the cultural changes cited earlier are merely insignificant alterations in local custom, introduced through past marriages with non-Chinese women, but of no great importance to the community? In seeking an answer to this question, individual Pulai men and women were questioned about their attitudes toward outsiders and the differences which they perceived between Pulai people and other Chinese or Malays. The answers received from Pulai men fairly consistently described their ties to Chinese culture. Opinions expressed by Pulai women were practically nonexistent. In fact, Pulai women seemed confused by these questions, replying, if anything, that I should ask their husbands.

Differences in male and female reactions to questions about cultural identity appear to be related to other kinds of male/female divisions in Pulai. The separation of the sexes is immediately apparent to any casual visitor to the settlement. Men take charge of all public activities, religious and secular, and on a daily basis, they are publically the most visible community members, as they meet to talk, drink, and gamble in the Pulai shops. Women generally remain close to their homes, and when in public they rarely join the male coffee shop groups, but can often be seen standing with other women on the fringes of public activities.

The division of labor between men and women within Pulai is influenced as much by the context of an event, whether it is domestic or public,¹⁴ as by the nature of the activity. For example, while only men cook food for public feasts held for

ings, funerals, or religious rituals, women are usually responsible for the preparation of daily meals at home. The division of labor is less marked within the domestic setting than when in public. Both men and women plant and harvest tap rubber trees, grow vegetables, and feed household flocks, although men are generally considered more responsible for rice production and women more responsible for vegetable cultivation and the care of animals. During domestic rituals, both men and female family members cooperate in the preparation of offerings, spirit money and ghost clothing, as well as in worship itself.

Within the formal public context, divisions between male and female activities are clearly structured. Men regularly represent their families at community meetings.¹⁵ Men also take part in all public religious rituals during the annual Guan Yin festival celebration. Only men are allowed to prepare temple offerings for the gods during this period; the women's job is to make paper clothing and prepare spirit money for the ghosts. Furthermore, within the public religious context, women are seen as ritually polluting and are barred from the temple kitchen during the festival period. Yet these same women take charge of the ritual cleansing of their family homes on the eve of the festival, thus becoming guardians of family purity in the domestic sphere. (See Carstens 1980b).

Although public and domestic spheres entail different male and female divisions, neither sphere is considered of greater importance or of consistently higher status than the other. Public and domestic concerns are seen as separate but complementary. Community harmony enables individual families to flourish, so too orderly and stable families form the building blocks of community well-being. In a similar manner, one of a man's most important duties to his family is to represent family interests within the wider community, while women use their time more laboriously and harder than men at economic and domestic tasks to benefit their individual families.

Once we have recognized this separation of public and domestic spheres, and the domination of the public sphere by men, it is not surprising to find public definitions of cultural identity more easily expressed by men than by women. Of even more significance, in looking again at cultural changes in Pulau, we find that all of the changes--the wearing of sarongs, changes in dress and eating habits, and even the use of Malay words in the place of Hakka language--are generally confined to domestic or private settings. Furthermore, it is women who usually cook and prepare food, women who eat with their hands, and women who wear sarongs.

It is interesting to note that the very things which change in the domestic setting--food, clothing, and language--appear in different forms as important symbols of Chinese cultural identity during public occasions. Thus the same women who wear sarongs around their homes, change to Chinese-style pants and blouses on public occasions, when traditionally-styled Chinese clothing is greatly admired. Food is certainly a focal interest in Chinese culture, and the dishes served at weddings, or other community feasts, all of which are cooked by men, are generally distinctively Chinese in both ingredients and presentation. No one would eat with their hands on such formal occasions. Language is one of the most important symbols of the Chinese heritage. The archaic forms of prayers which are written and chanted and the numerous couplets handwritten and pasted to temple walls and doors during religious festivals may be unintelligible to most individuals, but they symbolize the continuation of an ancient cultural tradition to which Pulai Chinese feel closely bound. The language used at public meetings generally falls somewhere in between that of ritual language and the language spoken in casual conversations. Formal meetings are usually conducted either in very formal Hakka or in Mandarin.

Confining changes in focal cultural symbols to the domestic sphere and mostly to women does not necessarily signal that these changes are being either trivialized or concealed. Much as there is strong complementarity between male and female roles, so too we see complementarity between the public and domestic spheres in Pulai. Thus while public symbols express the continuation of Chinese identity, changes in food, dress, and language in the domestic sphere are used to express Pulai's relationship to the local soil--a local identity of great importance to Pulai people. In private conversations, Pulai people speak with pride of the wonderful herbal soup their grandmother brews from jungle herbs or the delicious curries of a favorite aunt. Sarongs and Malay words are taken as expressions of local color, and Pulai people will without hesitation identify them with Siamese wives or Malay neighbors of the past. In fact, these cultural changes are commonly used to describe the distinctiveness of the Pulai identity.

By placing Chinese and local identities in public and domestic spheres respectively, Pulai people have continued to define themselves as Chinese to both outsiders and themselves, while at the same time retaining a close attachment to symbols which link them to the local soil. Pulai Chinese have not altered their culture in order to relate more smoothly with either Malays or people from other ethnic groups, for the changes which we have identified are found almost exclusively in the domestic sphere. This is very evident in their addition of a few scattered Malay words to Hakka speech. While these Malay words may symbolize association with the local area, they do not allow Pulai Chinese to communicate with or identify with Malays.

ring the past social isolation of the Pulai community, and central importance of this community in the surrounding area. These definitional strategies make good cultural sense. In a different history and a different ethnic setting, how- such strategies might have found different expressions. For example, rural Chinese who live surrounded by Malays in Kelantan exhibit more Malay-like cultural patterns when with Malays in a public context, while preserving Chinese of their culture within their own homes (Raybeck 1980).¹⁶ It is possible that the fast-growing Malay population in the areas surrounding Pulai may encourage Pulai people in the to alter somewhat their public images of themselves. Yet Chinese culture is expressed more openly in public or spheres, it is evident that the continued importance of culture in shaping Malaysian Chinese interpretations of would need not preclude a growing attachment among Chinese to Southeast Asian homes.

The division of cultural behaviors and cultural symbols public and domestic domains demands that we look again at the role of women in the formation and maintenance of ethnic identity. Expressions of ethnic identity by their very nature to public settings, settings often defined as male. If males in a particular society define the public im- held by group members, where then do the women fit in? How do they themselves perceive of their roles in the negotiations of cultural identity carried on within and between groups? Pulai women may not talk about cultural identities, their communicates a set of cultural ideals which hold an im- place in the culture of the Pulai community. What I find particularly interesting in the Pulai case is the manner in which are used as markers of cultural flexibility, leaving the men to defend a public image of conservative Chineseness. This contrasts vividly with photographs shown me of Indonesian weddings where the bride, dressed in exquisite Batak is accompanied by the Batak groom, outfitted in a Western-style business suit, complete with white shirt, necktie and glasses. Or one might contrast Muslim women in certain Eastern countries who must cover themselves when in public with concealing robes while their husbands suit themselves in the latest western style. Thus it appears that in identifying individual or situational differences in expressions of identity, it would be useful to pay particular attention to the patterns of differences linked to gender roles. Moreover, it seems that cross-cultural research in this area is highly productive.

Finally, I would like to return once more to questions of cultural and political loyalty. I began this essay by asking how elements of Chinese culture could not be recognized as parts of national cultures within the culturally diverse

Southeast Asian states, where they would symbolize not loyalty to the Chinese mainland, but a recognition of past and present contributions made by Chinese in the social and economic development of the area. It is clear that Pulai Chinese exhibit a strong attachment to their local area within Kelantan, in direct contrast to any memory of or attachment to a particular area within China. The same could be said of Chinese from Penang, Ipoh, Kuala Lumpur or other areas of Malaysia, who consistently voice rather fierce loyalties to their own home towns. However, attachments to local areas within Malaysia does not necessarily indicate a similar attachment to a more abstract Malaysian identity, nor for that matter a particular loyalty to the Malaysian central government. This is not altogether surprising when one remembers that nationalism is historically a relatively new phenomenon and that the problem of nurturing a sense of a larger national identity among tribal and peasant groups remains a pressing concern in nations throughout the world. Malaysia is no stranger to this problem, yet the national culture policies of the Malaysian government, which recognize with increasing insistence only Malay and/or Moslem cultural elements as components of the national culture, practically guarantee the cultural (and risk the political) alienation of non-Malays, who make up almost half of the population. The debate over national culture continues, fueled both by a growing conservatism among Islamic Malays and by heightened worries among Chinese, Indians and others of being ignored and/or eventually forced to assimilate.¹⁷ Of course, decisions about national culture policies appear to be swayed more by immediate political concerns than by sociological arguments, yet I would hope that the obvious cultural attachment to local areas within Malaysia exhibited by non-Malay groups, coupled with the dangers inherent in the cultural and political alienation of a large proportion of the population, would encourage Malaysian officials to reassess their stands in the debate over a national culture policy.

Notes

¹ See Barth (1969) and Cohen (1969). Barth focuses primarily on the self-ascriptive features of ethnic identity and on boundary maintenance between groups, while Cohen emphasizes the political nature of ethnic expressions.

² Certainly the strongest case for the recognition of the legitimacy of Chinese cultural identity can be made for Chinese in Singapore and Malaysia who make up 75% and 37% of these populations respectively. However, I do not see why the logic of

Chinese culture in Southeast Asia as another ethnic group could not also apply to Indonesia, the Philippines or other countries. Unfortunately current political realities make acceptance of Chinese cultural expressions in most of Southeast Asia highly unlikely. For further discussion of this see below.

The distinction made between ethnic and cultural identity is one of degree rather than kind. Ethnicity involves the recognition of cultural differences between two or more groups, while cultural identity involves efforts at retaining cultural distinctiveness. Groups thus select certain contrasting cultural symbols which can be used to define group membership within and outside the group, with an emphasis on boundary maintenance (see especially Barth 1969). Because these symbols include only a small portion of possible cultural traits from the total cultural canon, the ethnic image which results often gives the impression of a stereotyped group caricature. In contrast with ethnic identity, cultural identity includes the sum total of a group's culture and image of itself. It is expressed most clearly in the manner in which group members talk about their group not only with outsiders but also with each other. Thus I would argue that the Malaysian awareness of their "Chineseness" as an ethnic identity reflects only a part of their total identification with their Chinese culture.

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Two good examples of research along this line can be found in Tobias (1973) and Golomb (1978).

It is important to recognize, of course, that these groups have a certain basis in reality. Many Southeast Asian groups were seriously involved in Chinese mainland politics in the first half of the twentieth century; both the KMT and the communists actively recruited supporters among overseas Chinese in the 20s, 30s, and 40s. The Malayan Emergency (1948-1960), led primarily by Chinese Malaysian communists, further heightened fears of dangerous links between overseas Chinese and the communist government on the mainland. Thus, while in Southeast Asia rebellions and revolutions were also flourishing during this period, their lack of attachment to a larger power meant that the threats which they posed were of a different order from those of the Chinese.

While I do not discount the inter-ethnic tensions which have been generated by more public displays of Chinese culture in Southeast Asia, I believe that many of the negative views which

Southeast Asians hold of Chinese are supported both implicitly and explicitly by Southeast Asian governments. It is possible that a shift in official policy toward the recognition of Chinese culture might well encourage increased tolerance towards Chinese culture on local levels as well.

8 Hakka and Cantonese are mutually unintelligible southern Chinese dialects. Indians, who mostly work for the railroad, will also appear in the Gua Musang coffee shops, but they are few in number and thus not very visible members of the Gua Musang community.

9 While local people share similar concerns, there is no mixing of Malays and Chinese at this level. Socializing is fairly common however between Chinese loggers, Chinese and Malay plantation managers, and certain local Malay officials, who must deal with each other regularly on business matters.

10 Although Clammer (1979) uses the lack of non-Chinese names in Chinese genealogies in early Malacca as negative evidence against marriages between Chinese men and non-Chinese women, the evidence from Pulai genealogies questions this interpretation. All non-Chinese women who married into Pulai were given Chinese names which were written in family genealogies after their death. In fact, there are still a few older women in Pulai who claim to be Chinese and told me their Chinese surnames, but who were identified by other community members as of Siamese origin.

11 It is interesting that whenever I attempted to photograph a man wearing such a head cloth, it was promptly removed, which seems to further support my argument about male/female differences below.

12 See Carstens (1983) for a more detailed analysis of the meanings which these categories hold for Pulai people.

13 Strauch (1981) documents a similar decrease in the importance of dialect group divisions among New Village Chinese on the West Coast of Malaysia.

14 Basically the domestic sphere encompasses family and kin-oriented affairs including such domestic activities as cooking and cleaning as well as family economic enterprises such as growing rice. Public events, which may take place either in the "public space" around the Pulai shops and temple or at individual homes (where weddings, birthday celebrations, and funerals are held) are activities where community members meet not as immediate kinsmen but as Pulai people.

5 The few women seen in the back rows at public meetings only when it is impossible or inconvenient for a male member to attend and when they have an individual family which they wish to bring to the attention of the relevant ties. Furthermore, these women never express their during the formal meeting, but wait until the meeting is up before stepping forward with their private request.

6 Raybeck's use of Goffman's (1959) distinction between stage and back stage behavior closely parallels the domestic distinction which I have made, although it does count as clearly for differences in male and female r.

7 See the statement on National Culture issued by the Associations in Malaysia submitted to the Ministry of Youth, and Sport, March, 1983.

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