"There is a wide gap in our knowledge of the aborigines during the Malay period. We do not, for example, know of their relationship with the Malay community and why they have generally remained aloof from Islam".

(Lim Teck Ghee 1977: 24).

In spite of the fact that the Aborigine peoples of the Malay Peninsula have never been numerically, economically or — outside the brief period of the Communist Insurgency in the 1950's — politically important, they received a great deal of attention from late 19th and early 20th century romantics, scholars and apologists for colonialism. To romantics they represented Man untainted by Civilization; to scholars they represented the point furthest removed from the evolutionary peak of industrial Europe; to apologists for colonialism the treatment that the Aborigines received at the hands of the Malays formed part of the defence for imperial expansion. In fact, when Skeat and Blagden published their monumental two-volume study of Aborigine society in 1906, probably more was known about Aborigine social organization than about Malay social organization outside the charmed circles of the court elites.

However, the aim of this paper is not to describe Aborigine social
organization as such, but to bring together the fragmentary and scattered information that is available from (primarily) late 19th and early 20th century European writers about the nature of the relationship between Malay and Aborigine society before the advent of colonial rule. I hope that in the process of doing this some light may also be shed not only on the nature of pre-colonial Malay society and the problem of why the Aborigines have generally remained aloof from Islam, but also on the pre-occupations, perspective and idiosyncrasies of early European reportage.

In the Malay Peninsula of the 19th century, a variety of factors had brought about a system whose broad characteristics were that the politically dominant Malays lived as rice-growers or fishermen on the coasts and coastal plains, the Chinese as miners in the mineral-rich foothills, and the Aborigines as hunters and gatherers in the inland forested areas. Although even today there is no consensus over the naming of the various Aborigine groups, nor over the exact number of sub-divisions (while to add to the confusion there is a plethora of synonyms), three main groups may be distinguished: the Semang, the Senoi and the Jakun.

The Semang, who were sometimes simply called Negritos because they are a pygmy negroid people, live in the areas of Patalung-Trang, Northeast Kedah and the Perak-Kedah border, Northeast and North central Perak, Western and Southeastern Kelantan and North Pahang (Dentan 1964: 181-2). The second group, the Senoi, may be further divided into four sub-groups: the Semai and the Temiar groups who live in South Perak and Northwestern Pahang, Northern Perak and Southern Kelantan respectively; the numerically smaller Jah Hat and Che Wong group who live just South of the Temiar, and lastly the Mah Meri who, unlike the rest of the Senoi, are a coastal people living in Selangor (Dentan 1964: 176). The last group, the Jakun, who are also called the Aboriginal Malays or Proto-Malays, inhabit the southern portion (Selangor, Malacca, Negri-Sembilan and southern Pahang), mostly in the forested upper reaches of the rivers but also along the coastal areas not pre-empted by the Malays (Downs 1964: 262). In the 19th century they were particularly concentrated around Kuala Langsat in Selangor (Skeat and Blagden 1906 I: 3).

The 19th century population figures for the Aborigines are not known, though Skeat and Blagden in 1906, noting the difficulties of population estimates amongst a people cautious of outsiders, estimated that there were some 25,000 Aborigines in the Federated Malay states and the
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Straits Settlements, Kedah and Johore, and a further 10,000-15,000 on the East Coast. Graham, however, writing at about the same time, estimated that there were 10,000 Aborigines in Kelantan alone (Graham 1908: 17), whilst the 1911 population census put the Aborigine population for the whole of British Malaya at just under 16,000 (Del Tufo 1947: 117). Nor are the ancestral origins of the Aborigines known, though it is conjectured that the Senoi originated from Indochina 8,000-2,000 B.C., and that the Jakun are the “true” Aborigines of the Peninsula — hence their synonyms “Aboriginal Malays” or “Proto-Malays”.4

According to the writers of the 19th and early 20th centuries, the Malays regarded the Aborigines as intermediary between beasts and men5 and had long persecuted and exploited them. Manhunting was practised, and whether it was on a large or a small scale,6 the Malays certainly used the Aborigines as slaves, just as they so used members of their own community. Apart from the Malays, Sumatrans also organized raids. Newbold, writing in 1839, said of the Aborigines that “slavery is invariably their condition” (Newbold 1971 II: 106; Noone 1936: 55). As late as 1901, Annandale and Robinson reported that Aborigine women slaves were common in the houses of “better class” Perak Malays and that they themselves had been offered a slave for $ (Malay) 50.7 The slaves were used for a number of purposes, including domestic work, gathering forest products, forest-clearance, agricultural work and, in Perak, in the tin mines (Annandale and Robinson 1903: 180; Skeat and Blagden 1906 I: 526; Schebesta 1928: 42; Laidlaw 1953: 155-6). Because of this persecution and exploitation the Aborigines were slowly pushed deeper into the forests (in fact, Evans regarded the Semang as basically valley and coastal dwellers who had been forced to retreat into the hills) (Evans 1937: 11. See also Miklucho-Maclay 1875: 14; and Dentan 1964: 176), and it is little wonder that the Malay-Aborigine relationship has been described as “strained” or as one of “mistrust” (Annandale and Robinson 1903: 47; and Dentan 1964: 176).

However, it would be wrong to represent this relationship as universally totally unregulated, one-sided and harshly exploitative. Although the Malays may have despised the Aborigines for being as much “beast as human”, they also feared them for related reasons, in particular their ability to kill at a distance by magic (menuju) and the special potency of the Aborigine sorcerers, especially their reputed adeptness in turning into tigers.8 Favre, writing about Malacca in 1849, said that
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“it is not uncommon to see Malay men and women, at the sight of a Binua Pawang (i.e. Jakun Aborigine sorcerer) throw themselves on the ground before him” (Favre 1849: 115). Moreover, in several areas inhabited by the Temiar Aborigines in Kelantan and Perak (e.g. upstream of the Nenggiri River in Kelantan and the Temengor area in Upper Perak), the Malays would not venture except in force, albeit for less superstitious reasons (Clifford 1961: 103-104; and Noone 1936: 54-55). By and large the Aborigines have been presented as a timid, pacific people, but whilst they can hardly be regarded as warlike, in Kelantan at least they retaliated against Malay oppression by occasionally burning down Malay villages and, in the late 19th/early 20th century, against any Chinese traders by burning down their storehouses if they felt that they had been cheated by them.9

Furthermore, the Malay and Aborigine societies were not sharply separated, but rather blended spatially and mixed ethnically by intermarriage in the villages. Again, both Malays and Aborigines wanted each other's goods and around this trade nexus stable relationships of a political or quasi-political nature grew up, at least in the Northeast of the Peninsula.

The maps given by Annandale and Robinson, Skeat and Blagden, and also by Noone set out the geographical dispersion of the Aborigine groups, and it is clear from these maps that both societies blended spatially at the edges (maps in Annandale and Robinson 1903 (Supplement); Skeat and Blagden 1906 II: 386 and 394; and Noone 1936). This blending of societies led some 19th century observers to divide up the Aborigine population into what they called the “tame” and the “wild” races, the “Orang-Sakai dina” and the “Orang-Sakai liar”, or those Aborigines that interacted and traded with the Malays and those that avoided contact (for example, Miklucho-Maclay 1875: 11 and 14). It is clear that this spatial blending also led to intermarriage. Miklucho-Maclay in 1875 noted that the “Orang-Sakai dina” gave their daughters to Malay and Chinese villagers; Annandale and Robinson felt sure that extensive intermarriage took place; and Annandale in 1904 believed that “natural absorption” (alongside smallpox and persecution) had caused the Semang to practically disappear in northern parts of the Peninsula.10 Noone noted that in the villages of Ulu Kelantan (i.e. the forested upper reaches), the Malays were mostly relatives of Hill Temiar, not from a process of the Aborigines becoming Muslims but rather from an original pioneer Malay marrying an Aborigine female. He quotes as instance the isolated villages along the Nenggiri River,
from Kuala Betis to Bertam, where in 1926 there were about 1000 Malays who were, more often than not, kinsfolk to the 4,000-5,000 Temiar who lived in the area. Such intermarriage led Noone to the opinion that the Malays of Ulu Kelantan had a different origin to the Malays of the alluvial flats, the former being descendants of Moslemised Temiar and Malay colonisers from the Jelai district of Pahang.\textsuperscript{11} It seems highly likely that this intermarriage was between Malay males and Aborigine females, rather than between Aborigine males and Malay females, though Annandale and Robinson reported that if Aborigine men did enter Islam they were fully accepted and "not infrequently marry Malay women".\textsuperscript{12}

Compounded with this spatial and ethnic mixing, the Malays and the Aborigines lived in what Schebesta called "economic symbiosis" (Noone 1936: 52, quoting Schebesta on the Semang). The economy of the Aborigines varied from group to group, but by and large it was a mixture of swidden agriculture, hunting, fishing and gathering. However, there were several products that they either needed or wanted but could not produce themselves. This meant that they either had to barter goods directly with the Malays (and later with the Chinese), or with some other Aborigine groups who were in contact with the Malays, or alternatively work for the Malays. The articles that the Aborigines particularly needed were iron and iron implements such as knives, \textit{parangs} (a Malay version of the machete), blades for their spears, axes, tools, and chains for weighing down their fishing nets, as well as salt. Several other goods and foodstuffs had entered into their social system and had, in the course of time, become essential for transactions such as payment of brideprice or else highly prized or desired. Amongst these articles were cloth and tobacco (which alongside iron and salt were major trade items), sireh, gambir and arecanuts for making betel (a stimulant masticatory), rice (which they did not grow themselves), goats, salt-fish, and sometimes opium. The other articles they had to obtain by barter were earthenware cooking pots (which were an item of luxury among a people who normally used green bamboo as a cooking utensil), Japanese "Lucifer" matches, brass ware, trinkets for adornment, looking-glasses and beads.\textsuperscript{13}

Just as the Aborigines needed the Malays for certain products, so the Malays needed the Aborigines for their knowledge of the forests and their ability to make lengthy trips to isolated places to collect animal and vegetable products. Amongst these products were various resins used for incense, caulking boats and fire torches; gutta, the resin
of which was used locally for making basins, handles, jugs etc. (as well as being a major export item) and whose wood was used for house- and boat-building; camphor for its medicinal properties; various perfumed woods such as sandalwood and eaglewood; jelutong, which was valuable both for its resin and for its wood, which was used for making patterns (jelutong was found in large quantities along the River Lebir in Kelantan); kemuning wood, whose yellow roots were used for the handles of the Malay kris (a wavy knife famous in Malay folklore; yellow was also the colour of royalty); rotan canes; pulai, whose surface roots were used as cork floats; various fruits such as langsat, tampoi, setar and prah; vegetables; honey; beeswax; atap for thatch; and no doubt many other products. Amongst the animal products that they collected were ivory, elephants' teeth, rhino-horn and bezoar stones, the latter two items being highly prized by the Malays for their supposed medicinal properties.14

However, the Aborigines did not simply collect forest products, they also bartered their own products such as chickens, goats, monkeys trained for coconut collecting, and carved wood to the Malays, and also bartered amongst themselves goods obtained from the Malays and other goods such as pigs, bamboo and blowpipes (Miklucho-Maclay 1875: 11-12; Cerruti 1908: 153; Schebesta 1928: 70; Noone 1936: 26 and 46-47). They also prepared medicines and poisons (the preparation of poisons in Kelantan was centred around the Sokor River, which was known as “the poison belt”),21 as well as a variety of love-philtres which they sold to the Malays and the Chinese, and more especially, according to Skeat and Blagden, to Malay women, who bought them at a great price.19 The preparation of medicines and love-philtres is an example of the way in which the Aborigines economically exploited the Malay beliefs in their special occult knowledge.

Apart from bartering goods, the Aborigines bartered their labour. They helped at harvests, with house building and with forest-clearance, and worked as woodcutters and carriers. They acted as herdsmen of elephants for Malay chiefs and also washed for tin; in the Ulu Plus area of Perak they had a regular agreement to provide a fixed quota of tin every three months.17 According to Munshi Abdullah they also worked in the gold mines in Ulu Pahang.18

Before the advent of British control and the widespread penetration of Chinese peddlars into the Ulu economy, the trade that took place between the Malays and the Aborigines was not on an individualistic basis operating through a, albeit imperfect, market mechanism, but
rather, in the manner of the traditional Malay economy, on a monopolistic basis. Skeat and Blagden report that the Malay headman in each district in Johore had the monopoly of trade with the Aborigines and, as one might expect, this gave rise to high profits. But, at least in the case of Perak and the Siamese-Malay states, this role of monopolist also had a social and a political or quasi-political dimension to it. This again is in keeping with the nature of the Malay society.

Although Miklucho-Maclay wrote that the Aborigines regarded themselves as a free people (Miklucho-Maclay 1875: 16), we have seen that the Malays regarded them as subordinate and inferior, and in the Northern states of the Peninsula this relationship became institutionalised via a role known variously as sakai-raja, penglima-sakai, pengku or pangku, mikong or mengkong. Unfortunately the amount of information about this role, with the exception of Noone's account for Kelantan and Perak, is limited. Miklucho-Maclay, who does not specify the exact area though it is certainly somewhere in the Northeast, writes that he heard of the position of sakai-raja and that the incumbent had inherited the position from her husband (Miklucho-Maclay 1875: 16). Annandale and Robinson report that in Rhaman the Penghulu (or Headman) of Jarum had been appointed penglima-sakai by the former Raja of the area (Annandale and Robinson 1903 (Supplement): xix). Waterstradt, who visited Kelantan at the turn of the century, said that the whole of the tribe of Aborigines in the Ulu Aring area were considered to be the "personal property" of a Malay living half-way up the Aring River, and that this Malay had succeeded in gathering together all the able-bodied Aborigines in his area for him within two days to act as guides and carriers (Waterstradt 1902: 5). Schebesta too refers to this role of "raja" of the Aborigines, a position which he says was one of protector, creditor and exploiter, and adds that on the Pergau River in Kelantan the position of "raja" of the Ple Aborigines was held by an old Chinaman who had been associated with them for over 40 years. "In his old age he was honoured by all the Orang-Utan (forest people) of the district. He passed as one of them, as their raja, to whom they looked with respect".

It would seem that Waterstradt's Aborigine-owning Malay was in fact a pangku or mikong. Noone wrote that in 1936 only two mikong were left, one in Kampong Temengor in Perak and another in Kuala Betis in Kelantan, and the inference is that previously there were many more. As we have seen, the Malays believed that the occult knowledge of the Aborigines was especially potent, and local legend had it that
the original *mikongs* had married Aborigine women and had so learnt their lore and magic. “Certainly”, wrote Noone, “they are feared as much by the Malays who live in the kampongs as by the hill people who claim a relationship which is admitted by them” (Noone 1936: 23 and 55). The role of the *mikong* was to act as an ally and intermediary between the Aborigines and the outside world, to offer hospitality to any Aborigine who came to the village, and to make an annual gift of articles such as salt, *parangs* and cloth. In return the Aborigines brought their products. This system of exchange, writes Noone, was without doubt the oldest (Noone 1936: 23, 47 and 55-56).

Certainly under Malay rule the Aborigines led, in Emerson’s phrase, “a miserable and hunted life” (Emerson 1964: 13). Economically they were exploited in the sense that the Malays used their position to wrest pecuniary advantage from them. As a group the Aborigines were despised as near-naked heathens who were beyond the pale of ordinary morality and so left largely unprotected by the conventions of religion, kinship and familiarity that generally mitigated the relationships between the strong and the weak within Malay society. It was these aspects of the relationship between the Aborigines and the Malays that received a great deal of attention from early European writers (from whom nearly all the available information comes), partly because the harshness genuinely shocked their sensibilities, partly because of a sympathy for the underdog and partly because, by dwelling on the iniquities of native rule, colonialism was justified against the assertion that “good government can never be a satisfactory substitute for self-government”. But, as I have tried to show, the relationship between the Malays and the Aborigines was not totally unregulated or one-sided. In the inland areas, where the two societies came face to face, there was an ethnic blurring, mutual economic need and, via the *pangkus* (a position that was certainly often abused for short-term advantage), a relationship that was governed by a stable set of mutual expectations. Furthermore, the Aborigines were feared and so respected for their occult knowledge, as well as for their ability to use the forested terrain and their weapons to their own advantage. In fact, in some ways the Aborigines were probably better off than the poorer Malay villager. To begin with they were sufficiently removed from Malay influence for the conception that they held of themselves to be affected by Malay ideas. They regarded themselves as a free people, subservient to no outside authority and, according to Clifford (and without going into the niceties of translation), they reserved for themselves the term “men” and called
everyone else gob (Clifford 1927 (1920): 244-271). On the other hand, the Malay villager (who was often equally subject to exploitation, slavery and cruel treatment), by virtue of his membership in Malay society, recognized his lowly status. Again, the Aborigines were able to remove themselves from Malay power by disappearing into the forests, where no Malays would dare pursue them except in force.

Since Malay rule, the Aborigines have experienced the colonial and post-colonial regimes. The colonial regime introduced a policy of paternalistic protection and gradual integration into the wider society (a policy that has been pursued by the post-colonial regime), but, in Emerson's opinion, the lot of the Aborigines hardly changed for the better, if at all (Emerson 1964: 12-13). As with other societies that have the guardianship of a dependent and anachronistic ethnic minority, the choice between assimilation and preservation presents an acute dilemma. However, the relationship of the Aborigines to the wider society under the colonial and post-colonial regimes, and the problems of their future position in Malaysian society, is outside the scope of this paper and must be explored in subsequent essays.

NOTES

1 Carey (1976) provides a modern and comprehensive account of Aborigine social organization.
3 Skeat and Blagden 1906 I: 38-9. Cameron's estimate of 7,000-8,000 for the total Aborigine population of the Peninsula in the mid-nineteenth century is surely too low. (Cameron 1965: 111.)
4 Dentan 1964: 176. It is perhaps unfortunate that the generic term "Aborigine" is sometimes used also as a specific term for one of the three main groups distinguished by modern writers. Noone (1936: 1) prefers the old Malay term "sakai" for generic usage, but although this term literally means "dependent" or "subject", it also had the connotation of "slave". This has meant that the term "sakai" has been officially dropped, though the word is still retained in modern Malay usage as a term of abuse, meaning a stupid ignoramus and/or a country bumpkin.
5 Smyth 1898: 76; Annandale 1900: 516; Annandale & Robinson 1903: 8; Schebesta 1928: 76. This Malay belief fitted in well with the evolutionary theories held by 19th and early 20th century writers. Since this part of European reportage is so much at variance with modern thought, but is not yet sufficiently antiquarian to be inoffensive, it is particularly in this area that the preoccupations, perspective and idiosyncrasies of early reportage can be most easily analysed. Thus one early — though sympathetic — report (Osborn 1857: 239-40) averred that the Semang were "human beings in their most degraded form — without religion, without any acknowledged
form of government, and only gifted with animal instincts and passions. When found or caught by the Malays, they are tied up or caged just as we would treat chimpanzees. Cameron reports that early travellers asserted that the Aborigines had tails (Cameron 1965: 120), and as late as 1875 there is what purports to be an eye-witness account according to which the Aborigines were covered in body-hair (Bradley 1876: Ch. 13). Cameron himself had no doubt that the Aborigines were a “low type of man” (Cameron 1965: 120), and Clifford (one of the foremost of Malaya’s scholarly colonialists) classes the Aborigines with “some of the other lower animals” (Clifford 1898: 9). The Semang, on the other hand, had their own theories about the origins of people; see Evans 1937: 219.

Skeat and Blagden (1906 I: 530) and Cerruti (1908: 8) say that man-hunting was practised on a wide scale, but Mikhlucho-Maclay (1875: 6 and 14), whilst noting that the Raja of Singgora kept Semang slaves, said that it was an occasional practice. Noone (1936: 54-55) also queries some of the what he regards as exaggerated tales, but reports that both Malays and Aborigines recall slave-raiding. See also Wilkinson 1971: 18; Emerson 1964: 13; Schebesta 1928: 148.

Annandale and Robinson 1903: 47 and 180; Annandale 1904: 346. Some 50 years later, Williams-Hunt (1952: 44-7) reported that about 3-4% of the Aborigines still lived in a state of “semi-slavery” to Malay villagers, particularly in the more remote areas of Kelantan and Perak.

Newbold 1971 II: 106; Blagden 1896: 12; Skeat 1902: 136-7; Skeat and Blagden 1906 I: 233 and 530; Schebesta 1928: 41; Evans 1937: 33-4. Maxwell (1911: 265-79) gives an interesting story about the Malay fear of were-tigers, and Skeat & Blagden (1906 II: 227-9) had the good fortune to meet an Aborigine sorcerer with the ability to turn into a tiger in a village in Ulu Aring, Kelantan. They present, verbatim, the Kelantan Malay account of the techniques, habits and taboos of such tiger-sorcerers. Such beliefs in metamorphosis are common in Asia (See Chandra 1933) and are an illustration of the continuum of beliefs between the Malay and Aborigine societies.

On Temiar retaliation, see Noone (1936: 47 and 54-55). Dentan (1964: 170), amongst others, described the Temiar as “pacifistic”, which is only true in the sense that they were not aggressively warlike. Hsieh Ching Kao, an illiterate Chinese Hakka who travelled extensively in the Malay states, including Kelantan, in the late 18th century, said of the “inland natives” of Kelantan that they were clothed in bark and were “expert at throwing spears and are able to kill at a distance. They carry their spears wherever they go, and will commit robbery whenever there is a suitable opportunity. The thick undergrowth provides a natural cover for them. Therefore no one will dare go to isolated places.” (Tweedie 1953: 217; see also Wang 1960: 31.) There seems no doubt that Hsieh’s “inland natives” were in fact the Temiar because of the references to barkcloth and their ability to “kill at a distance” (menuju). Tweedie referred the passage quoted above to Mr. T. W. T. Banks, Kelantan’s Development Officer in the early 1950’s, who suggested that Hsieh referred to the Temiar, though he found it difficult to believe such a story of “an amicable, inoffensive folk”. However, the accounts given by both Clifford and Noone (see above) show that the Temiar were not always so inoffensive. (Wang (1960: 34) accepts that Hsieh’s reference is to the Kelantanese Temiar.) Dentan (1968: 58-9), who subtitled his book on the Semai “A Nonviolent People of Malaya”, reports that the Semai made particularly bloodthirsty soldiers during the Communist Insurgency in Malaya in the 1950’s.
Miklucho-Maclay 1875: 12; Annandale and Robinson 1903 (Supplement); Annandale 1904: 346-7. Dentan (1964: 182) notes that the assertion that the Semang are dying out is frequently made, though “every count in the last 40 years has placed their number at around 2,000”.

Noone 1936: 18 and 54. See also the account of the origin of Kampong Kuala Tekal in the Temerloh district of Pahang contained in Bottoms 1954: 49-50.

Annandale and Robinson 1903: 9-10; but cf. Schebesta 1928: 41 and Evans 1937: 17, whose accounts indicate that discrimination remained even after conversion.

This latter item — beads — is probably a late 19th/early 20th century innovation. Their centre of distribution were the Chinese in Kuala Lipis in Pahang and Kuala Kangsar in Perak, who sold them to Malays, who then traded them to the Aborigines. Noone traced the passage of such beads from Kuala Lipis along a trade chain until their final owners on the River Plus Cameron 1865: 124-5; Miklucho-Maclay 1875: 11-12; Annandale 1900: 516; McCarthy 1900: 14; Annandale and Robinson 1903: 15 and 33; Skeat and Blagden 1906 I: 110-11, 127, Ch. V, “Modes of Barter”, and 526; Skeat 1907: 196; Cerruti 1908: 16, 49, 130, 147, 153; Clifford 1970: 132; Schebesta 1928: 166; Noone 1936: 26 and 46-9; Trengganu Administrative Report for 1936: 25; Dentan 1964: 183; and Downs 1964: 263.

There has been no attempt to give the botanical terms for these products, since the Malay terms often cover a variety of botanical classifications and there exists the excellent A Dictionary of Economic Products of the Malay Peninsula by I. H. Burkhill. On the various products collected by the Aborigines, see Anderson 1824: xxxviii-xxxix; Begbie 1967: 8; Miklucho-Maclay 1875: 11-12; Annandale 1900: 516; McCarthy 1900: 14; Annandale 1904: 346; Skeat and Blagden 1906 I: 110-11, 117, Ch. V, “Modes of Barter”, and 526; Cerruti 1908: 16, 49, 123, 130, 147, 153; Noone 1936: 26 and 46-49; Downs 1964: 263. See also Newbold 1971 I: 119, and II: 54 and 60-61; Cameron 1883: 124; Foster 1893: 172; Clifford 1961: 74; Skeat & Blagden 1906 II: 161; Linehan 1936: 61; Williams-Hunt 1952: 48; Laidlaw 1953: 155; Cant 1964: 8; Dunn 1975: 87-90 and 108-118. (Both Cant (1964: 8) and Dunn (1975: 108-110) take the view that the gathering of forest products for exchange purposes was almost exclusively in the hands of the Aborigines and that Malay involvement was negligible — at least until the latter half of the 19th century. My own research on the rural pre-colonial economy of the Malays on the East Coast supports this view.)

Anderson 1824: xxxix; Cerruti 1908: 153; and Low 1921: 16. Low, who wanted to examine the old mines around the Sokor River, could get no Malay to accompany him, for it was said that it was a lawless area where a man’s death could be arranged for 50 cents.

Skeat 1902: 136; Skeat and Blagden 1906 II: 67, 289 and 311; Schebesta 1928: 99-100; Noone 1936: 26; and Evans 1937: 33-34 and 228. There were a variety of such love-philtres, the most famous being the chinduai (also called “chindawei” or “chingkuai”), which was a small, rare and fragrant plant which, naturally enough, only grew on the peaks of the most inaccessible crags but whose scent was sufficient to make women fall in love with the owner. Skeat (1902: 136) gives an amusing account of the supernatural
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assistance upon which the Aborigines were believed to be able to call for its collection. Other love potions were the buluh perindu or “yearning bamboo”, a rare dwarf bamboo a sliver of which placed in the mouth was believed to make a person’s voice irresistible. It was mainly obtained from the Jakuns and was very popular amongst members of the Malay travelling theatrical groups who, like theatre people everywhere, had a reputation for loose morals (cf. Sweeney 1970: 50-51). Skeat says that its use became so abused that in certain parts of the peninsula the mere possession of the “yearning bamboo” was punished by death. Another potion was the mong-dar, the blossom of a small creeper that was believed to be effective for men only. Bezoar stones were also believed to have aphrodisiacal properties (Burkhill 1935: 323).

Beliefs in the efficacy of love-philtres are still strong in rural Kelantan; on hearing that there were many dolphins in European waters, Malay friends occasionally pressed me to arrange for some dolphins’ tears to be collected and sent across, since they believed that dolphins’ tears, applied on a woman’s arms, made her besotted with love. Today several of the local bomohs (Malay native doctors) prepare love-philtres and it was firmly believed by the villagers in my fieldwork area that one local woman had become mad after her husband had given her a philtre. Mostly these preparations seem to be fairly innocuous, but some of a horrifyingly gruesome origin are said to exist and have great potency.

17 McCarthy 1900: 14; Annandale 1904: 346; Skeat and Blagden 1906 I: 225 and 526; Skeat 1907: 192; Schebesta 1928: 42; Noone 1936: 46-49; Laidlaw 1953: 156. Dunn (1975: 110) is surely wrong in his assertion that Aborigine involvement in mineral production was either non-existent or did not form a “traditional” part of their economy.

18 Munshi Abdullah visited Pahang in 1838 (see Linehan 1936: 61). Cameron stated that the trade between the Aborigines and the Malays was greatly boosted by the increased demand in the 19th century for forest products, in particular for gutta. He regarded this increased contact as “fatal” to the Aborigines, since it introduced them to “tastes to which they were formerly strangers, but that once acquired they cannot control. To satisfy these, they regardlessly place themselves under a bondage of debt, which in many cases only ends with life”. (Cameron 1965: 124-5.)

19 Skeat and Blagden 1906 I: 15 and 238-9; Skeat 1907: 192. Schebesta (1928: 168-9), and Evans, who added that the fact that the Aborigines were basically innumerate greatly aided the business of cheating them — a fact well known by the Malays (Evans 1937: 35-36).

20 Miklucho-Maclay 1875: 16; Annandale and Robinson 1903 (Supplement): xix; Schebesta 1928: 32-33 and 161-162; Noone 1936: 23 and 66. Raja may be translated as “lord”, penglima as “commander”, and pengku (or pangku), which comes from the Malay verb memangku, meaning “to hold in one’s lap”, may be translated as “possessor” or “protector”. Mikong and mengkong are Thai terms whose meaning is unknown to me, but whose use reflects the extensive Thai influence in the northern parts of the Peninsula. It is curious that in Rhaman the term should be penglima, since this has military connotations. Certainly in 1810, when the agglomeration of states which
included Rhaman and which make up the Patani states invaded the Temengor area of what is today Upper Perak, the Aborigines took part in the war (Noone 1936: 55). In the last century the Aborigines also helped the Malays in slave-hunting, and in this century helped the British track down criminals and again acted as soldiers and trackers during the Communist Emergency of the 1950's. Perhaps among the services that the Aborigines gave the Malays should be included those of tracker and fighter.

Schebesta 1928: 161-2. Evans (1937: 34) also refers to the position of "protector", though he clearly sees the term as simply a euphemism for "monopolistic swindler". He also says that in some parts of the Peninsula, mainly in Perak, "these self-appointed Malay or Chinese masters of the Negritos have purposely taught some of the men to smoke opium, thus getting them still more firmly into their clutches once they have become addicted to the drug". In one instance recorded by Noone (1936: 55), a pangku actually helped the Malays organize a slave-raiding party — an incident which formed the basis for one of Clifford's short stories (Clifford 1920: 224-271).

Noone 1936: 23 and 55-56. Noone adds that the To'Pangku for the Plus and Korbu regions of Perak had recently died.

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* The dates in brackets are those of editions other than the original edition which have been used for the present paper.