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MONEY, MAGIC AND FEAR: IDENTITY AND EXCHANGE AMONGST THE *ORANG SUKU LAUT* (SEA NOMADS) AND OTHER GROUPS OF RIAU AND BATAM, INDONESIA

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SUMMARY

The central focus of my thesis is the symbolism of money and the power it holds in the Riau archipelago and Batam of Indonesia to affect the nature of social relationships. These social relationships in turn affect the different forms of exchange that take place in the archipelago.

In particular, I am exploring the meaning and moral implications of monetary and commercial exchanges in contrast to exchanges of other kinds that take place between the *Orang Suku Laut* and other Malay and non-Malay communities. The *Orang Suku Laut* are regarded as the *Orang asli Melayu* (indigenous Malays) of Riau. Yet in the interaction between the Malays and *Orang Suku Laut*, there exists much fear between them with constant accusations of being poisoned and harmed by one and the other through practices of magic and witchcraft. This stems from the Malays' perception of the *Orang Suku Laut* as a "dangerous, dirty and unprogressive people."

The *Orang Suku Laut* are regarded as preferring a life of nomadism, and one without a religious orientation towards Islam, as opposed to a life of sedentism guided by the Islamic religion. This thesis explores how this self and other perceptions which have shaped the image of the *Orang Suku Laut*, have become enmeshed in the exchange economy of the *Orang Suku Laut* and the Malays.

This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration. It does not exceed the 80,000 word limit.

Cynthia Gek-Hua Chou

Girton College

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PREFACE

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The *Orang Suku Laut* are regarded as preferring a life of nomadism, and one without a religious orientation towards Islam, as opposed to a life of sedentism guided by the Islamic religion. This thesis explores how this self and other perceptions which have shaped the image of the *Orang Suku Laut*, have become enmeshed in the exchange economy of the *Orang Suku Laut* and the Malays.

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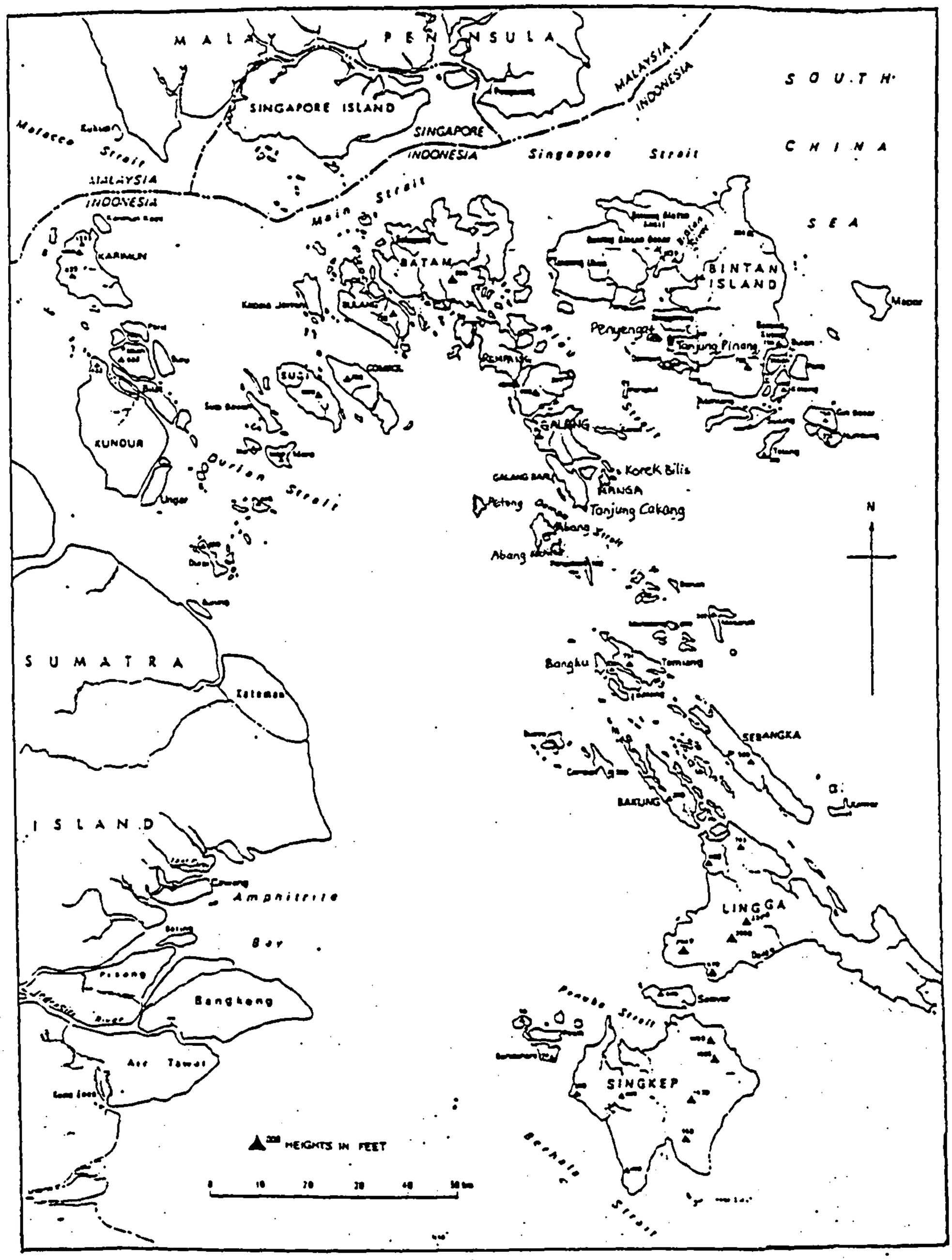
Cynthia Gek-Hua Chou

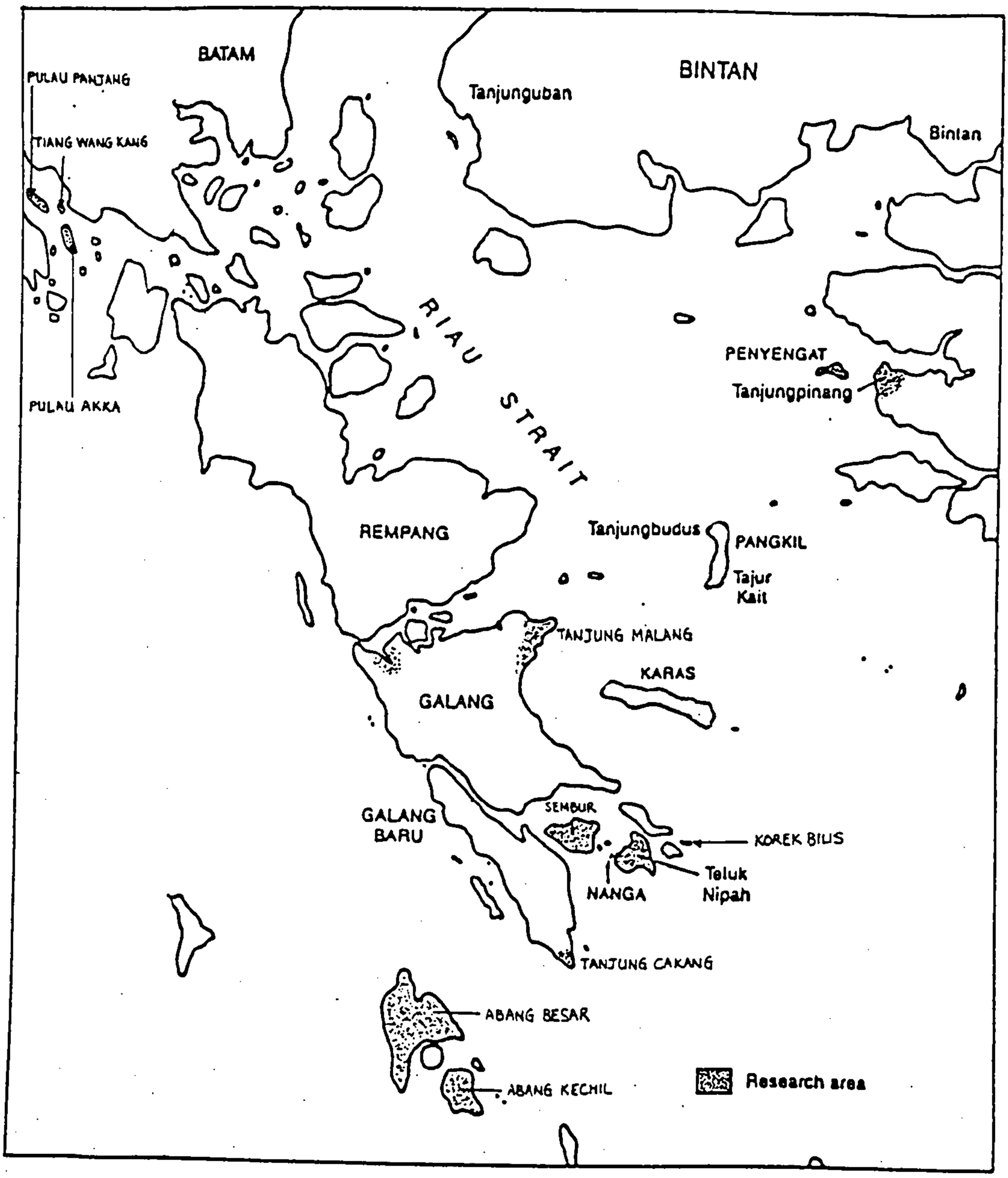
MAP 1

The Riau-Lingga Archipelago



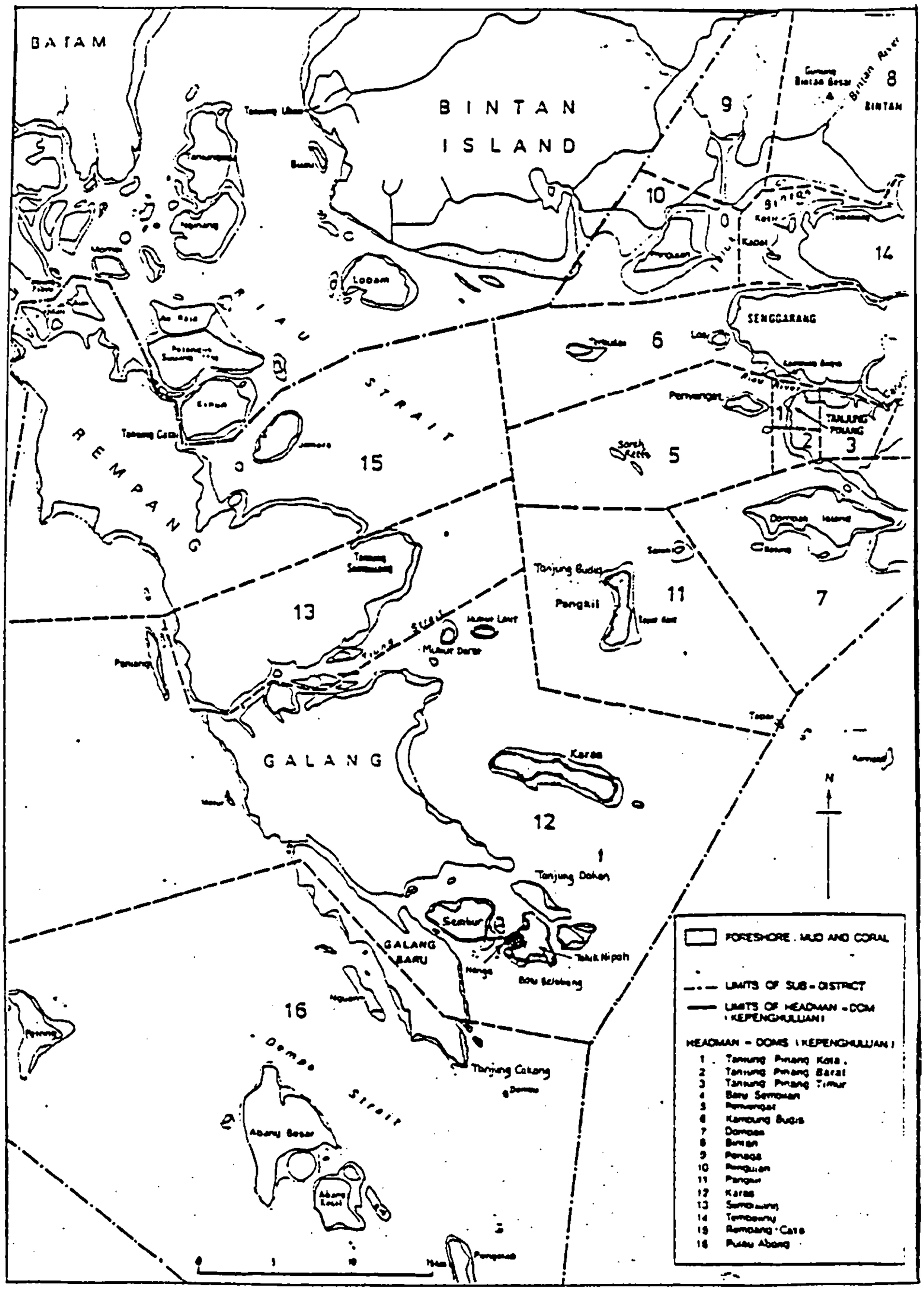
MAP 2

Research Area



Map 3

Subdistrict of Southern Bintan



CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

(I) AIMS

The central focus of my thesis is the symbolism of money and the power it has in the Riau archipelago and Batam of Indonesia to affect the nature of social relationships. In particular, I am exploring the meanings and moral evaluation that surround monetary and commercial exchanges as opposed to exchanges of other kinds (Parry and Bloch 1991) that take place between the *Orang Suku Laut* (henceforth referred to as the *OSL*) and other Malay and non-Malay communities.

The *OSL* are regarded by the Malays as the *orang asli Melayu* (indigenous Malays) of Riau. Yet in the interaction between the Malays and *OSL*, there exists much fear and avoidance between them. There are constant mutual accusations of being poisoned and harmed through practices of magic and witchcraft. This is part and parcel of the Malays' perception of the *OSL* as a "dangerous, dirty and unprogressive people". The *OSL* are perceived as a people preferring a life of nomadism as opposed to a sedentary lifestyle guided by the Islamic faith (or for that matter, by any mainstream religion).

(II) THE RIAU ARCHIPELAGO

"Riau" is officially recognised by the Indonesian government as an area which includes the central part of the east coast of Sumatra, and over 3,200 islands[1] off the east coast, stretching all the way to the South China Sea (Wee 1986:1). It is occupied by a diverse population of approximately 50,000 people comprising Malays, Javanese, Bawean, Minangkabau, Buton, Bugis, Flores, Chinese and other aboriginal groups such as the *OSL*, *Orang Dalam* and *Orang Akit*. The Malays constitute the majority.[2]

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[1]Not all of these islands are inhabited.

[2]I have not been able to obtain copies of the latest population census, other than those published in 1980. Most of this information based upon 1987 and 1988 reports is derived from my correspondence with Ms Lioba Lenhart of the Department for Cultural and Social Anthropology, University of Cologne, Germany who is also currently working amongst the *OSL* of Riau.

The Riau archipelago is located at the lowest administrative level in the bureaucratic structure of Indonesia. My fieldwork was carried out in the *Kepenhuluan* (Headmandoms) of Karas, Pulau Abang, Penyengat, Tanjung Pinang Barat and the Batam region. These Headmandoms are governed by the administrative unit of *Kecamatan Bintan Selatan* (Sub-district of Southern Bintan). The administrative centre of the Sub-district of Southern Bintan is located in Tanjung Pinang. This sub-district is a sub-set of the administrative body of *Kabupaten Kepulauan* Riau (District of the Riau archipelago). Its administrative centre is also located in Tanjung Pinang. This *Kabupaten* in turn, comes under the administrative unit known as *Propinsi* Riau 'Riau Province'. The capital is Pekanbaru which is located on Sumatra. The Riau Province is subordinate to Jakarta, the national capital which is located in Java. The area where I carried out my fieldwork is thus politically very peripheral in the context of Indonesia.

The District of the Riau archipelago approximately correlates with the area that constituted the former territory of the Riau-Lingga sultanate. By 1911, the Dutch had colonised and unified under one government the territory of which is now known as Indonesia. Previous to this, the area consisted of diverse indigenous kingdoms. One of these was the territory of the Riau-Lingga sultanate which was to become one of the last areas to come under direct Dutch administration. The Riau-Lingga area was also amongst the last regions to receive news of the declaration of independence of the Republic of Indonesia. This clearly indicates the peripheral status of the area in relation to the wider Republic of Indonesia (Wee 1985:49-50; Ricklefs 1981).

The Riau archipelago has however historically been an important area for trade between India, Southeast Asia and China (Sopher 1977:365). Since 1990, the economic co-operation agreement of the "Growth Triangle" between Riau in Indonesia, Singapore and Johor in Malaysia to establish and invest in the area as a free trade zone region, has once again brought Riau to new heights of political and economic importance (Wong and Ng 1991).

(III) PRECONCEPTIONS, EXPLORATIONS AND FIELD METHODS

My fieldwork amongst the *OSL* was conducted from August 1991 to October 1992. The preconceptions I had prior to my fieldwork reflect both the type of literature on the *OSL* that was available to me[3] and the conceptions of the *OSL* that were conveyed to me by concerned Indonesians. Yet, these views of the *OSL* were what enabled me to contextualise and understand the information that I was later to gather from both my *OSL* and non-*OSL* informants.

There has been some ongoing work on the *Bajau Laut* (see for example, Sather 1971, 1984, 1985), a group of Southeast Asian sea nomads. However, there is still a dearth of recent literature based on current research on the *OSL* (Benjamin 1989). It has been almost thirty years since the older literature, almost all written before the mid-century on the *OSL* was thoroughly analysed by Sopher's (1956) doctoral dissertation.[4] Even then, Sopher's geographical study of the sea nomads was based entirely on the published research and observations of other writers. No in-depth study of the *OSL* has been undertaken since. All that exists are fragmentary[5] discussions of the *OSL* in academic dissertations (see for example, Sandbukt 1982; Wee 1985, 1988). Much of this has remained unpublished hence limiting its availability (see for example, Normala Manap 1983; Mariam Mohd Ali 1984).

Consequently, most of the published literature on the *OSL* is that which was mainly written in the mid-nineteenth century. It comprises a heterogeneous collection of travel accounts, geographical monographs, local histories and administrative reports (see for example, Logan 1847; Thomson 1847; reprints of Hill 1973; Skeat and Ridley 1973; Gibson-Hill 1973). This constituted my main source of information on the *OSL* prior to fieldwork. Such literature presented a picture of a "lower class of Malays" (Findlayson

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[3]I was partly handicapped by my ability to read only literature written in the English language. Even then, there is very little work that is currently being done on the *OSL*.

[4]David E.Sopher's doctoral dissertation was first written in 1956, and later published in 1965. The second reprint with an added postscript was undertaken in 1977.

[5]This is also partly due to wide and discontinuous distribution of the *OSL*.

and Raffles 1826 in Gibson-Hill 1973) who behaved like "wild animals" (Hill 1973:97). The *OSL* were also often seen as people who seldom came ashore and who mostly lived in their boats (Hill *ibid*:106).

Such views of the *OSL* were echoed when I met Indonesian authorities to secure official documents to commence my fieldwork. Out of concern, the officers and other Indonesians I came into contact with, tried all verbal means of dissuading me from interacting with the *OSL*. They described the *OSL* as "smelly people who never bathe", "people who do not wear clothes", "people who do not have bathrooms" and "people who live and do everything in their boats."[6] I was invariably cautioned that I, as an outsider, was completely ignorant in comparison to the "people of Indonesia" who knew that "the *OSL* possess no religion and do not pray at all." In light of all this, the greatest worry for these concerned Indonesians was that I would be bewitched and poisoned by the *OSL*. The *OSL* are regarded as possessing the most powerful form of *ilmu hitam* (black magic). As such, the usual scenario painted for me by these well-wishers was that I would be bewitched into forgetting and abandoning everything about myself, my family ties and my enrolment as a student in a British University and end up marrying an *OSL*.

When these acquaintances finally realised that this only fuelled my curiosity to look for the *OSL*, they very reluctantly advised me on issues pertinent to my safety. I was told that I should never facially or verbally express my criticism in front of the *OSL* no matter how smelly or dirty they were. I was warned that if the *OSL* felt insulted, they would bewitch me into marrying one of them. Unfailingly this was followed by the advice that I should not accept any thing offered by an *OSL* or give any personal belongings to the *OSL*. I could be bewitched through these things. The most serious offence would be for me to tell the *OSL* that I disbelieved their magical prowess. I was cautioned that this would either insult or challenge the

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[6]Sopher (1977:174) also mentions how writers on the *OSL* have expressed their shock and disgust at the sea nomads lack of sanitation. The sea nomads often accumulate "slops and offal of all kinds" in "the bilge a few inches away from the people on board". However, Sopher explains that there is probably a practical reason for keeping refuse on board while at sea. This is to prevent sharks from being attracted to the boats.

OSL into bewitching me. I was also left feeling very confused when I was told that I should not address another as, or even to ask if the other were, an "*OSL*". I was taught that the term "*OSL*" had derogatory and insulting implications.

I was intrigued that the Malays who had cautioned me thus, were also the ones who recognised the *OSL* as *orang asli Melayu* (indigenous Malays). Yet the latter were seen as unprogressive and "*jahat*" (evil). The Malays took pride in differentiating themselves: "people like us would never be able to adapt to that sort of life."

Generally speaking, the literature on the Malays has tended to treat them as a homogeneous group. This has arisen because of a lack of historical consideration that is important in understanding the complexity of Malay ethnology (Mariam Mohd. Ali 1984/85). Far from being homogeneous, there is great diversity in their forms of cultural and social organisation (see Benjamin 1989; Wee 1985, 1988; Normala Manap 1983; Pang Keng Fong 1984).

My Indonesian informants consider the *OSL* who are *suku Melayu asli* (original Malay divisions) as Malays. According to Wee (1985:7), this differs from the situation in Malaysia where indigenous communities are constitutionally defined as (non-Malay) 'Aborigines'. This is in contrast to Major Williams-Hunt's (1952) -- the former Colonial Adviser on aborigines -- indications that there was no definite or rigid difference between 'Malays' and 'Aborigines' in British Malaya. Nevertheless, in Malaysia, 'Malays' and 'Aborigines' are now legally differentiated into two distinct categories in the amended Federal Constitution of 1981, Article 160(2). 'Malayness' thus specifically excludes '*orang asli*' ('aborigines'). The view of my Indonesian informants reflect opinions of the earlier period in Malaya when 'Malays' and 'Aborigines' were not yet clearly differentiated into mutually exclusive categories.

If literature on the Malays has tended towards presenting the Malays as a homogeneous group, my Malay informants also inclined towards a picture of the *OSL* as a homogeneous community. Most Malays believed that the *OSL*

would only be found far off in the Dabo Singkep area of the archipelago.[7] As an added piece of information, I was told that no Malay would inhabit an island occupied by the *OSL*. These were significant statements as to where the Malays thought the *OSL* were concentrated. This aided me in contextualising my exploration of the self and other perceptions of the *OSL*.

The picture of a homogenised *OSL* community was quickly proven incorrect as I travelled around various islands in the first few weeks of my fieldwork to look for a suitable field-site. I discovered very quickly that the *OSL* consisted of many related and unrelated sub-groups. From the start of my field explorations, I was constantly confronted with tensions that existed in the interaction between the *OSL* and Malays, and to a lesser extent, with the Chinese and other groups. These tensions were also present when different or unrelated groups of *OSL* interacted.

The overt expression of all this was clearly seen in the exchange practices of material objects and services between the different communities and the role that money was to take in transforming the meaning of these things during circulation.

In studying the *OSL*, I could not select a single island community. Neither was it feasible to restrict myself to one group, even if it were possible to isolate such an entity. Vital observations on inter-group relations would have been lost.

My fieldwork was thus carried out amongst the *OSL*, Malays and Chinese in the following cluster of island communities: Pulau Nanga, Teluk Nipah, Sembur and Air Lingka in the Headmandom of Karas; Dapur Enam and Pulau Abang in the Headmandom of Pulau Abang; and Tiang Wang Kang, Pulau Setengeh, Pulau Akar, Pulau Lancha and Pulau Panjang in the Headmandom of Batam. I also carried out fieldwork in Pulau Penyengat and Tanjung Pinang, the administrative centre of the District of Riau. Of these various island communities, most of my time was spent in Pulau Nanga, Teluk Nipah, Sembur and Pulau Penyengat. I travelled with the *OSL* of Pulau Nanga and covered several other

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[7]It was seldom mentioned that the *OSL* would be found near Tanjung Pinang unless they had rowed to places near the market in Tanjung Pinang to sell their maritime products.

island communities such as Tanjung Malang and Dapur Enam[8] in the Headmandom of Karas with them. At different points in my fieldwork, I lived with the *OSL*, Malays and Chinese.

My study is therefore not a village ethnography, but a discussion of the interaction between differing groups of *OSL* and non-*OSL* scattered throughout the archipelago. My work is thus a challenge to the received wisdom of the existing literature which tends to treat the Malays as a homogeneous group. My purpose is to integrate the study of the indigenous *OSL* cultures within the wider body of literature on the Malays proper.

I employed the method of participant-observation while in the field. Thus, I have not shied away from presenting ethnographic examples where I was the principle participant in the cases concerned. What happened to me while I was in the field has therefore been a key factor in understanding the identity and exchange practices amongst the *OSL*.

I carried out my fieldwork mostly in a mixture of *Bahasa Melayu* and *Bahasa Indonesia*. Although I was able to record certain data that was told to me in *Bahasa Gallang*, I was not able to speak it very well. Almost all of my Chinese informants were fluent in *Bahasa Indonesia*. However, they were sometimes more eager to converse in Teochiu and Mandarin with me. Thus, unless stated, all my quotes in this thesis have been translated from *Bahasa Indonesia* and *Bahasa Melayu*.

As a field ethnographer, my presence and participation in the lives of the *OSL* also aroused their curiosity. The way in which the *OSL* perceived, talked about and treated my presence in their midst too constituted important data in contextualising my understanding of the dynamics of group boundaries.

The lack of updated information on the *OSL* meant that I was at a complete loss when I first embarked on my field explorations to locate the *OSL* in Riau. I was therefore completely dependent upon the goodwill of two Malay Rajas from Pulau Penyengat who offered to act as my guide. Due to my ignorance of the tensions that exist between the *OSL* and Malays, I was

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[8]This is a different Dapur Enam from the one mentioned earlier in this paragraph.

undiscriminating in my choice of guides. My association with these Malays thus caused crippling problems in the early stages of fieldwork. My Malay guides were insistent that I live with Malay or Chinese families in nearby Malay islands to observe neighbouring *OSL* communities. At certain points, almost entire Malay communities turned up to advise me to stay away from the *OSL*. On the other hand, the Chinese regarded me as one of them and were just as adamant that I live with them. I had to be careful not to insult the hospitality of the Malays and Chinese when I explained my need to be with the *OSL*, and made the transition to live and travel with the *OSL*.

The *OSL* were therefore initially suspicious of my association with the Malays. However, my earnest struggles to establish a close rapport with them and to learn their language soon indicated that I was different. The first indications of the *OSL* acceptance of me came in how they interpreted my presence amongst them. They reasoned that although my family home was in Singapore, I was studying and living in England and was intending to return to England again. However, at that moment, they saw that I liked and wanted to stay in Indonesia. The *OSL* thus explained that I was "like an *OSL*" moving from place to place. They soon adopted me as a member of their community through the very exchange practices that I was cautioned by my non-*OSL* informants to avoid in case I was bewitched into following an *OSL*'s way of life.

(IV) THE *OSL*

The *OSL* are known variously as "sea nomads", "sea folk" (Sopher 1977:47), "sea gypsies" (Thomson 1851:140) and "people of the sea" (Sandbukt 1982). The *OSL* are found scattered throughout the Riau-Lingga archipelago and the southern coasts of the Malay Peninsula (Johor), the east coast of Sumatra and the larger islands of Bangka and Belitung (Sandbukt *ibid*:17).[9]

The current numbers of *OSL* in the Riau archipelago are estimated at 1,757 males and 1,652 females,[10] although there is still much uncertainty surrounding these figures. This is due to their constant movement, the lack of official recording in the outer islands of the archipelago and inaccessibility of government reports.

The *OSL* constitute the *orang asli* (indigenous) population of Riau. However, there has been speculation (Wee 1985:630-631) that these boat-dwelling people are a secondary development out of original land-dwelling nomads. This development is believed to have occurred around 5,000 B.P.

The *OSL* played an important role in aiding the Sultan's position during the period of the Malacca-Johor-Riau Sultanate. However their importance weakened during the 18th century with the emerging powers of the Dutch and the weakening powers of the Sultanate (Brown 1970; Tarling 1963; Wolters 1970; *Straits Times* March 11, 1993).

Some groups of *OSL* have settled on land and live in government houses or self-constructed dwellings erected along the coast. Nevertheless, they still return to live on board their *sampan*s (boats) with their entire family

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[9]Sopher (1977:51) lists three subdivisions of sea nomads of Southeast Asian as the *OSL* or *Orang Laut*, the Moken or Selungs and the Bajaus. The location of the Mokens and the Bajaus have been recorded as follows. The Moken are said to be scattered around the Mergui archipelago in the Tenasserim province of Burma as well as the chain of islands along the southwest coast of Thailand. On the other hand, the Bajaus are known to be dispersed around the Philippine Sulu Archipelago, the neighbouring north coast of Borneo, the coastal waters of Celebes and the surrounding islands, and parts of the Flores archipelago (Sandbukt 1982:17).

[10]These figures were given to me by the Kantor Sosial in Tanjung Pinang.

when they embark on fishing voyages. Fishing voyages may last from a night to a few months.

The *OSL* possess outstanding knowledge of the winds, currents and tides that govern the sea, rich fishing grounds and mangrove swamps and the position of the sun, moon and stars by which they navigate their way through the archipelago.

The *OSL* depend predominantly on the sea for their food. They also engage in the collection of maritime products. Surplus maritime products are sold to the Chinese *thau-ke*s (bosses). The *OSL* manifest great resourcefulness in constructing their own fishing gear.[11] The use of spears is a distinctive fishing method of the *OSL*. However, some are now taking up offers from Chinese *thau-ke*s to enter a barter-exchange system and engage in net-fishing methods. Some *OSL* also work for the Chinese *thau-ke*s in chopping wood from mangrove swamps for the production of charcoal.

(V) SOCIAL ORGANISATION

The *OSL* are divided into various *suku* or clans (for example, *Suku* Tambus, *Suku* Galang, *Suku* Mantang, *Suku* Barok) (Sopher 1977; Sandbukt 1982). There are further subdivisions to these clans along the lines of kinship and territorial occupation.

In the groups of *OSL* that I lived with, the most senior male member was often appointed the *kepala* (head) of the community[12]. The *kepala* is endowed with greater, but not absolute authority over the community. His leadership is usually officially recognised by government authorities. This means that the *kepala* is called upon to represent his community during official occasions, such as visits from the authorities to the community. I was informed by the *OSL* that their *kepala* was officially recognised as being under

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[11]A collection of fishing gear used by the *OSL* in Riau has been deposited in the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge University in the United Kingdom and the National Museum of Singapore.

[12]It has been recorded elsewhere (see for example Sopher 1977) that the leader of the *OSL* is addressed as *batin*.

the authority of the *kepala* of the Malays in the region. This clearly indicates the subordinated political status of the *OSL* in relation to the Malays.

Sexual division of labour within *OSL* communities is not clearly defined. During fishing expeditions, men often spear for fish, while women row the boats. Yet, it is not uncommon to hear men praise their women for being skilful spearers of maritime products. Both men and women possess the potential to be renowned *dukuns* (practitioners of indigenous medicine). Once again, there is almost no distinct division in the type of *ilmu* (magic) practised by either men or women.

(VI) TEXTUAL ORGANISATION

There are several inter-related aims in this thesis. First, there are still glaring gaps in our knowledge of the *OSL* and of *orang asli* (indigenous) populations which need to be filled (Benjamin 1989). This thesis therefore looks towards the amplification of ethnographic detail on the *OSL* of Riau and Batam. Moreover it offers a significant contribution towards understanding the indigenous history of Riau, Singapore and Malaysia, which before present-day political territorial demarcations stood as a single political entity, the *alam Melayu* (Malay kingdom or Malaydom).

In seeking to look at the exchange economy and the dynamics of social interaction between the *OSL* and the other Malay and non-Malay communities, I will examine in close detail ethnographic data collected from selected *OSL* communities. I shall explore how perceptions of self and other which have shaped the image of the *OSL* have become enmeshed in the dynamics of social interaction in this exchange economy. This is of great consequence as the perception of who the *OSL* are directly affects who can exchange with whom, which items can be safely exchanged without fear of being poisoned by magic, and how these exchanges can take place in acceptably safe terms between the transactors. The material on the identity of the *OSL* will be examined in relation to the social history and the hierarchies of being Malay in the Malaydom. The Malaydom extends beyond the present political boundary of Riau, Indonesia. The political reality of Riau will thus be raised. This is

intended to contribute towards discussions on Indonesia as a centripetal state in Southeast Asia such as are found in the literature on the meaning of power in the Southeast Asian realm (see Geertz 1989; Keeler 1987; Errington 1989; Anderson 1972).

Following this, the next aim in my thesis concerns how the *OSL* are regarded and widely feared by the Malays who embrace Islam, and by the non-Malays. The *OSL* are often seen as "unprogressive and evil" because of their practice of what is reputed to be the "most powerful sort of *ilmu hitam* (black magic)". What is most feared in being bewitched is that one would abandon a particular lifestyle to "*ikut*" (follow) an *OSL* into one which is regarded as being at the bottom of a hierarchy of what it means to be Malay in Riau. This raises the question: what exactly does being a pure Malay in Riau mean? Conversely, what does this process towards purity embrace, and what does it entail? (Wee 1985, 1988). I begin with an analysis of what is deemed to be the "impure and evil" practice of black magic amongst the *OSL*.

The above will set the background to explain how the identity of the *OSL* has been formed and how it affects the dynamics of social interaction in Riau. The bulk of the thesis will continue with an analysis of detailed ethnographic accounts of the different levels of interaction and exchange patterns between (i) the *OSL*, (ii) the different groups of *OSL*, (iii) the *OSL* and the Malays, and (iv) the *OSL* and the Chinese.

The main body of the thesis looks into the circulation of items and services within and beyond the *OSL* communities to the Malay and non-Malay communities. Here, I look at what it means to exchange gifts within the *OSL* groups. I will also examine why this form of exchange is feared and avoided between the different groups of *OSL*, Malays and non-Malay communities. This will be contrasted with how the exchange of the very same items within a cash economy is regarded as safe and acceptable. Here, I apply aspects of Appadurai's (1988) ideas on "the social life of things" for an analysis of the circulation of items in Riau. My concern is to see how elements of sociality are removed as an item moves from being a gift into a commodity. I look also at what money means to the *OSL*. The purpose is to show how money holds

the power in the Riau archipelago to transform symbolically the nature of social relationships between the Malays and non-Malays and *OSL*. The use of money has enabled the former to interact, touch and even obtain magic potions from the latter with less fear of being poisoned. I will also examine how social relationships have shaped the use and meaning of money.

This thesis is also devoted to looking at the role of the Chinese merchants and middlemen in Riau. To my knowledge, no study has been carried out on the relationship between the Chinese and the *OSL*. The Chinese middlemen play a key role in moving items from an *OSL* community to other communities in Riau (or vice versa), and even for export purposes to Singapore and beyond. The islanders do not consider the local born Chinese as "*orang dari luar*" (people from outside) (Wee 1985). Instead, they are referred to as "*peranakan*s" ("people of mixed origins").

The Chinese are regarded as a distinct group involved in, but not part of the Malaydom. What is of interest with respect to this issue is that the Chinese who are considered non-indigens are playing the role of making the items that pass through their hands more safe and acceptable for the people of different island communities to own or consume. This is in contrast to the fear that the Malays have of receiving items that come directly from the *OSL* communities and vice versa. The Chinese as intermediaries add social distance to the items that pass through them. They make such items acceptable for the different communities who would otherwise fear transacting with one another.

The participation of the *OSL* into a wider exchange economy involving money breaks down certain barriers for the *OSL*. The use of money has allowed the *OSL* some interaction with the Malay and other non-Malay communities. However, for the *OSL*, this has broader implications for their identity. Firstly, in trading with the Chinese middlemen, it also seems that the *OSL* are being induced by their Chinese *thau-ke* (boss) to settle ashore to participate in a mediated exchange economy. Wee (1985:85) puts forward a plausible suggestion that,

> it is possibly the trading relationship of exchanging fresh fish for salted fish on the part of the *OSL* with the Chinese *thau-ke* (boss) that makes

> the *OSL* question if they should remain at sea. For, if fresh fish and other marine products caught by the *OSL* can become a medium of exchange for almost anything else, and if the goods for which they are exchanged become valued above the marine products as such, and if these goods are obtainable only through trade, then at that point, it would seem advantageous to participate in an exchange economy, rather than to subsist on fish alone. It follows from such a situation that the sea is then no longer regarded as an all-encompassing environment. Instead, it becomes merely a resource for obtaining marine products to be exchanged for non-marine goods. Direct consumption is thus replaced by mediated exchange.

Here her suggestion comes to an abrupt halt. I endorse this suggestion. The *OSL*'s transition from a nomadic to a sedentary lifestyle is also marked by attempts of the *OSL* to adopt ways outlined by the Malays to be like pure Malays. In the words of the Malays, this makes "such *OSL* less dangerous" for the purposes of interaction. However, for the *OSL*, the transition from being impure Malays to pure Malays, is not simply a matter of adopting Islamic ways. Those who regard themselves as pure Malays still retain the advantage of deciding who can or cannot enter the hierarchy of being a pure Malay. Moreover, for those *OSL* who choose to try to make this transition, this also means changes in interactional patterns within their own community.

Plate 1: An *OSL*'s *sampan*.

Plate 2
Preparing a meal in the interior of an *OSL*'s *sampan*.

CHAPTER TWO: RANKING IN RIAU

(I) INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines how the Malays continue to perceive and map out Riau as part of the wider Malaydom. A system of social ranking prominent in the Malay society of Riau during the period of the sultan, continues to pervade intergroup relations with the *OSL* today. Through an examination of the perceived signs (Anderson 1972; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1992) of purity conceived by the Malays, contrasting meanings (Cohen 1986; Leach 1989) of purity and impurity in one's Malayness are expressed in the erection of group boundaries.

The ethnographic material presented shows how these boundaries become more stark (Cohen *ibid*) when the *OSL* redefine and attribute different or contrasting meanings to the same signs of purity denoted by the Malays. An understanding of the hierarchical social relationships between the Malays and *OSL* is necessary. This is because, as will be discussed in the ensuing chapters, inter-group and intra-group relations underpinned by such hierarchical boundaries find expression in the forms of exchange between the Malays and *OSL*.

(II) THE HIERARCHY OF RANKS

My *OSL* and Malay informants speak of five different periods of political domination that the Riau archipelago has come under.[1] They are the periods

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[1]See Wee (1985:118-166) for more details on the impact of each period on the Riau archipelago.

of the *batin* (chief); sultan,[2] Dutch (1911 -1942); Japanese (1942-1945) and the Republic of Indonesia (1949 to the present)[3] respectively.

Although the Riau archipelago currently constitutes part of the wider Republic of Indonesia, it is the period of the sultan which remains most significant to my Malay aristocrat informants. These informants retain the title Raja, and continue to see Riau as part of the wider Malaydom. Both my *OSL* and Malay informants are well aware that there are currently reigning sultans in other parts of the Malaydom such as Brunei and Peninsula Malaysia.

In Anderson's (1990:15) concept of nation states, he discusses the idea of imagined communities whereby:

> the members...will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.

Although Anderson was referring to the creation of nation states, parallels can be drawn to the situation in Riau. There is presently no officially acknowledged sultanate in Riau. Neither are there extensive contacts between my informants with most of the other aristocrats in the wider Malaydom. However, they continue to conceive a unity with the royal houses of the wider Malaydom. The Malaydom is in turn seen as belonging to the *umat* (nation of Islam).

In Pulau Penyengat, a genealogical chart demonstrating the position and links of the Riau rajas to the wider Malaydom is prominently displayed in a public gallery. During the course of my fieldwork, the rajas were often very eager to sketch from memory their genealogical charts to show me their lineage to the royal houses in the Malaydom. Genealogical charts and other royal heirlooms such as *keris*es (wavy double-bladed daggers), trays and dinner sets bearing the royal insignia were often displayed or kept in their homes, ready to be shown to anyone.

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[2]The period of the sultan commenced earlier than 1511 and lasted over 400 years.

[3]The Republic of Indonesia was unilaterally declared by Sukarno on 17 August 1945 to be so, but officially achieved in 1949.

For my aristocrat informants, these heirlooms and genealogical charts are proofs of their royal descent and links to the wider Malaydom. The keenness of the aristocrat Malays to show such things to others constitutes part of an important process (Barth 1969; Eidheim 1969) of their desire to present an identity of pure Malayness to others. It perpetuates a cleavage in ethnic identity from those whom they consider as impure Malays.

Some of my aristocrat informants have even used these charts to verify their lineage to gain admittance into the royal palaces of Malaysia. Upon the establishment of such links, my informants enjoy the honour of receiving cards bearing royal greetings and invitations for special occasions from some royal households. A raja informant proudly showed me photographs of the informal meals to which some members of the aristocracy in Peninsula Malaysia had invited him when he visited Malaysia.

My aristocrat friends therefore view relationships in Riau in terms of a hierarchy of *derajat* (ranks).[4] They deem the hierarchy of ranks applicable only to the *orang Melayu* (Malays) of Riau. The Chinese, Javanese and Boyanese in Riau are excluded from this hierarchy. This supports Anderson's (1990) argument that limitations and boundaries exist to demarcate even the largest of all imagined communities from other communities. Conversely, it can also be said that it is the recognition of outsiders (Errington 1989) that makes the Malaydom visible and felt.

The hierarchy of ranks that is perceived by my informants from a top-to-bottom viewpoint is derived from the period of the sultan (Armstrong 1984; Gullick 1988). This ranking system can be summarised as follows (see also Wee 1985:167-223, 242):

Orang bangsawan (aristocrats/ people of breeding)
= *Melayu murni* (pure Malays)
raja, tengku : princes
tuan said : descendants of the Prophet Muhammad

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[4]Wee (1985:406-470) has already extensively discussed the hierarchies of being Malay in Riau. My field data correspond closely to her findings and analysis. I shall therefore only highlight issues which have not appeared in her analysis.

Orang merdeka (free people)
= pure Malays
encik datuk : local chiefs
encik keturunan : personages of honourable descent
(*orang biasa* = commoners)

Orang kerahan (vassals)
= *bukan Melayu murni* (not pure/ impure Malays)
keturunan Bintan : descendants of Bintan (commoners)
hamba raja : serfs (non-branded foreigners to Riau who were government property)

Orang hamba (slaves)
= impure Malays

hamba orang : slaves (branded indigens who were the personal property of individual owners).

To this very day, the imposition of such a ranking system derived from the period of the sultan has influenced those at the top to regard those at the bottom as impure Malays. Such a situation is not unique to Riau. Armstrong (1984:28) has noted that such ranking "prominent in traditional [Malay] society, particularly with respect to royalty and the Islamic religion" continues to make an impact on social interactions carried out in "modern Malay life" in Malaysia.

This is how Raja Rahim explained the place of the *OSL* as serfs, during the period of the sultan in Riau:

> There are several groups of *OSL* such as the *Suku Mantang*, *Suku Tambus*, *Suku Barok*[5], *Suku Bintan*, *Suku Temiang* and *Suku Ladi*. I cannot remember all the groups. During the period of the sultan, each group was assigned different work duties for the sultan.[6] For example, the *Orang Mantang* (Mantang people) rowed boats and the *Suku Ladi* carried water and chopped fire wood. The importance of each group could be seen from the sort of work they did. But they all obeyed the sultan. The *OSL* always lived in the sea. They were near but away from the sultan's palace.

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[5]*Suku Barok* is also spelt *Suku Barut* and *Suku Bru* (Sopher 1977:95).

[6]See Sopher (1977) for a detailed description of the tasks assigned to the respective groups of *OSL*.

The *OSL* were therefore the indigenous people in the political periphery. They could and would be asked to make pilgrimages of submission to the sultan at the political centre whenever their services were required.

The Malaydom that is conceived by my aristocrat Malay informants can be partially explained by Errington's (1989) and Anderson's (1972) arguments. Errington (*ibid*) maintains that throughout hierarchical Southeast Asia, the ruler is regarded as the nucleus of the state. This supports Anderson's (1972) description of indigenous notions of power in Indonesia. He describes how the Javanese see power as concrete, homogenous, immutable and not to be challenged. Similarities from Errington and Anderson's arguments can be seen in how the aristocrat Malays in Riau expect all other Malays in the periphery to be oriented to the centre. For them, an ordered polity is perceived as void of challenges regardless of all inequalities.

The aristocrat Malays therefore see the necessity of institutionalising their power in the Malaydom. This is of paramount importance in establishing and maintaining centred positions and spaces of power in the kingdom. They have constructed ideas to outline the shape and meaning of the Malaydom.

These ideas have been inferred by signs of purity -- hence of authority, refinement and superiority -- as stipulated by the aristocrat Malays. In contrast , the pure Malays see impurity as personified by those such as the *OSL* who are at the bottom of the hierarchy. From the viewpoint of the pure Malays, impurity therefore means submission, coarseness and inferiority. The deliberate choice of these signs by the pure Malays seeks to inculcate the continuity of a particular system with a suitable historical past (Hobsbawn and Ranger 1992).

However, the realisation of such a concept of power is only made possible by the political supporters of the aristocrat Malays. The former are the ones who enter into alliances and negotiations on behalf of the aristocrat Malays who ideally must not exert themselves to retain their power (Keeler 1987; Howe 1991).

During the period of the sultan, these supporters such as the Bugis adventurers, were regarded as the "middle people." They mediated between the aristocrats and the "small people" such as the *OSL* (Wee 1985:171). Titles were bestowed upon these supporters. Political offices were also established for them to legitimate their authority. Furthermore, such titles were exclusively reserved for "middle people." "Small people" were never allowed the privilege of having such titles bestowed on them.

To this very day, the aristocrat Malays have the support of the Indonesian government and authorities as the representatives of the Malays in Riau. Official visitors are constantly directed to the aristocrat Malays in Pulau Penyengat to host their visits.

(III) PURITY

"Purity" for my aristocrat informants is manifested through *agama* (religion), *adat* (proper behaviour), *bahasa* (language) and what is perceived as their "physical appearance". This view is also shared by most other non-aristocrat Malays of the *OSL*. The following criticisms voiced by two Malays reflect common opinions of the *OSL*.

> Zainal:
> The *OSL* are Malays, but my view is that the *OSL* are the lowest. They are not pretty. They are dark skinned. They don't know anything about toilets or hygiene. They have a different language to the extent that neither you nor I would understand. They have no religion. But be careful. Never let the *OSL* hear you criticise them. They are very powerful in *ilmu hitam* (black knowledge/ magic) and like bewitching people, especially those who criticise them, into marrying them. The *OSL* cannot survive on land. They will die. Even though the government have given them houses, they insist on returning to the sea.
>
> Mansur:
> You will hear the *OSL* claiming to be Christians, Protestants or Catholics, or that they have *masuk Islam* (entered Islam). This is so only in name. They don't pray and they still eat pork. If they say that they are Christians, they don't go to church. They have no religion. When it is the Chinese New Year, the *OSL* follow. When it is the

> Muslims' *Hari Raya* (a festival), they follow too. However, they do not follow the customs.

The *OSL* are acknowledged by many Malays as the indigenous Malays of Riau. However, their status as indigens is not enough for them to be accepted as pure Malays. This is because they are deemed as having "no religion", speaking a coarse language, lacking a proper code of conduct and lacking in refined physical appearance.

(III.I) ISLAMISATION

Islam in particular is used as a vehicle for the legitimising of authority, and hence also of superiority by the pure Malays (Milner 1981).[7] Therefore, a person's purity depends on the observance of various Islamic practices. I have made slight modifications to Wee's (1985:556-557) illustration of the "Islamic sliding scale"[8] to summarise the issues concerned:

1. circumcision
2. abstaining from eating pork and drinking alcohol
3. burying the dead in an Islamic manner
4. pronouncing the two statements of the testimonial creed
5. getting married and divorced in an Islamic manner
6. being ritually purified
7. learning how to pray
8. living in a village which has a mosque
9. praying communally on the two major festivals, *Hari Raya Puasa* and *Hari Raya Haji*, of the Muslim calender
10. praying communally every Friday
11. observing the Islamic fasting month
12. giving *zakat* and *fitrah*, two types of alms
13. praying privately five times a day
14. going on the pilgrimage to Mecca.

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[7]The *Tuhfat al-Nafis* (The precious gift) is an official record of the history of Riau, authored by various members of the aristocracy. It is important to note how it stresses Penyengat's status as a centre of Islamic scholarship and an area governed by rulers who were devout Muslims (Matheson and Andaya 1982; Matheson 1989:164).

[8]This scale resulted from Wee's (1985) own fieldwork amongst the aristocrat Malays in Riau.

A person is officially converted to Islam upon pronouncing the testimonial creed in the presence of two Muslim witnesses. However, from the strictly Islamic perspective of the Malays, this is insufficient. Hence, the refusal to accept the *OSL* who have officially entered Islam as pure Muslims.

I support Wee (1985:527) in focusing on the two distinct contexts of centripetal orientation that is implied here. She states:

> One is the context of the world-wide Islamic *umat*[9] 'congregation of believers' or 'nation of Islam,' where all are supposed to be centripetally orientated towards God. The other context is the local *umat* in the shape of the bygone sultanate, with Penyengat as its centre.

Pulau Penyengat was the capital of the Riau sultanate.[10] Ever since the institution of the caliphate after the Prophet's death, it has been an established principle of Islamic organisation that the Muslim ruler is also the religious leader of his polity. The ruler's authority was thus deemed as being divinely sanctioned. Therefore, the sultan of Riau was regarded as the *amir al-mu'munin* (commander of the faithful) and *iman* (religious guide) (Farah 1970:154). Hence, the political capital was also the religious centre (Matheson 1989; Wee 1985:530).

Early in the 19th century, Penyengat was described as *Serambi Mecca* (Gateway to Mecca). In the latter half, it was also called *Pulau Indera Sakti*. When translated, *Indera* means royal while *Sakti* means sacred or divine supernatural power (Matheson 1989:163-164; Echols and Shadily 1989). It is significant that once again, the name is used by the Foundation of Raja Hamza Yunus. Towards the end of my field stay, I was approached by a raja in Penyengat who was anxious that I purchase a recent publication of the history of Penyengat entitled, "*Pulau Penyengat Indera Sakti*".

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[9]The Arabic *umma* means 'nation, people; generation' (Wehr 1976:25).

[10]See the *Tuhfat al-Nafis* (1982), Raja Hamzah Yunus (1992), Wee (1985) and Matheson (1989) for a documentation of the history of Penyengat.

My pure Malay informants clearly believe in the relevance of calling this former royal centre, "*Pulau Penyengat Indera Sakti*" up to this very day. This belief rests upon various historical remains and is manifested in several ways.

The enduring focus of Penyengat has undoubtedly been the mosque. My informants point out that this mosque is painted a distinct royal yellow as a constant reminder of its difference and importance. This mosque continues to be one of the main centres for Muslim marriages in Riau. It can be said that the Penyengat mosque is the leader of all other mosques.

Penyengat also has the highest incidence of things that are *keramat* (endowed with supernatural power)[11] (Wee 1985). According to my informants, some royal graves are *keramat*.[12] As explained by Endicott (1991:93), it is the belief that the persons in *keramat* graves are "not really dead." These graves are called *makam* (grave) rather than *kubur* (grave) to distinguish them from ordinary graves. When I had confused the terms during the initial stages of my fieldwork, even my *OSL* informants reminded me that most *makam*s are in Penyengat.

Before commencing my journey through Riau, I was told by the Malays to visit the *makam* of Raja Hamidah[13]. The intention, as explained by the Malays, was to seek permission from the owner to enter and stay in Riau. My informants related numerous stories of how those who had failed to do so always encountered untoward circumstances of some sort. Midway through a visit from friends who had come to join me in the field, the Malays

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[11]See Endicott's (1991:91) discussion on how the beliefs in "*kramats*" [as spelt by Endicott] can influence events by revealing signs. Studies on the power of these *keramats* have also been dealt by Wilkinson 1964:132 and Annadale and Robinson 1904:24.

[12]See Matheson (1989:159) and Wee (1985:324, 342) for a further discussion on these royal graves in Penyengat.

[13]According to various written sources (the *Tufhat*; Matheson 1989) and the oral histories of my Malay informants, Raja Hamidah who was also titled Engku Puteri (Raja Ali Haji 1982:32) became the wife of Sultan Mahmud in 1804. Penyengat was her *mas kawin* (dowry). The Sultan gave instructions for "the island to be cleared, and a royal residence with fortifications, a mosque, and an audience hall be constructed" (Matheson 1989:159). My informants explain that it was thus Raja Hamidahwho opened up Riau. Hence, the need to seek her permission before journeying through it.

grew frantic with worry for their well being. They had forgotten to remind me that all guests on short stays -- even if they were English and Scottish -- had first to seek the permission of Raja Hamidah before venturing any further. Fortunately, to the relief of everyone, I had faithfully taken my guests to the *makam*. I was also often reminded to return to Penyengat upon the success of my studies to wrap the gravestones of their ancestors with cloth. I was told that even if I could not personally make it to Penyengat, I should arrange for the gravestones to be covered. The act of wrapping the gravestones with cloth can be understood as an exchange (Wee 1985:336) of the fulfilment of my personal wish with a wish for the benefit of the deceased.

Malays throughout Riau make pilgrimages to these *makam*s if they have special requests. Below is a Raja's wife's explanation of how Rokiah, a woman from Tanjung Pinang had her request for a baby granted after her visit to Raja Hamidah's *makam*.

> Rokiah came to see me one day. She had been married for 2 years and had been trying very hard to have a baby. She was very sad and worried that she would not be able to have any children. I told her to go to Raja Hamidah's *makam*. She obeyed and not long after, she gave birth to this beautiful baby. It is like that. People have had all sorts of needs fulfilled.

From the accounts given above, it is notable that certain things associated with royalty -- such as the mosque and *makam*s in Penyengat -- are endowed with power. This is viewed as untainted and pure power because it is legitimated through Islam. These things in Penyengat also continue to be visual representations (Anderson 1990:20) of a kingdom.

The relationship between the power-endowed things in Penyengat and the pure Malays can be seen in various ways. First, the concentration of such islamised things in Penyengat legitimises its centrality in the Malaydom. Secondly, it establishes the island as the Gateway to Mecca. Thirdly, it authenticates the place as *Pulau Penyengat Indera Sakti*; fourthly, the continued residence of many rajas in Penyengat allows them to be in close proximity, and hence constant association with these things. The rajas are able

to pray regularly and participate in events at the mosque. They are also able to visit the *makam*s regularly to perform Islamic rituals.

Parallels can be drawn to Anderson's (1972) study of the Javanese tradition. He mentioned the ruler's need to concentrate around himself things and people endowed with unusual power. The purpose being that the power of these things would be absorbed and added to that of the ruler. Their loss would be interpreted as a diminution of the king's power and an impending collapse of the dynasty. However unlike the Javanese case, the constant contact with these things in Penyengat does not mean a direct absorption or addition of power into the pure Malays. Rather, the acts of Islamic piety add to their sense of purity, hence superiority and power. Regular visits to the *makam*s mean that the pure Malays are more blessed too. By going to the *makam*s, my aristocrat informants are also acknowledging their descent. The continued links with their ancestors accrue to the passing down of power.

(III.II) PROPER BEHAVIOUR

The Malays also regard *adat* which can be translated as proper behaviour or customs as a reflection of a person's purity. However, proper behaviour is predicated upon Islamic principles. The following criticism of the *OSL* by a Malay clearly illustrates this concern.

> Pindah:
> Den will tell you that he has two wives. In actual fact, he has had three or four others. He is too embarrassed to talk about those wives because he did not marry them in accordance with proper Malay behaviour. I can still remember how Den married his first wife. His wife wore a *sarong* (sheath) tied around her chest and then he chased her around the *sampan* (boat) thrice. After that, they both swam in the sea.
>
> All of them were drunk because they had been drinking liquor. There was no *kenduri* (religious feast). After that, the two of them entered a house and slept together. When they left the house, they got into a *sampan* together and rowed away to go fishing. That was how they were considered a married couple. It is only now that they follow proper Malay behaviour when they marry. They go to the *iman* to obtain a marriage certificate. In the past, they would only follow the person.

> For the *Suku Oyol*[14], both the male and female would dive beneath the *sampan* and try to catch each other. If they meet underwater, it means that they are suited for marriage, if not it means that they are not suited for one another.

During the course of my fieldwork, I had never personally witnessed any *OSL* marriage take place in the ways described above. Neither did my *OSL* informants ever narrate their marriages in such terms. However, the significance is that the Malays do not perceive the *OSL* as marrying in proper Malay fashion.

Nonetheless, I had on numerous occasions either been told by the *OSL* themselves or witnessed how an *OSL* couple would *"lari"* (elope) and return to their respective families and be considered married. For example, Saya an *OSL* from Pulau Abang told me that she had initially disapproved of her daughter, Joya's desire to marry Pri. This was because the latter was already married with children. Joya "eloped" with Pri. Saya missed her daughter but was sure that Joya had eloped with Pri to Pulau Nanga. Together with the other members of her family she went to see Joya. Saya explained that since Joya was already living with Pri, the matter was considered settled. There was no need for a ceremony of any sort. Everyone, including Saya and her family accepted Joya as Pri's wife.

In another case, Lampung from Pulau Nanga left for Tiang Wang Kang within weeks of his wife, Siti's death. He had told his siblings that he was seeking the help of a *dukun* (shaman) in Tiang Wang Kang to trace the identity of the person who had poisoned Siti. A week after Lampung's departure, I left on another boat with the other members of his family for Tiang Wang Kang. Upon our arrival, we were told by the *OSL* there that Lampung had arrived with the intention of marrying Simmon. She was an *OSL* from a nearby island. Lampung had not informed his family of his desire. This was because it was not permissible to marry within a hundred days after the death of one's spouse. His family refused him any assistance.

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[14]The *Suku Oyol* is another group of *OSL*.

They were certain that their eldest brother, Bolong who was also *kepala* (head) of the *OSL* in Pulau Nanga, would be angered. I returned to Pulau Nanga with the other *OSL* before Lampung. In the meantime, Lampung and Simmon had started to sleep together and form a working partnership in the same *sampan* (boat). When they arrived in Pulau Nanga, they were considered married.

From the perception of the *OSL*, it is considered proper for a man and woman who have slept together and formed a permanent working partnership to be regarded as married. However, the Malays do not consider any behaviour as proper behaviour if it is not based upon Islamic principles. As such, failure to have an *Iman* solemnise one's marriage is unacceptable.

Therefore, the *OSL* are constantly mocked for creating their own standards of behaviour.

> Pindah:
> Suri puts a pail of muddy water outside her house. She wants everyone to wash their feet in it before entering. She thinks that this will keep her house clean. What sort of custom is this? This is not a Malay custom! It is just her way of doing things. (Laughs). Your feet will be even more dirty if you dip them into the water.

In cases like the above, individuals are looked upon as creating their "own ways" dictated by their respective desires. Even if it is behaviour perceived to be commonly shared by most, if not all *OSL*, such orientations are still not regarded as customs or proper behaviour. Instead, the *OSL* are viewed as impure, hence unrefined people who "do not possess proper Malay behaviour".

In contrast, the *OSL* never hesitated to tell me about "the customs of the *OSL*". They pointed out that *OSL* customs -- like eating pork -- was indeed different from Malay customs. Many *OSL* were ready to say that they followed proper Malay behaviour. However, like the Malays, these *OSL* told me that it would be best if I asked the Penyengat rajas if my curiosity rested in the origins or details of what constituted proper behaviour. This is a clear implication that whilst the Malays and *OSL* may differ in ideas of whether or

not the latter possess proper behaviour, they agree that it is the rajas who are the authorities in proper Malay behaviour.

(III.III) LANGUAGE

The Malays[15] mock the *OSL* for being incomprehensible because they have a *bahasa lain*[16] (different language) and thus "speak differently". The Malays do not regard any of the *Bahasa OSL* (*OSL* languages) as related to *Bahasa Melayu* (the Malay language) at all. Instead, the pure Malays consider themselves as arbiters of the Malay language.[17] While the *OSL* who can speak *Bahasa Melayu* are considered as having "advanced", there is no corresponding compliment for those who are familiar with *Bahasa OSL*. The *OSL* who can speak *Bahasa Melayu* are seen as taking steps towards being more pure Malays.

The criteria of 'purity' discussed above are constitutive of what the aristocrat Malays consider as pure Malayness. The structuring of the Malaydom in this manner centralises and accumulates the power of the aristocrat Malays.

(IV) INDIGENOUS STATUS

The Malays claim purity, hence sovereignty of the Malaydom. In a counter-claim, the *OSL* have argued for *orang asli* (indigenous) status, thus ownership and rights to the area. The *OSL* also refer to themselves as *asli Melayu* (indigenous Malays).

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[15]Both the Malays and *OSL* from different areas in the archipelago are known to have their own regional language and dialects. Therefore, there is much dispute amongst the different groups of Malays and *OSL* as to who is more refined or less coarse.

[16]Wee (1985) states that the Malays never accepted what the *OSL* spoke as a *bahasa* at all. However, I found it to be the case that my Malay and *OSL* informants referred to the latter's speech as a *bahasa lain*.

[17]See Wee (1985:458-466) for a detailed discussion on how language is manipulated to indicate the purity in one's Malayness.

The *OSL* support their claim of aboriginality through orally transmitted history from their ancestors. Below is a collection of different narrations by various *OSL*.

(i) Pak Meen:
The history begins here. The *OSL* have five languages, or you could say, five *bangsa* (nations / people). Many years ago in the kingdom, there was a Sultan in Johor who together with his followers set sail in his *perahu* (a type of boat) for Temasik. Temasik is now called Singapore.

The Sultan of Johor asked the Sultan of Bintan for help. The Sultan of Bintan said, "It is better for us to ask the Sultan of Lingga for help." When they reached Lingga, they enlisted the Sultan's help. In between, one of the Sultans said that they should ask the *OSL* for help if they wanted to be certain of winning.

From the very beginning, we *OSL* were led by Panglima Ladi. We had moved towards the direction of being divided into different *OSL*. But the name Panglima Ladi commanded the respect of every *bangsa* of the *OSL*. There were and still are five *bangsa* of *OSL*. These are the *Mantang Ace*, *Mantang Baro*, *Mantang Mapor*, *Mantang Tambus* and *Mantang Seme*[18].

To continue with the history, everyone agreed to go to Johor to help the Sultan of Johor. We went to help him get back what was seized from him. After that, the Sultan of Bintan, the Sultan of Daik and all the *OSL* returned to their own place.

It was not long before the Sultan of Johor returned again because his purpose was to go to war. His intentions indicated that he wanted us to work alongside him or be considered foreigners. Panglima Ladi only knew too well what all this meant. So, the *OSL* hated the Sultan of Johor. This is because if the *OSL* helped, they would be made to do all the work, while the Sultan of Johor remained comfortable. The Sultan merely gave instructions. And then, the Sultan of Johor would just enjoy all the success. From here, we hated the Malays. They were bad influence. They could go alone.

From the very beginning, the *OSL* had houses and we lived in the same village with the Malays. But because of this matter, they hated us and we hated them; so we went down to our *sampan*s (boats) and fixed *kajang*s (movable sunshade of palm thatch).[19]

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[18]The names of these different *bangsa* of *OSL* were spelt by Meen's son-in-law, Koeng. The latter had received three years of formal education.

[19]I cannot find any written records of a Panglima Ladi in Lingga. However, according to Sopher (1977:97), the *rakyat*s (populace, citizenry) of Lingga were under the leadership of a man called Panglima Raman. He is thought to have been the son of a Bugis trader and his mother is believed to have been the daughter of one of the leading citizens of that locality,

(ii) CeCo:
We came from Malaysia. Our ancestors were already Muslims, just like the Malays. When they moved here, they came in *sampan*s, so they were called *OSL*. When they were in the *sampan*, they forgot Islam. But when they came to Indonesia, they started a village, and we returned to Islam. So, you can also say that the *OSL* originated from Penyengat.

(iii) Sman:
Raja Hamidah's descent was also from the *OSL*. Formerly, we all lived in *sampan*s out at sea. We had no houses. If it had not been for us the indigens, how could there be islands now? We say that we own all the islands. In our history, the *Raja laut*[20] (King of the sea) had fifteen children. He gave each of them rings and islands. That is how the islands came into being.

The accounts above by the *OSL* vary greatly in details. However, there are similar issues of concern underlying all of them. First, the stress on origin from a single group who have shared the same habitat. As such, it is perceived as only logical that the Malays share a common descent. Second, Islam was not the cause of the division. In fact, as a single group before the division, there are accounts which maintain that the *OSL* were already Muslims. This directly questions the status of the pure Malays as the progenitors of Islam in the Malaydom. It thus challenges the moral superiority of the Malays as leaders and guardians of Islam for the Malaydom. However, it does show that the *OSL* perceive sedentism as providing a home for Islam,

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probably belonging to the Suku Sekanak. As a youth, Raman had become a friend of the ruler, and later became one of his principal officers. Because of his maternal connection with the *OSL*, he also became leader of the citizens, and was thus able to employ them in his master's political quarrels.

[20]The *OSL*'s description of one of their *Raja Laut* bears much similarity to "one of the sea-people" identified as "Badang" in The *Tuhfat* (1982:13). Raja Ali Haji (*ibid*) recorded that,

> It was during the reign [of Raja Muda, who was entitled Seri Ratna Wikrama] that one of the sea-people, Badang, who was exceptionally strong, was able to uproot trees two or three spans wide because, it was said, he had eaten the vomit of a spirit.

whilst nomadism is an unsupportive base for Islam.[21] Third, the islands -- including Penyengat -- in the Malaydom were in fact opened up by the sea-faring activities of the *OSL*. The *OSL* thus claim ownership of the area that they have settled. This undoubtedly challenges the Malay's notion of Penyengat's centrality in the Malaydom. The *OSL* dismiss Penyengat as a privileged centre of authority. Neither for them does Raja Hamidah play a pivotal role in the establishment of Riau.

The stories told by the *OSL* of their history must be contrasted with those orally told by the Malays. Below is a cross-section of narrations by the Malays of the beginnings of the *OSL*.

> Yusof:
> The *OSL* started out as one group. They are the indigens of Riau. In one of the families, everyone died leaving only a surviving brother and sister. The brother married his sister. This couple was so ashamed that they went to stay in the *sampan* out at sea. As a consequence, they did not have any religion. That was how two groups of people came into being...one group in the sea, and one group on land.

> Fatimah:
> The *OSL* were actually also Malays and Muslims. That is why they look like us, Malays. However, they committed some *salah* (wrong doing). The prophet Muhammad asked this group of Malays to get him *ikan idip* (a type of fish). However, this group of Malays ate half of the fish before giving the other half to the Prophet. This angered the Prophet Muhammad so he cursed them. That is how they ended up living in *sampan*s. As a result, they also threw away the Prophet Muhammad and now they don't have a Prophet.

> Raja Rahim:
> The *OSL* is descended from three places, Daik-Lingga, Penyengat and Johor. The *OSL* are the aborigines. They are also Malays. Formerly, they were also Muslims. However, with their constant shift from one

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[21]The perception of Islam as entrenched in sedentism has led many *OSL* to voice the following opinion,

> Sara:
> For those who are Muslims, they cannot live in the sea any longer. According to Islam, you cannot live in a *sampan*. You cannot return to sea. You will be given a house on land. If you insist on living in the *sampan*, your house will be taken away from you. As for those who have entered Christianity, we can still live in a *sampan*. If you enter Islam and insist on returning to live in the *sampan*, you will be jailed.

place to another, there wasn't anyone to teach them Islam. As a result, they forgot Islam.

Long ago, there was a family who lived in a house on land. One day, strong winds collapsed the house. Many in the family died. Those who managed to survive cursed those who had survived on land, so they left to live in the sea instead. They thought that they would be able to move their *sampan*s into smaller rivers to seek refuge during seasons of strong winds.

The *OSL* have advanced considerably now. They want to live in houses on land, and some may even possess their own motorised boats. The government has also helped to build houses for them.

While there are differing details in the accounts given above, there are also similar key issues that are agreed upon. First, the indigenous status of the *OSL* in the Malaydom is undisputed. The *OSL* are acknowledged as indigenous Malays. This is similar to the views held by the *OSL*. Second, although there is no denial that the Malays and *OSL* shared a common descent and religion; the division arose due to the latter's breach of Islamic principles and proper behaviour. The division thus distinguished the coarse, sinful and impure Malays from the refined, pious and pure Malays. Third, this division was also one that was based upon a nomadic versus sedentary lifestyle.

Bearing many similarities to the accounts given by the *OSL*, it is the view here that nomadism as opposed to sedentism is not conducive for upholding Islam. The *OSL* are in a situation similar to that of the *Bajau Laut*, another group of non-Muslim sea-faring nomads in Indonesia. The *Bajau Laut* are believed to be spiritually cursed. Denied a place ashore, the *Bajau Laut* have been forced "to live in boats, dispersed and looked down upon, without status or power" (Sather 1984:13).

The contrast in accounts by the *OSL* and Malays is intended to show that the question of the former's indigenous status is undisputed. However, what remains disputed is the issue of power and a person's position in the hierarchy of being Malay in Riau.

(V) WEAPONS OF THE WEAK

The title of this section is borrowed from Scott's (1985) analysis of the everyday forms of peasant resistance to defend their interest. His attention was directed on the Malaysian village of Sedeka. Scott's study focused on the economic and employment relations encouched in class and ideological struggles between the rich Malay landlords and poor landless Malays.

The *OSL* and Malays in Riau are not engaged in economic and employment relations similar to those of the Malay peasants and landlords in Sedeka. Instead, the concerns of the Malays in Riau centre around the setting up of ethnic boundaries and imposing changes into the culture of the *OSL*. In spite of the differences in the situation between the *OSL* and Malay peasants, the *OSL*'s methods of resistance against domination is comparable to that of the Malaysian peasants.

I have shown how the idea of centralised power and purity as opposed to being an indigen and impure is approached from a top-to-bottom perspective. The *OSL*'s resistance against such a view does not stop at their claim to indigenous ownership of the Malaydom. Their resistance against the Malays is not an outright or collective challenge as it would work against them. Instead, they resist through ways which Scott (*ibid*:29-34) has described as dissimulation, calculated conformity, false compliance, feigned ignorance and slander . These forms of self-help resistance which require minimum or no planning often reap immediate gains.

The *OSL* face immense pressures from the Malays to become Muslims. This is compounded by governmental efforts to Islamise the *OSL*.[22] Islamic

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[22]The Indonesian national ideology is to achieve *bhinneka tunggal ika* (unity in diversity) amongst the various groups of Indonesian peoples. An abstract creed known as *Pancasila* (Five Principles) prescribes belief in:

1. *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa* (A supreme Godhead).
2. *Kemanusiaan Yang Adil Dan Beradab* (A humanism that is legal and proper).
3. *Persatuan Indonesia* (The one-ness of Indonesia).
4. *Kerakyatan Yang Dipimpim oleh Hikmah Kebijaksanaan Dalam Permusy Awararan/ Perwakilan* (A citizenry that is led by wise guidance through consultation/ representation).
5. *Keadilan Sosial Bagi Seluruh Rakyat Indonesia* (Social justice for all the Indonesian people).

representatives are usually sent to evangelise to the *OSL*. It is as described by an *OSL* in Pulau Abang, "We have yet to enter Islam. We are still waiting for someone to come." However, it was evident that they were neither overly interested, nor impatient for any Islamic representative to arrive.

The following is an example of ongoing Islamic missionary activities carried out amongst the *OSL* in Pulau Nanga. This case study also reflects the calculated conformity of the *OSL* to adhere to Islam.

According to my *OSL* informants, they entered Islam a few years prior to my arrival. They recount how the *kepala* (head) of the Malay community in the neighbouring Pulau Sembur together with a government official named Pak Muji from Tanjung Pinang had arrived to ask if they had any religion. They replied that they "did not have any religion". Whereupon, they were asked to become Muslims with the assurance that they would be taken care of. The *OSL* recall how Pak Muji gave them planks of wood and nails to construct their houses on land. He visited and taught each family how to keep their house clean like the Malays. He also gave rice, sugar, soap and cloths for purposes of prayer to every family in the community. The *OSL* were promised that help would be rendered to bury their deceased in a proper manner. The *OSL* were also told that they would be taught how to pray. In addition, promises were made to build a mosque and school in the community.

It is noticeable that whilst the *OSL* who agreed to enter Islam received much aid from Pak Muji in the early stages of their conversion, the Christianised *OSL* in the neighbouring island of Teluk Nipah hardly received any help from Pak Muji. The *OSL* in both communities were told that they would receive wood and nails to construct houses on land even if they chose not to enter Islam. However, the *OSL* in Teluk Nipah maintain that the wood and nails that they received were hardly enough for each family's needs. Pak

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I had obtained a copy of this creed from the *Kantor Camat* (Subdistrict office) in Tanjung Pinang. The translation is by Wee (1985:106). The first principle implies that atheism is un-Indonesian. In this context, adherence to a religion is considered official proof that one is not a communist.

Muji had told them that there was simply not enough wood and nails left after meeting the needs of the Pulau Nanga community.

The *OSL* in Pulau Nanga complain bitterly that after the first stages of help given by Pak Muji, he has since become "useless". However, they are also aware that as long as they are officially recognised as having entered Islam, they can expect visits and help, rare though they may be, from other higher official Islamic institutions.

During the course of my fieldwork amongst the *OSL* in Pulau Nanga, representatives of the Islamic School and Departments of Religious and Social Affairs arrived for half a day's visit. The *OSL* once again complained amongst themselves when Pak Muji ordered them to give the village and their houses a general clean-up. The *OSL* were also organised into building a jetty and contributing Rp 500 per family to purchase bottled drinks for their guests.

However, the *OSL* complied with Pak Muji's instructions as they were also anticipating distributions of clothes and food from their visitors. When the representatives arrived, bags of clothes were presented to Bolong and Ceco, the two eldest brothers who were heads of the *OSL* community. Unknown to the outsiders, Bolong instructed his siblings to remain silent and not question their guests. The more vocal siblings decided to bathe or go fishing during the visit. They explained that they had agreed to obey Bolong and reasoned that "it was better" for them to observe from a distance lest they "opened" their "mouths". The representatives were completely unaware of the arrangement that had taken place behind their backs. They were thus under the impression that they had procured total allegiance from the *OSL* in Pulau Nanga.

During the visit, Bolong and Ceco, as representatives of the *OSL* community, donned their *songkok* (rimless fezlike cap)[23] and followed their visitors in raising their hands during the prayer session. There were quiet whispers and muffled laughter amongst the *OSL*. This was because it was clear to them that their representatives were experiencing great discomfort as

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[23]The *songkok* is worn by men when they pray and on formal occasions.

they were "not used to praying". They told me that Ceco, in comparison to Bolong was better at putting up a public front.

In the Islamic representatives address to the *OSL*, mention was made of how the *OSL* did not speak *Bahasa Melayu*. The representatives also pointed out that the *OSL* did not have names that could be found in "books". However, they noted that upon the *OSL*'s conversion to Islam, they had now adopted Islamic names such as "Muhammad" and "Ali"[24]. Promises were also given that a school and mosque would be built in Pulau Nanga. The entire missionary zeal was therefore to Islamise and educate the *OSL* in refined language and proper behaviour.

It is interesting to note that when I asked the representatives if they would be crossing over to help the *OSL* in the neighbouring islands of Teluk Nipah or Abang, I received the following reply,

> Official:
> No. We were not given any instructions to go over. Perhaps it is because the *OSL* in Teluk Nipah are not Muslims...We didn't even know that there were *OSL* in Pulau Abang. Are they Muslims?

Therefore once again, the *OSL* in Teluk Nipah expressed unhappiness that unlike their Pulau Nanga neighbours, they had not received any help from the visitors.

In view of the possibilities of help that the *OSL* can anticipate upon entering Islam, many have confided in me that "there is nothing to lose" -- except the abstinence from pork -- upon conversion. In the months that I lived with my Islamised *OSL* informants in Pulau Nanga, I was either taught or learnt through observation their calculated forms of conformity.

Midway through my fieldwork, Ross, an *OSL* in Pulau Nanga, fell gravely ill. One of the reasons brought forward for her illness was the fact that her house was built on land, rather than over the sea. Although there were Malays who had built their houses over the sea, I observed that they held

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[24]This remark was made by the representatives with reference to how upon entering Islam, Bolong and Ceco are now also known as Muhammad and Ali.

a different view with regard to where the *OSL* chose to locate their house.

Sopher (1977:1) has described the line that demarcates the strand and the sea as "the zone of transition". He mentions how this zone of transition is "very often characterized by its own special land forms and life forms". Correspondingly, this line is also perceived as a zone of cultural and ethnic transition for the Malays in Riau.

The Malays were insistent that if the intention was to draw the *OSL* into a progressive lifestyle, the latter should construct their houses on land rather than over the sea. Also, the Malays correlated their success in getting the *OSL* to build their houses on land with greater hope in Islamising the *OSL*. This was a clear indication that the Malays saw themselves as losing control and authority over those who chose a nomadic sea-based lifestyle, in comparison to groups in land-based dwellings.

In contrast, the *OSL* regard houses standing on land as "dirty". They explain that this is because their graves are also on land. Therefore, they believe that water from the graves seeps into the ground under their houses when it rains. Furthermore, people urinate and defecate on open land.[25] When Ross recovered, her family tore apart their house and rebuilt it over the sea. This triggered off a slow but steady exodus of all land-based houses to the sea. The move was initially unnoticeable until all the houses were rebuilt over the sea. It was only then that the Malays in surrounding islands began to comment that this was a clear indication that the *OSL* could not survive on land, and were reverting to their former lifestyle.

My *OSL* informants explained that it had always been their intention to build their houses over the sea. However, when they were first given the construction materials by Pak Muji, he had issued strict instructions that all houses had to be built on land. Pak Muji had warned the *OSL* that if they wanted to challenge this official statement, they would have to write to the government offices in Jakarta and Pekanbaru. The *OSL* explained that they felt intimidated at the thought of dealing with the authorities because of their

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[25]Even when houses are built over the sea, people still urinate and defecate on land, rather than into the sea.

illiteracy. Bolong, as head of the *OSL*, therefore agreed to Pak Muji's instructions and the others had no choice but to comply.

The *OSL* claim that in moving their houses to the sea now, they had in fact obeyed all initial instructions. However, they believed that it was time to move as it was beyond their control that people were falling ill now. They reasoned that unless Pak Muji wanted to be answerable for all the deaths or provide effective medical aid, he should not fault them for moving their houses down to the sea. More importantly, they pointed out that they were unable to consult Pak Muji on this matter due to his infrequent visits to the community.

Another form of passive non-compliance by the *OSL* in Pulau Nanga was also evident during the *Hari Raya Puasa* (a religious festival after the fasting period) celebrations in the neighbouring Malay island of Sembur. The Malays in Sembur avoid interacting with the *OSL*. However, they were obliged to host a *kenduri* (religious feast) during *Hari Raya Puasa* for all Muslims in the surrounding area. This included inviting the *OSL*.[26] To their disappointment, anger and embarrassment, no *OSL* appeared. When I asked the *OSL* if they had reasons for not wanting to attend the *kenduri*, they shrugged it off by saying that they did not have enough eggs to make cakes for the *kenduri*.

The Malays felt insulted by what they considered to be the poor excuse given by the *OSL*. The Malays maintain that they were not even expecting any contributions from the *OSL*. As this was a period to celebrate the forgiveness of all wrong doings, the Malays could not exhibit any unpleasantness. However, they were certain that the *OSL* did not attribute any importance to the event, and were only keen on carrying on with their fishing activities.

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[26]Scott (1985:171), explains that these *kenduri*es are "a sacred obligation" to "promote social harmony" and to cleanse any "jealousy or hatred" from all parties concerned. It is usually an act of giving by the privileged to the less privileged. In the context of Islam, the benefactor, if of pure heart, will be rewarded. I share Scott's view (1985:169) that these *kenduri*es are "sensitive barometers of class relations". Therefore, they are "rituals of compassion and social control".

Another prime concern in the conversion to Islam is the need to abstain from eating pork and drinking liquor. The *OSL* are aware that they are constantly being watched and criticised as "pork-eaters" by the Malays. However, even these Malays admit that they cannot make exact identifications as they have never caught an *OSL* buying or eating pork.

Pork is not commonly eaten by the *OSL*. This is due to several reasons. First, there are those who obey the laws of Islam. Second, there are those who do not like the taste of pork. Third, the meat is not easily available. However, for those who still desire to eat pork despite having officially entered Islam, they have devised various ways of obtaining it with the assurance of remaining anonymous.

The *OSL* are often able to get pork by collaborating with their Chinese *thau-ke*s (bosses). For example, my *OSL* informants would often choose a time when there would be no Malays around to approach their *thau-ke*s. The pork is then brought in from Tanjung Pinang via the boats owned by their *thau-ke*s. The Malays assume that such pork is for the *thau-ke*'s family. The *OSL* would then visit their *thau-ke*'s shop late at night to collect the pork. It is not unusual for people to bring in their fish at all hours of the night to the *thau-ke*, and in turn make purchases for provisions from his shop. The *OSL* thus seize this time as an opportunity to collect the pork as it is less crowded and very difficult to see the transactions that take place in the dark. Often when the Chinese *thau-ke*s discover that their *OSL anak-buah* (followers/ underlings) want the left-overs of pork from their religious feasts, they would arrange a late collection time for them.

Tins of pork are also available from the Chinese *thau-ke*s. Ways have been devised between the Chinese *thau-ke*s and the *OSL* to enable the latter to walk away with the tins of pork safely. In one shop, the *thau-ke* kept all his tinned-pork hidden beneath a counter. Whenever the *OSL* asked for these tins of pork, the *thau-ke* would as an added precautionary measure, remove all labels and wrap the tins for the *OSL*.

The *OSL* have also adopted the method of feigned ignorance in obtaining pork. The Chinese *thau-ke*s sell a variety of Chinese cakes during

major Chinese festivals. The sale of such cakes are aimed at the other Chinese in the islands. The Malays believe that most of these cakes are made of lard, and have refused to buy them. On the other hand, the *OSL* delight in these cakes. One day, while one of my *OSL* informants was making a purchase, the *thau-ke* thought it his duty to inform her that the Malays considered this particular cake to contain lard. She smiled at him and replied, "But they are not certain that it does, yeah? No one knows for sure." The *thau-ke* gave an understanding smile and wrapped the cake in newspaper for her. She was thereafter a regular customer. In the same way, liquor is obtained from the Chinese. The *OSL* would often tell me that "a little liquor is good for the health".

There are also times when the eating of pork is difficult for the *OSL* who have Malay spouses. In one such case, an *OSL* woman who claimed to be Christian, told me that she was going to invite her brother who had entered Islam over to eat pork.[27] I asked how this would be possible for he had already entered Islam. She said that her brother's wife who was Malay would not like it if he ate pork at home. However, she knew that he missed eating pork. She would therefore help him out periodically by inviting him over for a meal. She explained that he would not be given advanced information of what he was going to eat. Once seated, it would be considered very rude of him to refuse her food. She added that he always enjoyed his meal.

The "trading of stories" is another tool of resistance prevalent amongst the *OSL*. Below are examples of stories told by my *OSL* informants comparing their position to that of the *OSL* in Indonesia and Malaysia.

Ceco:

> Look at the *OSL* in Malaysia. We are the same. As the indigenous peoples of Malaysia, they are well-provided for. The *OSL* have been given motorised boats, nice houses, rice, money, motorcycles and television sets. We know because we have been told all this by people

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[27]This *OSL* woman had been baptised into Christianity by Christian missionaries. The latter had entered her husband's village while she and her husband were there fishing together. On the other hand, her brother was a Muslim as Muslim missionaries had persuaded his community to enter Islam.

> who have been to Malaysia. There was once a television programme featuring the *OSL* in Malaysia. We saw the place they lived in and their fishing equipment. They were given everything. They even had television aerials sticking out of their houses.

This same story was then retold by Ceco's brother, Boat.

> Boat:
> We have been told by those who have been to Malaysia of how the *OSL* there can have anything they want. They have been given not one, but two houses, two motorised boats...they have enough. It is not like us here. We are not given anything!

If the Malays have looked beyond to the wider Malaydom, such as Malaysia with stories to legitimise their kingship, the *OSL* too have employed similar methods in justifying their indigenous status. They exchange stories of the privileged status of the *OSL* there whom they "have seen over television" or "have heard from those who have been to Malaysia". They claim that this is because the Malays there respect the indigenous status of the *OSL*. These stories are intended to shame the Malays in Riau for their lack of respect and concern for their indigenous Malays.

The *OSL* also express collective grievance against the Malays by telling stories of "*jahat*" (evil/ wicked) Malays. To illustrate how evil the Malays are, the *OSL* often relate how the Malays even poison one another. The *OSL* of Pulau Nanga had a favourite story to tell me.

Some years prior to my fieldwork, the Malays in Pulau Sembur invited another group of Malays for a football match in Pulau Sembur. No *OSL* was invited to play in the match. Soon after the match, there was an epidemic which killed most of the Malays in Sembur. The few surviving Malays fled Pulau Sembur in fear. Some even sought refuge by putting up movable sunshades of palm thatch over their *sampan*s and went out to live in the sea like the *OSL*. Pulau Sembur became deserted except for the three Chinese families who remained in their homes. No Chinese died. According to my *OSL* informants, this was because the Chinese, like the *OSL*, had not participated in the football match. Their lives had thus been spared. Also, the Chinese are seen as having powerful deities that protect them even when the

Malays want to harm them. The *OSL* explained that the Malays in Sembur "cheated" during the match. This antagonised their opponents who decided to curse them.

The *OSL* also laugh at how easy it is to fool the Malays. The *OSL* are aware that the Malays also refer to the criteria of physical appearance and speech to distinguish themselves from the *OSL*. In turn, the *OSL* have manipulated these criteria to fool the Malays themselves. The *OSL* would often dress-up and apply make-up when they travel into Tanjung Pinang. Upon their return, they would often have merry accounts of how even the Malays had mistaken them as fellow Malays.

Beneath the safe disguise of outward compliance, the *OSL* have shown the extent of their resistance to the pressures exerted by the Malays to alter their lifestyle. The *OSL* have refused to conform to the standards of purity imposed upon them by the Malays. Calculated conformity, false compliance, feigned ignorance, gossip, rumours and jokes by the *OSL* have served to indicate the actual degree (Scott 1985:282-283) to which the *OSL* have accepted the code of conduct imposed upon them by the Malays. They are clear, but safe indications of the *OSL*'s contempt and defiance of the social order constructed by the Malays. In these forms of defiance, the *OSL* are defining their conception of an alternative Malaydom.

(VI) REDEFINING PURITY

Not all *OSL* resist every criteria of purity as defined by the Malays. This is especially so for communities of *OSL* who have been pressured into a religious conversion. These groups of *OSL* have incorporated aspects of the ideology upheld by the Malays into their own system of social organisation. This is comparable to the situation of gypsies in Southern England. As a subordinate group, the gypsies have incorporated "symbols, rites and myths" from the larger society (Okely 1983:77). The *OSL*, like other oppressed groups, such as the gypsies have chosen to select and reject certain aspects of the dominant society's ideology. In this case, whatever is adopted takes on a new coherence which serves to accommodate

the *OSL* on two counts. First, to identify themselves as a group independent from the Malays. Second, to rank the different groups of *OSL* according to a perceived degree of evilness.

In relation to the first point, the *OSL* have adopted the criterion of religion as an indicator of their entry into the wider world community. This also attests to their non-evilness, hence purity. The Malays focus specifically on Islam. However, the *OSL* are aware of the possibilities of choosing alternative religions. They also know that these options are recognised by the Malays. They can thus decide to convert to Roman Catholicism, Protestantism or "*agama Tiong-hua*" (religion of the Chinese)[28]. For those who select one of the alternatives,[29] they discern a joining with the outside world through membership of believers in the faith (Wee 1985:581). Thus, on the one hand, they see other groups of *OSL* who "do not have a religion" as evil in comparison to themselves. On the other hand, they also regard themselves as forming an allegiance to a high centre more powerful than the Malays. For example, the *OSL* have told me about the leadership of the pope and the powers of the Christian God.

The move towards adopting a religion is also regarded by both the Malays and the *OSL* as a transition from nomadism to sedentism. This is yet another indicator for the Malays that the *OSL* have advanced into the world community. From the perspective of the *OSL*, this transition of their identity relocates them as an independent group beyond the boundaries of the Malaydom.

The *OSL* have also adopted aspects of the notion of purity to evaluate other *OSL*. I mentioned earlier that during the period of the sultan, the respective groups of *OSL* were ranked according to the task that they were assigned to. In turn, this has affected how the *OSL* would rather identify

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[28]Hinduism is an officially recognised religion too. However, my informants never talked of it as there were very few Hindus in the Riau archipelago.

[29]Roman Catholicism and Protestantism are two of the more popular alternative choices amongst the *OSL*.

themselves with a prestigious group.[30] This system of classification has also influenced how different groups of *OSL* look at each other. The *OSL* are constantly categorising others as belonging to a less prestigious group. However, the relation between work tasks and the prestige of each group is no longer relevant.

There is therefore, another ongoing idea of "evilness or wickedness" that the *OSL* capitalise on to demarcate internal divisions. It is the very criterion of religion and language which the *OSL* have adopted to identify this "evilness." Below are excerpts of two *OSL* belonging to rival groups to illustrate this point.

> Suri:
> We here, are *Suku Galang*. Those on the opposite side are *Suku Barok*. So, be careful of them. They speak *Bahasa Barok*. It is very funny when you listen to them. They reverse the meaning of words that we would normally understand them to be. They cannot speak *Bahasa Melayu*. No one can comprehend them. The *Suku Barok* are evil. They are very powerful in their *ilmu* [*hitam*] (knowledge/ magic [black]). They are not like us here. They are Catholics. We are Muslims and Protestants...No, Catholics and Protestants are not the same. The Catholics are *orang lain* (different people/ outsiders). They are evil. They do not pray like us.
>
> Meen:
> Did they tell you that they were *Suku Galang*? They are lying. They humour me. They are ashamed to tell you that they are *Suku Tambus*. They speak a different language from everyone else. Even I cannot understand their language. No one knows what they are talking about.

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[30]It was impossible to draw up a comprehensive list of the different groups of *OSL* based upon information given by my informants. This was due to several problems. First, almost everyone would have a different listing. Second, it was not uncommon for them to make situational changes in their identity. Third, rival groups would often contradict each other on their identification claims.

Wee (1985) was also confronted with the impossible task of deriving a comprehensive list from her informants. She (*ibid*:245) offers the following explanation, "whether this imposition of classificatory fragmentation had any effect on the indigens themselves would have depended on how seriously they regarded the view of the political centre. The consequence is that it is practically impossible to obtain a comprehensive list of *sukus* because it all depends on who one asks." This is a plausible reason.

However, it can also be conversely argued that the *OSL* have been so influenced by the view of the former political centre that it pressurises them to align themselves to a more prestigious group. The consequences as such contribute towards the problems in compiling a comprehensive list of the different groups of *OSL*.

> I am *Suku Barok* and my wife is *Suku Mantang*. But look at us here, we can speak *Bahasa Melayu*. The *Suku Barok* are good.
>
> Be careful of those on the opposite side. They are very powerful in their *ilmu*. We have *ilmu* too, but we are not evil like the people on the opposite side. We are Catholics and do not want to poison anyone. They have no religion and like poisoning people. They say that they are Muslims and Protestants. But that is so only in name. They do not pray, and they still eat pork. We can eat pork because we are Catholics.

Suri and Meen are from Pulau Nanga and Teluk Nipah respectively. Their views adequately represent the opinions of the other members of the respective communities.

Both Suri and Meen have argued about group membership, and the status accorded with respective groups.[31] Congruous to their claims to non-evilness is the criterion of possessing a religion and fluency of the Malay language. The excerpts above show Suri and Meen to be relating evilness and goodness to particular religious affiliations. It was the case that the *OSL* in Teluk Nipah and Pulau Nanga saw each other as evil because of their respective alignments to different religions.

However, it must be pointed out that the *OSL* are aware that religious affiliation does not correspond to group membership. For example, those who identify themselves as *Suku Mantang* or *Suku Barok* in Teluk Nipah may claim allegiance to Roman Catholicism. However, they will also readily say that their *Suku Mantang* and *Suku Barok* siblings elsewhere are Muslims. Yet, they will say that their relatives are real Muslims, hence not evil as compared to their *OSL* neighbours in Pulau Nanga. The reason being that the *OSL* in Pulau Nanga neither take their religion seriously nor adhere strictly to all the principles that have been laid down by the religion.

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[31]Based upon the hierarchical system of the former sultanate, the *Suku Tambus* were regarded as "being the lowest in rank. [They] had the meanest work, being in charge of the hunting dogs" (Sopher 1977:93 quoted from Schot 1882:472). In contrast, the *Suku Galang* were piratical sea nomads. Hence, they were accorded with greater prestige because they could either align themselves to the power holders (Sopher 1977:96-99) or pose potential threats to them (Wee 1985:248).

(VII) SUMMARY

The aristocrat Malays consider themselves as pure Malays. They claim to be vested with an authority that is legitimated by the principles of Islam, on behalf of the Malaydom. For the pure Malays, an ordered Malaydom is perceived in terms of a hierarchy of social relationships based upon centred spaces and positions (Keeler 1987:19; Errington 1989:98; Anderson 1972) of power. All other Malays, such as the *OSL* in the periphery are expected not to contest the central position of power and authority of the pure Malays in the Malaydom.

The Malays accept the *OSL* as the indigenous Malays of the Malaydom. They even acknowledge sharing a common origin with the *OSL*. However, the Malays differentiate themselves from the *OSL* based upon the criteria (Barth 1969:15; Anderson 1972; Hobsbawmand Ranger 1992:9) of religion, code of conduct, language, physical appearance and a sedentary as opposed to a nomadic lifestyle. These are criteria used by the pure Malays to demarcate group boundaries within the Malaydom. On the basis of these criteria, the Malays also differentiate and categorise themselves and the *OSL* for purposes of interaction. I will examine how this has affected the patterns of exchange between the Malays and the *OSL* in the subsequent chapters of this thesis.

In actuality, the vitality of the pure Malays' centralised position in the Malaydom has been perpetuated by the active role of political supporters. During the period of the sultan, such supporters were conferred honorific titles. Currently, the Indonesian government's recognition of the aristocrat Malays in Pulau Penyengat as representatives of the Malays in Riau is a renewed impetus to the central role of authority claimed by the pure Malays.

Like many underprivileged groups elsewhere (see for example, Scott 1985; Howe 1991), there are some *OSL* who are aware of gaining some material benefit through their conformity in the prevailing system. They are aware of gaining short-term advantages through their calculated adherence to the dominant ideology of the Malays. Yet, there are other *OSL* who have refused to be incorporated into the ideal Malaydom of the pure Malays.

Therefore, the pure Malays see themselves as protecting the Malaydom against those *OSL* who refuse to be incorporated into the ordered Malaydom based upon the criteria discussed above. Such *OSL* are seen as threatening, challenging, resisting and endangering the ideal social structure of the Malaydom. These *OSL* have presented the pure Malays with an alternative Malaydom in which they make claims of power through indigenous status and *ilmu hitam* (black magic). The latter will be discussed in the following chapter. The Malays disapprove of such sources of power. They deem them as impure and dangerous. Therefore, there is on the part of the Malays, a clear correlation between their authority and controlled spiritual power (Leach 1961:29-32; Douglas 1985:101).

Plate 3
The Great Mosque of the Riau Sultan of Penyengat.

Plate 4
Construction materials were given to the *OSL* by government authorities to set up this *OSL* settlement in Pulau Nanga. Under the instructions of the authorities, the *OSL* had to build their houses on land. The thick cover of coconut trees has hidden most of the houses. The coconut trees dotting the island is also an indication of human settlement. Towards the end of my fieldwork, the *OSL* deconstructed almost all the houses built on land and moved them over the sea.

Plate 5
A visit from Muslim missionaries to the Pulau Nanga *OSL* community.

Plate 6
The *OSL* community in Dapur Enam, Headmandom of Pulau Abang.

Plate 7
The interior of an *OSL*'s house in Dapur Enam.

Plate 8
The Christianising *OSL* community of Tiang Wang Kang, Batam. This picture shows Atong, the head of the Tiang Wang Kang *OSL* community delivering a Sunday sermon.

CHAPTER THREE: *ILMU*[1]

(I) INTRODUCTION

The Malays often talk of the *OSL* as possessing the most powerful "*ilmu hitam*" (black magic), or what is more commonly referred to as "*ilmu*" (magic), in the Malaydom. This is believed to be a consequence of the *OSL*'s "lack of religion". As such, the power possessed by the *OSL* is feared as dangerous and "*jahat*" (evil). The greatest anxiety of the Malays and non-Malays[2] concerning bewitchment by an *OSL* is that they would then "follow" the latter into their lifestyle. For the Malays, this would also mean lapsing to the lowest rung of the Malay hierarchy.

The *OSL* claim to possess the knowledge and ability to capture, subjugate and harm the inner essence of others. The Malays believe and fear such powers of the *OSL*. They see this as a constant challenge and threat to invert the ideal Malaydom's power structure based upon Islamic principles.

My foremost concern is thus to describe how the *OSL*'s beliefs and practices of *ilmu* cluster around capturing the inner essence of others. I begin by discussing the process through which the *OSL* acquire this *ilmu*. This leads to an examination of the methods and materials used for abducting and controlling inner essences. This forms the basis to making intelligible how a person's inner essence can be merged with or embedded in things. As such, things can share a common identity with their owners.

The discussion extends into looking at how the *OSL* are also able to merge their being with spirits. My focus is concentrated on the ways in which the *OSL* establish a spiritual link with the spirits that control the maritime

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[1]The word, "*ilmu*" is an Arabic-derived word which means "knowledge" or science. Wilkinson (1959:421) lists the different kinds of "knowledge" that the word "*ilmu*" refers to as, "learning [based on divine revelation], science, magic, any branch of knowledge or magic." According to Endicott (1991:13), the Malay word for magic is *ilmu*. Thus, the term used by the *OSL* and Malays can be translated as magic, witchcraft and/or knowledge derived from a spiritual realm. I am thus using the word interchangeably to refer to any one of these aspects.

[2]Although most of the Chinese in Riau are not Muslims, they are regarded as a safe people with their own "Chinese religion".

world. I look at how these links with spirits are mediated by exchange and reciprocity. The aim is to provide a focus for thought to the meaning of things, exchange and identity of the *OSL*.

Endicott's (1991) analysis of Malay magic has served as a useful guide in organising most of my material on the *OSL*'s *ilmu*. The applicability lies in the all encompassing approach that he has adopted. His study on "Malay folk religion" has taken account of the "heterogeneity of the Malay population" and the varied "religious traditions that have influenced the area of western Indonesia" (*ibid*:1).

(II) SOURCES OF POWER

The *OSL* are criticised by the Malays for having an "uncertain" religion as they celebrate "the festivals and religion of everyone". The Malays are quick to point out that the *OSL* are still behoved to other spirits. Hence, they are believed to indulge in the evil pleasures of "playing with poison" and "harming" others. The Malays do not see the *OSL* as committed to the one God that Islam demands of its followers. This perceived ambiguity challenges the pure Malays' perception of Islam as the basis of legitimation for their leadership in the Malaydom (Milner 1981).

In contrast to this, the *OSL* regard the Malays as evil. This is because the *OSL* maintain the *Koran* contains instructions on how to cast spells and practice black magic.[3] The *OSL* accuse the Malays of such evilness that the latter are not only constantly trying to poison the *OSL*, but even other fellow Malays, and the Chinese.

During the initial stages of my fieldwork, the *OSL* were unwilling to divulge any information concerning their relationship with spirits. It was only after several months into my fieldwork when they trusted me that they spoke of their associations with the *hantu laut* (sea spirits) and the *hantu darat* (land

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[3]According to Endicott (1991:15), "another way to obtain *ilmu* is through *tuntut* (pursuing knowledge), seeking after it by practices such as praying, fasting, and reciting the Koran until a revelation comes in a dream or spell of temporary madness."

spirits)[4]. Their initial denials stemmed from fears that I, like the pure Malays, would see them as "evil".

The Malays regard good *ilmu* as revealed by God only, while evil *ilmu* is derived from spirits.[5] On the other hand, while the *OSL* endorse such beliefs, they also believe that spirits can render good *ilmu*. For the *OSL*, any *ilmu* revealed by God or spirits which can be used to "help" the general well-being of a person is considered good *ilmu*.[6]

The *OSL* are engaged in an on-going system of reciprocity with various spirits. They apply their *ilmu* in many areas of their life. Therefore, the achievements and successes of the *OSL* are seen as a testimony to their relationship with these spirits and the power of their *ilmu*.

This is clearly a situation where two systems of power clash within one society (Brown 1970). On the one hand, the Malays[7] define and agree that purity through Islam is the only recognised route to power in the Malaydom. By rejecting other ways, the Malays also refuse to accept other additional sources of power. They spurn any other "impure, and hence polluting

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[4]The sea spirits and land spirits are not to be confused with the spirits of deceased people.

[5]The Malays believe that Muslim Malay *bomoh*s or *dukun*s (indigenous medicine people) possess good *ilmu*. Such healers claim that they only use Koranic verses to cast their spells. They claim to practise *ilmu sihir* which is supposed to be derived from Islam, even though it is not part of Islam as such (Wee 1985:531). The Arabic word *sihr* does indeed mean "bewitchment, beguilement, enchantment, fascination...sorcery, witchcraft,magic, charm (of a woman)" (Wehr 1976:400).

[6]The *OSL* and Malays believe that there exists also neutral knowledge such as scientific knowledge (Wee 1985:530), which is derived from outsiders. The *ilmu* that a person possesses is used to prepare either good and safe, or bad and dangerous *obat* (medicines). "Foreign" or "western" medicines are regarded safe because they are prepared from neutral knowledge. My informants know that these medicines are "powerful" and overdoses may prove fatal. However, such deaths are viewed differently from being "poisoned" by someone's black magic. The *OSL* explain that medicine prepared by good and evil *ilmu*, unlike "western medicine", are made of "leaves and wood". Hence, they are cautious of people with such capabilities. The *OSL* stress that the only other people apart from themselves who prepare such medicines in Riau are the Malays. The Chinese are not seen as possessing such *ilmu*. According to the *OSL*, Chinese physicians are the only Chinese with the potential to poison anyone. This is because they possess extensive knowledge of "making medicine from leaves and wood". However, the *OSL* are certain that Chinese physicians, unlike the Malays, have no interest in poisoning anyone.

[7]This is especially so with the pure Malays who are the power holders in the Malaydom.

alternatives [of Malayness]" (Wee 1985:550). Contrary to this is the *OSL*'s assertion of the multiple sources of power. Therefore, although the Malays may even admire the power of the *OSL*, this power is essentially illegitimate. This is similar to Brown's analysis of how the accuser of magic and witchcraft is one who adheres to 'the Single Image' of power. This is compared with the sorcerer and witch who are seen as 'invested with the Double Image' of power.

Along the same line of thought, I find Douglas' (1970) theory of witchcraft accusations applicable to the situation of accusations of evil *ilmu* in Riau. According to Douglas (*ibid*:xxv), witchcraft accusations depend on "what pattern of relationships need redefining at the time". She goes on to state that people are trying to control one another, albeit with small success. The idea of the witch is used to whip their own consciences or those of their friends. The witch image is as effective as the idea of the community is strong.

I follow Douglas in arguing that accusations of *ilmu* serve important social functions (Mayer 1990:62) in structuring the hierarchy of power and domination in terms of what it means to be a 'pure' Malay in Riau.

(III) ACQUIRING *ILMU*: THE INITIATION PROCESS

Evans-Pritchard (1976) distinguishes a "witch" from a "sorcerer" in the following way. The witch possesses innate powers to harm others, while the sorcerer uses "magic medicines" for similar results. Nevertheless, both sorcery and witchcraft have the same powers and they can be used to achieve good or evil purposes.

The *OSL* and Malays refer to people who practice *ilmu* as "*dukuns*" and "*bomohs*" (indigenous medicine people). These words are often interchangeable. However, sometimes, the two terms are used to differentiate between healers and other practitioners of *ilmu* (Endicott 1991:13-14). The latter are usually described as people who "*pakai ilmu*" (use magic).

Occasionally, my *OSL* and Malay informants differentiate between the functions of magic and the methods of operation to harm others.[8]

The Malays regard the *OSL* as intrinsically evil. Hence, they believe that the *OSL* are more inclined to practise evil *ilmu* to harm others. However, I was not able to obtain clearly defined answers as to what constituted this intrinsic evilness. Neither were my Malay informants explicit in correlating this belief with any notion of hereditary witchcraft transmission. Instead, it was common to hear the Malays accusing *OSL* children for being evil because "the children learn evil *ilmu* from their parents". The Malays also talked of the *OSL* as acquiring their *ilmu* through their relationship with evil spirits.

Therefore, the *OSL* and Malays did not focus their attention on distinguishing hereditary magicians from initiated magicians. Their main concern revolved around the issue of whether it was the *OSL* or Malays who possessed and practised good or evil *ilmu*.

The *OSL* are said to possess the most extensive *ilmu* which enables them to diagnose and cure various illnesses, safeguard pregnancies and deliver babies, construct houses,[9] control the maritime world and winds[10], hunt and

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[8]However, Endicott (1991:13-19) maintains that the Malays do make distinctions between hereditary and initiated magicians. He notes that the magic of hereditary magicians are considered more effective. Wee (1985:531) also sees the applicability of Evans-Pritchard's definition of witches and sorcerers in Riau. She (*ibid*:531-532) proposes the following explanation:

> ...a Muslim [Malay] is regarded as intrinsically good, whereas a non-Muslim [Malay] is regarded as intrinsically bad. As a consequence, [it is believed that] only the good can have good 'knowledge'; the bad would have access only to bad 'knowledge'...I have glossed this bad 'knowledge' as 'witchcraft' because evil is attributed not to the act of knowing, but to the person who knows...The *bomoh* (shaman)...exists even in the communities that are considered [pure]...The kind of 'knowledge' that a *bomoh* has is generally referred to as *ilmu sihir*...The 'knowledge' of such sorcerers is considered acceptable if these sorcerers are themselves acceptable as Muslims...*Ilmu sihir* is thus supposed to have an Islamic derivation...Because of this..., a *bomoh*'s *ilmu sihir* is not regarded as intrinsically evil...In contrast, the bad 'knowledge' of witchcraft is an evil mystery to which my [pure] informants feel they have no direct access."

[9]The use of *ilmu* is deemed necessary to choose the best site and time for the building process. It is also necessary in the process of adopting a house.

[10]Controlling of the winds is especially important for navigational purposes. Also, winds send ripples across the surface of the sea. This makes it difficult for the *OSL* to gauge the position of the fish for their spear-fishing method.

gather jungle resources to supplement their diet,[11] pull in crowds when they entertain with their musical instruments during *joget* (dance) sessions, propitiate or intimidate spirits and control souls. However, the *OSL* are always fearfully seen as concentrating their efforts in preparing love potions to induct others into their way of life.

While the *OSL* acknowledge that they themselves possess the most powerful *ilmu* in the Malaydom, they make an added claim that they only practice good *ilmu*. My *OSL* informants have also always stressed that they acquire their *ilmu* through formal training.

The *OSL* will form an attachment as a student or disciple to an established *dukun*. By going through a ceremony of initiation, the student will obtain the right to use the *ilmu* of the teacher and the line of *dukun*s through which the *ilmu* has passed (Endicott 1991:14). The following is an account of how Suri, an *OSL dukun* renowned for her love charms and skills as a midwife, adopted me as a member of her family and initiated me into her *ilmu*. Suri had herself been initiated into the *ilmu* of her parents and various other *dukun*s. She was in the process of deciding which of her children should be initiated into her *ilmu* for delivering babies. She confided that her second youngest daughter, Anita, showed great potential. However, Suri feared that Anita was still too young to be initiated into such powerful *ilmu* as it could overpower her and lead to her death.

It was only towards the latter half of my fieldwork that Suri trusted me enough to initiate me into her *ilmu*. I had expressed an interest in acquiring a whole range of *ilmu* from controlling the maritime world to delivering babies. However, it was Suri who decided that it was more important for me to be initiated into the various love charms. Like most of my *OSL* friends, Suri was concerned that I was still unmarried. Therefore, she thought it most practical and important that I dealt with this matter immediately. Hence, Suri

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[11]It is believed that *ilmu* is necessary for attracting one's prey, making equipment used (traps, snares etc.) effective, and for protection against any dangers in the carcases of the animals killed. It is also believed that *ilmu* is necessary for the gathering of jungle resources to propitiate the spirits that guard the products (Endicott 1991:24).

decided that it would be best for me to learn how to "beautify" myself to "get any man" I desired and to "protect" myself from any scorn.

The learning process stretched across a few months. This was because Suri stipulated different conditions for the teaching and learning of the respective spells to ensure their effectiveness. For example, for some spells to be effective, Suri insisted that she could only impart her *ilmu* to me at certain times of the day. Therefore, there were spells that could only be imparted while the sun was appearing or disappearing over the horizon. On the other hand, there were spells that could not be uttered after mid-day lest we destroyed the power in them. Furthermore, there were spells which Suri could repeat herself more than once to me during the teaching-learning process. Yet, there were also other spells which were impossible for her to repeat lest the spells lost their power.

Suri initiated me into her *ilmu* in utmost secrecy. I was taught to mumble or silently recite all the spells to maintain their secrecy. My mentor had to be certain that there was no one around to eavesdrop on our training sessions. I was told that this was to protect the power in our *ilmu*. Various *OSL dukuns* explained that the eavesdropper would gain the power of the *ilmu*. Even more dangerously, the eavesdropper would be able to use the *ilmu* to harm the person who had originally possessed it. This is due to the *OSL*'s belief that they could be harmed by others through their own *ilmu*. Throughout my training sessions with Suri, I was made to "*sumpah*" (swear) never to impart her *ilmu*[12] to anyone lest either one of us be harmed. This is because her initiation of me into her *ilmu* now meant that she had established a bond of common identity with me.

Upon the completion of my sessions with Suri, she instructed me to present her with some tamarind, salt and a nail. The nail was first dipped into the tamarind and salt before she licked part of it off. Suri then asked me to swallow the remainder of the salt and tamarind from the nail.

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[12]This differs from Endicott's (1991) analysis of Malay magic, in that he only discusses *ilmu* as "magical knowledge" without seeing it as having the capacity to contain the soul substance of its possessor.

I was constantly reminded by the *OSL* that the incantation of all spells is incomplete without the manipulation of certain material objects. Sometimes, accompanying actions are also necessary to empower the spells. I employ Endicott's (1991:133-145) categorisation of these accompanying materials and actions according to their functions as "boundary strengtheners", "boundary weakeners", "essence receptacles", "communicators" and "offerings" for the persuasion of essences.

The *OSL* explain that whenever any spell is cast for someone else, both the giver and recipient must respectively receive and give an iron nail, tamarind and salt. This exchange is necessary to "lock" the *ilmu*. It is to ensure the continuing effectiveness of the *ilmu* when it is applied again at a later date.

The powers of iron are well documented in the literature on Malay magic (see for example, Skeat 1900; Winstedt 1961; Swettenham 1895). Iron is believed to function as a boundary strengthener (Endicott 1991:133)[13] in that it possesses the power to keep a person's soul in their body. Thus, upon casting a spell, the giving of iron is to ensure that no vacuum is left for other spirits to enter. Iron therefore maintains the boundaries of the body and the environment.

Upon the conclusion of my training sessions, Suri also reminded me to give her some money along with a non-monetary item.[14] *Ilmu* is an inalienable possession of the *OSL*. Therefore, Suri stressed that she could not

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[13]Other elements such as gold and silver are also believed to possess similar powers to iron. However, because of their scarcity and costliness, substitutes are used. For example, white cotton thread is often used to represent silver. In Chapter Four, I describe the giving of a white cotton thread to a midwife after she had applied her *ilmu* on a conceiving woman. The *OSL* also use tumeric to dye the colour of rice that is used to offer to spirits. The colour yellow, I believe, is a colour association to represent gold. The scattering of yellow rice to spirits is used in different situations. For instance, when I was in the *OSL* community in Tiang Wang Kang, a pregnant woman developed premature pains. A *dukun* prepared a plate of various coloured rice -- yellow being one of them -- made out in the shape of a human being. The *dukun* rotated the plate over the head of the woman and simultaneously cast a spell. I was told that this was to protect the pregnant woman from being "eaten by spirits". In the event of a death, yellow rice is also scattered to protect the other surviving members of the community.

[14]The role of money will be further discussed in Chapter Six.

ask for money nor quote a specific amount as that would mean that she was selling her *ilmu*. She emphasised that the money that I would "give" was not similar to paying for something that I had bought. This was because she was neither keen nor able to sell her *ilmu*. Rather, Suri maintained that she had chosen to impart her *ilmu* to me and not to anyone else, as *ilmu* was not something that could be circulated around freely.

Parallels in Endicott's (1991:14-20) analysis of the ceremony for acquiring *ilmu* can be seen in the way the *OSL*, such as the case of Suri and myself, initiate others into their *ilmu*. As explained by Endicott (*ibid*:14-15),

> The [initiation] ceremony features prominently a payment by the initiate to the original *guru* [teacher] in the line of transmission (this is actually received by the living magician, of course). The initiate is brought into a particular magical tradition and is sworn to secrecy regarding its contents. A prospective magician may study with more than one master. The teacher could be one's parent, relative or even someone from outside the community.

The items that Suri had asked for therefore constituted a form of exchange to indicate that I was entering into a line of transmission in a particular "magical tradition".

As argued by Endicott (1991:15) in view of Cuisinier's (1936:7) ideas, the "initiation creates artificially a right to use *ilmu* analogous to the right transmitted naturally by heredity". According to Endicott (1991:15), Cuisinier maintains that the initiation ceremony includes a swearing to secrecy of the *ilmu* as a condition for the right to use the *ilmu* of a particular tradition. All initiates are therefore taught that spells must be protected. They can only be silently recited or incoherently mumbled.

Endicott (1991:19-20) agrees with Cuisinier that people who practice *ilmu* try to maintain secrecy surrounding their *ilmu*. However, he disagrees that this is done to protect the effectiveness of the *ilmu*. Instead, Endicott argues that it is professional jealousy that causes *ilmu* to be so closely guarded. He rationalises that it is the business of *dukun*s to know what other people do not know, and that sharing the knowledge would diminish their importance and the demand for their services. He maintains that it is

precisely because *ilmu* is believed to work for anyone that it is jealously guarded.

While there is much plausibility in what both Endicott and Cuisinier say, I am also of the opinion that neither of them have understood the full implications of *ilmu*. I suggest that *ilmu* can also be understood as an inalienable possession that bears a common identity with its owner. As an inalienable possession, it can only be passed down or given under certain conditions. Hence, the necessity of the initiation ceremony with its attached conditions for the initiate. Owners must guard their possessions well as they may be harmed via their inalienable possessions that bear a common identity with them.

(IV) THE INNER ESSENCE

The *OSL* believe that *ilmu* controls every aspect of life. Central to the whole system of *ilmu* is the belief in *semangat* and *ruh*. Endicott (1991) has translated these terms to mean 'soul substance'. I use it also to encompass the concept of an *OSL*'s soul or inner essence and power.

In analysing Malay magic, Endicott (1991:48) talks about three distinct types of soul: *semangat*, *nyawa* and *roh* (or *ruh*). He argues that the *semangat*, *nyawa* and *roh* can be understood as the different aspects of the single human soul. However, he states that they are usually referred to as the *semangat*.

I observed that the *OSL* often used the term, "*semangat*" in their spells, and the word "*roh*" when talking about the souls of deceased persons. However, the *OSL* were never clear in making any distinction between the two terms. Their concern was to explain how the inner essence of a person could be appeased or attacked. Therefore, I will use the terms in a broad sense to mean the inner essence and power of the *OSL*.

The main preoccupation of the *OSL dukun* who initiated me into her *ilmu*, was to train me in various love spells. Below are samples of translated spells.[15]

(i)
In the name of God, may the struggling betel nut[16] be split!
Come hither, be split above the rock!
In whichever way your *hati* (heart/liver/mind) spins.
Let it bend to me!
Semangat of my lover return to me!
Semangat of mine be one with yours!

(ii)
Sweet lime in the moon
Upon the wishing moon, sit and cry!
Reveal and submit yourself to me.
I turn your *semangat* towards me!
Return!
Your *semangat* return to me!
My *semangat* be one with yours!

Forlorn young hawk[17]
Come hither, remember your awaiting death.
Anxiety plague you as you sit and as you stand.
Reveal and submit yourself to me because I command you under hypnosis.

May the face in the mirror be a reflection
To be loved.
May this face that you see in this mirror
Be the only one which you will lock your gaze at fixedly for being the prettiest of them all!

Young bird, come towards
the face in the mirror that is reflected beyond.
Let your *hati* be one with mine
Bending to my commands

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[15]All spells in this chapter have been translated from the original in which I was trained. I am not able to present them in their original words as I am under oath not to make them known to anyone.

[16]The betul nut is a metaphor and/or conception of the soul (Endicott 1991).

[17]According to Endicott (1991:80) who draws his analysis from Skeat (1900:47), the bird is a common Indonesian conception of the soul. As such, references are made about the soul being detached from the body and flying away (*ibid*:139).

In the name of God!

Forlorn young hawk, come towards the mirror!
Hither, with throbbing pains in your lowered head and swaying with death under the direct heat of the sun!
With the yearnings of a new born baby
Be plagued with anxiety as you sit and as you stand!
Because I command your *hati* to be feeble.

In the love spells above, there are explicit utterances of the word, "*semangat*" to indicate the working of the love charms by soul abduction.

Although it is common for the word, "*semangat*" to appear in love spells, not all spells make such direct references to capturing the soul. This is seen in the sample of love spells below.

(iii)
Stormy day
Thrust yourself towards the sea
Row towards the island!

Leave me a piece of cloth torn from you
To capture and excite your serene *hati*.

Stormy heart thrust towards the island
In loneliness go towards and fall into the foul salt water.

Live to be ridiculed for my pleasure
To see [it all as] a story in comic form!

(iv)
In the name of God, wishing upon the sweet horizoned moon![18]
Hither, be served upon a wooden platter
Upon the wishing moon, cry lover!
In the name of God, wishing upon the sweet horizoned moon
Cry as you sit, stoop in submission to me!

(v)
In the name of God, let the *ribu-ribu* (a kind of creeper) cover your path!
The young crocodile is clearly doubtful
Allowing a thousand friends to pass!

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[18]According to Malay belief, it is a propitious time when the moon appears over the horizon (Echolas and Shadily 1989).

His love to be given to me alone
I am the prettiest of them all.

Although no direct references were made to abducting the *semangat* in the spells above, all of them share similar general features. They all consist of pleas, commands and threats to persuade or coerce the inner essence of a person into total submission to the magician.

The incantation of all of the above spells is insufficient. I was instructed by the *OSL dukun* to cast all love spells that I had been trained in onto limes. These limes were then to be immersed into the water that I was to bathe in. The pulps of the limes would then be thrown away.

In the casting of love spells, it is vital that boundaries of bodies are also weakened to admit the passage of essences from one person to the other. Water is therefore important for weakening boundaries because it is fluid. It cannot sustain divisions or boundaries (Endicott 1991:136). The mention of water in love spells and the accompanying act of bathing thus enable essences to cross boundaries in order to be merged.

Limes, cloths and leaves are also commonly referred to and used as receptacles or substitute bodies for absorbing essences (Endicott 1991:139). For example, by casting the love spells into limes, essences are enticed into the limes which act as receptacles when abducting souls. Also, the distasteful acidity of limes is thought to incapacitate spirits so that they can be controlled once they have been absorbed into the limes (*Ibid*:138-140). Sometimes 'cloth', as uttered in the third love spell, is used in similar ways to limes.[19] Skeat (1900:51)[20] calls it a 'soul cloth' when it is used to retrieve or abduct a soul. In the third spell, mention is also made of *ribu-ribu* (a kind of creeper). Leaves and grass brushes usually comprising a bouquet of leaves tied with *ribu-ribu* or a string of *daun t'rap* (shredded tree bark) are yet other

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[19]According to Endicott (1991:139), cloths hold such powers because "cloths recall the shrouds so prominent in imagery of ghosts and may represent the constraint of the grave to spirits that have escaped it".

[20]See also Skeat 1900:452, 453, 575, 576.

kinds of essence receptacles to absorb and subdue essences for disposal (Endicott 1991:136-140).

The concept of a person's inner essence and power or *roh* was also emphasised by my *OSL* informants in their discussions concerning the deceased. For example, upon Siti's death, her sister-in-law Suri, explained how the deceased Siti in the form of her *roh* was still present in the Pulau Nanga community.

> Suri:
> Siti will roam around Pulau Nanga for a hundred days after her death. We have to hold *kenduri*es (religious feasts) for her until the hundredth day. You may think that you cannot see Siti. In any case, if you do, you would die of shock too! However, each time we hold a *kenduri* for Siti, her *roh* is hovering above us. We cannot see Siti, but her *roh* can see what we are doing and is satisfied. When we *jampi* (bespell) the food over the burning incense during the *kenduri*, we are inviting Siti to eat and not harm us. The smoke from the burning incense shows that Siti is eating the food. When the smoke dies down, it indicates that Siti is full. It is only after that that we can eat. However, the food will lack in taste because Siti has consumed all the essence of the food. After a hundred days, it will not be necessary for us to hold any more *kenduri*es for Siti. After that, we will only have a *kenduri* for Siti when she appears in our dreams. These dreams will be an indication that Siti is hungry. We will have to appease her by holding another *kenduri*.

The *OSL* use *kenduri*es or food offerings to persuade or appease souls. The type of food offered varies. It is usually things that people themselves desire and eat (Endicott 1991:142-143). The *OSL* also believe that smoke and the smell of incense to fumigate offerings penetrate through space and some boundaries in the physical world to capture the attention of essences.[21] This

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[21]Lighted candles also serve the same function. In Chapter Six, I describe how an *OSL* midwife upon the completion of her services is given a lighted candle stuck into a coconut. In turn, the coconut is pierced with a needle and white cotton thread. I have already explained the significance of the white cotton thread. The needle which has the quality of sharpness is to ensure the continued perfect eye-sight for the mid-wife to carry on in her skills. The coconut, with its quality of hardness, is to strengthen boundaries. The lighted candle which is placed with all these things purports to invite and guide the spirits to enter the candles when they appear on the scene. The flickering and flaring up of the flame are signs that there is disturbance in the air because of the arrival of the spirits or that spirit has indeed entered the candle (Endicott 1991:141).

thus paves the way for the *OSL* to establish contact and communication with essences (*Ibid*: 1991:140).

The conversations that I have had with the *OSL* illustrate that the soul may or may not be attached to the body of a person. Although Siti's *roh* was not embedded in any body to make its presence visible, the *OSL* explain that it is common for the "*roh*" to appear in the form of a *hantu* (spirit/ghost).

> Suri:
> I dream of the *roh* of the person. It appears as a spirit in my dreams. When I dream of the spirit, the dream always occurs at about five or six in the morning. I am able to wake up and still be conscious of my dream. If it is an *asli* (authentic) dream, the face of the spirit will appear. If I don't see the face of the spirit, then I would not be brave enough. The dream would be from satan disturbing us...we must not do anything.
>
> If a person dies properly, the person's *roh* and face will appear to us in our dreams to urge us properly for food. I dreamt of my mother asking for chicken when my sister-in-law Ross was ill...You mustn't fool around. When a spirit appears in your dreams, you'll wake up and see it. I was sleeping and it approached me and said, "Wake up! Wake up!" I already saw the face of the spirit in my dreams while I was asleep. I woke up and exclaimed, "Ah, what is it?" The spirit said, "There is someone who wants to approach you." I replied, "Who's that?" It replied, "Your mother." The spirit woke me up.
>
> When my mother first died, I fell ill and she appeared three times in my dreams. She said, "Ask your husband to prepare medicine from leaves and wood." I asked, "What sort of medicine?" She said, "For you to get well".

Even though the *OSL* believe that each person has only one soul, it is clear from the excerpt above and the spells discussed so far that the inner essence and power of a person constitute the "identity" and "symbol" of the person's existence (Endicott 1991:31) even after death.

The use of spells to attack a person is thus really an attack on the inner being of the person rather than a direct attack on the person's physical body. Spells can therefore work in various ways. One is by controlling the inner essence without weakening or extracting it. For example, as explained by the *dukun*, love spells (i), (iv) and (v) are intended to charm a person into falling

in love. Endicott (1991:50) has pointed out that such spells aim at controlling the soul without weakening or extracting it. On the other hand, love spells (ii) and (iii) are so powerful that they could be used to drive a person, who has criticised me for any lack of beauty, into such passion that it could lead to his insanity and suicide. This correlates with Endicott's (*ibid*:50-51) analysis that some spells work through the abduction of a person's soul driving him into madness, rather than love. This sort of spell "represent[s] the revenge of a shunned suitor [rather] than true love charms" (*ibid*:51). Such a spell works by extracting the soul of the victim, leaving the victim's body out of control. The victim could become ill and even die. This is because the absence of a soul makes the body vulnerable to the entry of evil spirits. The symptoms are loss of memory, confused speech and failure to recognise even one's own parents.

While there is a dependence of the body on the soul, it is also possible for the soul and the body to be separated. This would not cause the latter to be displaced. It means that the soul can enter and leave the body of its owner. The *OSL* believe that they can share a common identity with a person's possessions. This is precisely because the inner essence of a person is able to cross boundaries and become merged with other persons or be embedded in things. Thus, the *OSL* and Malays believe that their inner being can be harmed via their body or through things that share a common identity with them. This spiritual bond between owners and their things bears some similarity to Mauss's (1990) description of Maori things. Mauss relates how things are tied into their owner's nature and substance. Hence, to accept something from someone is to accept part of their soul. In the following chapter, I will discuss the identity of things.

The incantation of spells with the manipulation of materials therefore make it possible for the *OSL* to control, abduct and subjugate others via their inner essences. The Malays thus fear that the *OSL* will use their power to invert the perceived power hierarchy in the Malaydom. The Malays worry that the *OSL* will bewitch them into abandoning what is thought of as the ideal

Malay society. The apprehension lies in "following" the *OSL* into their alternative lifestyle of being Malay.

(V) FISHING AND THE CIRCULATION OF FOOD WITH THE SEA SPIRITS

The *OSL* believe that they depend on the *hantu laut* (sea spirits) for the safety and success of all their maritime activities. In ways similar to the manner in which they lure the soul of a person towards them through love spells, the *OSL* communicate with the spirit of their prey. It is also often the case that the *OSL* will establish communication with the spirits in charge of their prey's environment. These are ways in which the *OSL* guide their prey into their hands. There are variations in the way different communities of *OSL* present their pleas and offerings to the sea spirits. However, some general basic beliefs underlie these variations. The *OSL* maintain that "everyone including the Westerners" know of spirits, such as the sea spirits. According to them, it is just a matter of the willingness on the part of others to talk about their relationship with the spirits.

The *OSL* assert that there is a *Raja Hantu Laut* (King Sea Spirit) who reigns in the maritime world. They also maintain that there is a female sea spirit that is "Mother" to all things in the maritime world. The *Raja* and Mother Sea Spirits have their *anak buah* (followers) sea spirits, who are sometimes referred to as *anak hantu laut* (child sea spirits). The *OSL* liken these child sea spirits to children of human beings who are constantly up to mischief.

As the sea spirits are seen as owning and controlling everything in the maritime world, the *OSL* believe that the relation between the maritime world and the human world must be mediated through an exchange with the spirits. Therefore, the *OSL* explain that things in the maritime world are not simply caught and killed. Rather, it is the sea spirits who withhold or release things in the maritime world to allow these things to offer themselves to pursuing humans. Parallels can be drawn to other hunting communities who like the *OSL*, directly interact with and exploit the natural resources in their

surrounding environment. Tanner's (1979) and Bodenhorn's (1988, 1989, 1990) work amongst the Mistassini Cree Indian hunters and the Alaskan North Slope Inupiat hunters respectively are examples of how hunting is "a sacred act" (Bodernhorn 1990:61) encompassing a whole set of "technical" and "symbolic" activities (*ibid* 1990:55) which celebrate the "spiritual connection between humans and animals" (*ibid*:64). The Inupiat make and wear specially designed hunting garments which combine "social", "spiritual" and "technological elements" (Chaussonnet 1988:210) to "spiritually" link "animals, hunters and seamstresses together in an intricate and circular set of relationships" (*ibid*:212).

Likewise, the *OSL* deem it necessary to establish a spiritual link with the maritime world in their fishing activities. They do not express this by wearing special fishing garments. Neither are they able to communicate verbally with the sea spirits. Instead, they explain the importance of casting spells to persuade the fish to yield themselves. Below is an example of a spell.

Darting obstructions
Come hither!
Come in from the right, come in from the left!
May all the fish be sucked into the centre of the water!

The spell above clearly shows that the *OSL* believe that they are able, through the sea spirits, to control the water and weather conditions to help them carry out their fishing activities more effectively. The *OSL* also maintain that all fishing equipment used at sea immediately comes under the authority of the sea spirits.

In the words of the *OSL*, sea spirits are "satan," hence "evil". In spite of this, the *OSL* claim that it is possible for sea spirits to do evil or good depending on how well they themselves "*piara*"[22] (adopt and feed) the spirits. The *OSL* believe that if they adopt the sea spirits well, the spirits would "like to help" them.

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[22]The word "*piara*" will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

Thus, the *OSL* adopt the sea spirits well in order to obtain knowledge of the sea for a good catch. They believe that to neglect or offend the sea spirits would result in the sea spirits "stealing" from human beings. This could prove fatal as explained by an *OSL*.

> Ceco:
> [If the sea spirits are not well fed], we will fall ill. We'll suffer from dizziness. We'll vomit immediately and our face will turn yellow. These are the symptoms of someone who has been harmed by the sea spirits. What we'll have to do then is to go to the spirit's place to see if we have made an offering. If not, we have to cast spells to say that we are good and not bad. We will have to plead with the sea spirits not to harm us. If we do not do this, we'll be harmed because the spirits own the territory.

It is the belief that if the sea spirits are angered, they will invade and devour the inner essence of a person. Therefore, the *OSL* offer the sea spirits anything they ask for. If the spirits do not make any specific request, then "all sorts of food" which include things like chicken and rice are given. It is said that entire villages stand in danger of being wiped out if one forgets to feed the sea spirits.

The *OSL* explain that spirits communicate their desire for food through dreams. Tanner (1979:126-127) has also recorded the importance of dreams as a channel of communication between hunters in the human world and the animal world. He observed that dreams are significant to the Cree Indian hunters in the following ways. Dreams offer the hunters a partial insight into their ongoing and future productive activities. Such insights reflect the communion that the hunters have with the animal world. Therefore, dreams also indicate the person's potential spiritual power.

In ways similar to the hunters, the *OSL* interpret their dreams as a union with the maritime world. The *OSL*'s ability to harvest a good catch or bigger varieties, such as turtles and crocodiles from the sea and mangrove swamps is thus seen as the extent of the *OSL*'s spiritual power. The *OSL* in Pulau Nanga often boasted to me about the magical powers of their eldest brother, Bolong. They explained that encounters with crocodiles were not

only dangerous, but possibly fatal too. However, when Bolong worked in partnership with his first wife[23], he was able to cast spells on the crocodiles at the end of his harpoon to persuade them to give up their struggle and come to him instead.

Sea spirits may be visible or invisible. The *OSL* say that if they are fortunate, they might meet sea spirits by accident. However, the *OSL* explain that upon such encounters, they will approach with the plea, "Do not harm me, and I will not harm you. I am looking for fish, just as you are looking for food[24]".

Some *OSL* argue that if they feel "cold", they would be able to see the sea spirits. Sea spirits are said to resemble human beings in some respect, such as possessing hair and teeth. However, the *OSL* claim that it is possible to distinguish these spirits from human beings. This is because sea spirits are always exceptionally good looking, but with blood-shot eyes. The spirits also possess a very white and clear complexion. The *OSL* were constantly telling me that ghost stories screened over the television only confirmed the existence and authenticity of spirits such as the sea spirits.

Before embarking on fishing trips, the *OSL* will ask the sea spirits for *ilmu*. The *OSL* will plead with the spirits to grant their request by giving them fish in front of their *sampan*s. This is followed with the promise to feed the spirits should the request be met. The sea spirits are then said to enter into the inner being of the *OSL*. The *OSL* cast spells to be spiritually linked with the sea spirits. This is to enable them to ask the spirits to allow the fish to come to the surface of the sea to be speared. It is believed that all good catches are due to the sea spirits' help. Conversely, all poor catches are

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[23]Bodernhorn (1989 and 1990) has shown the central role of Inupiat wives in the success of maritime activities. I lack the necessary data to analyse the role of *OSL* women in such a capacity. However, I have enough information for the present to say that the *OSL* consider "good marriages" or "a couple as well suited for one another" if together in a working partnership, they are able to bring in good catches.

[24]The *OSL* explained that they would feed spirits with types of food, such as glutinous rice and eggs, that are also eaten by human beings. I was also told that angry or hungry spirits would devour the inner essence of human beings. However, I remain uncertain as to whether or not fish and other maritime products form part of the sea spirits' diet.

understood as the sea spirits' unwillingness to comply with the requests of the *OSL*.

After all successful catches, the *OSL* must cast spells and present cigarettes and *pulot* (glutinous rice) to the sea spirits. Some present only a plate of *pulot puteh* (white glutinous rice), an egg and cigarettes. Others simply throw their offering into the sea for the sea spirits. There are yet others who place their offerings on top of rocks jutting out from the sea. This is because all dangerous rocks are believed to be the "homes" of the sea spirits.

Once offerings have been made to the sea spirits to acknowledge their help, the recipients of the spirit's gifts must bathe and cast spells to get the spirits out of their body. Below is an example of a spell that the *OSL* will have to cast to "*buang hantu laut*" (throw away the sea spirits):

> Hacking the betel nut
> Casting into half the rolling betel nut
> Let the sea come in like the wind
> May the sea spirit(s) be forced open without a fight!

Failure to bathe and cast such a spell may cause the spirits to "eat" the person up. The use of water and bathing in conjunction to the casting of spells function as boundary weakeners. They facilitate the exit of the sea spirits from one's inner being.

Fishing which is the main preoccupation of the *OSL*, is thus an exchange between the maritime world and the human world. Both worlds are connected by reciprocity and exchange. The use of cash for such exchanges is considered inappropriate for establishing communication between the two worlds. This is because, as will be discussed in Chapter Six, the use of cash distances the relationship between transactors. For the *OSL*, this transaction is not within a society with its hierarchical organisation, but between society and the forces upon which it must draw (Gudeman 1986:148-150).

The beliefs of the *OSL* are opposed to the principles of Islam propagated by the pure Malays. The latter often speak of dangerous and fearsome evil spirits being associated with such observations of the *OSL*.

Tanner (1979:198) has similar accounts of the Cree Indian hunters' practices running contrary to the Christian morality upheld by the wider community. Although the hunters have absorbed some Christian elements into their practices, those belonging to the wider community still associate the Christian concept of the devil with the practices of the Cree Indians. This can once again be compared to the situation of the *OSL*.

My *OSL* informants told me that even before their adoption of any "religion", they had always believed in the existence of a higher God. They maintain that although they are presently encouraged to take up a "religion", it is still their belief that "all religions lead to the same God". This contradicts the notion of the single path to purity upheld by the Malays.

It is clear that the *OSL* believe in the concept of a single unitary essence being diffused throughout creation. Alternatively, it can be said that the *OSL* believe that beneath the apparent diversity of things is a cosmic unity which is God. Running parallel to this belief is thus the understanding that all spirits pervading the whole world, even if they are known by different names, are really one (Endicott 1991:43-45). This is comparable to the Negrito Batek De's concept of deities. The Batek De are a group of Malaysian aborigines who have a variety of deities. The deities of the Batek De are unique and yet clearly related to the deities of all the other Negrito groups. This is because there is an underlying unity in the multiplicity of deities. Rhyming names are given to these deities to denote the various shifting roles that they assume. Yet, these rhyming names also put into perspective the basic image of a single all-encompassing deity of the Negritoes (Endicott 1979).

Therefore, for the *OSL*, like the aboriginal Negrito groups, the multiplicity of spirits, whether good or evil, are merely so in appearance. This understanding of a single unitary essence in the multiplicity of spirits can also be extended to include the *OSL*'s notion of the inner essence or soul substance of a person. Once again, it is the belief that all things whether knowledge or objects, are thus able to bear a common identity with their

owner. This is because a person's inner essence can be diffused into their possessions.

The *OSL* are thus seen as having the ability to merge their being with all spirits and things. This credits the *OSL* a particular spiritual authority to control events, things and others. For the Malays, this also implies that the *OSL* have the power (Tanner 1979:111) to harm others and invert all forms of order. This power poses a threat to the hierarchy of being pure Malay in Riau.

(V) SUMMARY

The Malays consider the nomadic groups of *OSL* to be more dangerous and evil than those who adopt a more sedentary lifestyle.[25] Likewise, the *OSL* who do not profess allegiance to a recognised religion with special emphasis on Islam, are regarded as dangerous and evil.[26] In contrast, the sedentary and Islamising *OSL* are seen as less dangerous because they are gradually fitting into the perceived ideal system.[27]

Those *OSL* in the further and more inaccessible islands of the Riau archipelago, which incidentally also means further from Penyengat, are also believed to be more dangerous and evil. It thus follows that in the cluster of island communities that I selected for my fieldwork, the *OSL* in Tiang Wang Kang are considered the safest. This is followed by those in Pulau Nanga. The group in Teluk Nipah are considered more dangerous than those in Pulau

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[25]The Malays criticise the *OSL* for being dirty and smelly because they live out at sea. They say that the *OSL* bathe in the sea and not with fresh water. Also, the former reason that the *OSL* "smell of fish" because they live in their *sampan*s. However, the Malays explain that they exercise great care to pretend that they do not notice the *OSL*'s odour. They also emphasise the importance of never letting the *OSL* overhear their criticisms. If such caution is not observed, the Malays fear that they would be bewitched into "forgetting" their family and their self to "follow" the *OSL* into the latter's way of life. The Malays have also often confided in me that the dirtiest and smelliest of all *OSL* are those who are still nomadic.

[26]It can be said that these are precisely the *OSL* who pose a greater challenge to the ideal Malaydom by presenting alternative ways of being Malay..

[27]In my previous chapter, I discussed how the groups of *OSL* who are making such a transition are also beginning to echo the Malay's viewpoint in their perception of the other groups of *OSL*.

Nanga, whilst those in Pulau Abang are considered the worst. The "most dangerous of all" were those in the Lingga area. However, due to constraints in the field, I was unable to carry out any fieldwork in the Lingga area.

The accusations levelled against the *OSL* by the pure Malays reflect the social relations (Mayer 1990:62) between the *OSL* and Malays. These accusations are the means by which the latter attempt to forge the social definitions of the dominant aspects of the community's politics (Douglas 1970:xxv).

In many ways, Douglas's theory of witchcraft can be used to examine the accusations of evil *ilmu* that the Malays have levelled against the *OSL*. Douglas (1970:xxvi-xvii) differentiates between two types of witchcraft. First, there is the witch as outsider; second, there is the witch as internal enemy. She further distinguishes internal witchcraft as having three sub-types. First, where the witch is a member of a rival faction; second, the witch as dangerous deviant; third, the witch as internal enemy with outside connections.

My *OSL* and Malay informants' views of each other fit quite closely into Douglas' characterisation of the witch as an internal enemy belonging to a rival faction. The *OSL* are regarded as the indigenous but non-Muslim Malays by the pure Malays. According to Douglas (*ibid*), the belief in such witches promotes factional rivalry, splits community and redefines hierarchy. These are seen as betrayers of a close community who are poisoning and sucking out the internal strength of that community.

For the Malays, especially for those who claim to be pure Malays, Islam serves as an ideology in the legitimation of power in the Malaydom. Hence, the *OSL* are regarded as a threat to the ideal Malaydom (Nadel 1990:298). This is because of their ambiguous position of belonging to the Malaydom without embracing Islam as their dominant ideology.

The *OSL* represent an alternative form of Malayness. The power that the *OSL* possess by way of their evil *ilmu* is judged as inverted, illegitimate and evil. The *OSL*'s power challenges the Malay's concept of a centralised, concrete, homogenous, immutable and undefiable power (Anderson 1972)

legitimated by Islamic principles. The *OSL*'s power is looked upon as indefinably potent to the extent that it even threatens to usurp God. However, the Malays refuse to accept this as a legitimate source of power that the *OSL* have been vested with. Hence, the Malays acting upon their fears of feeling challenged assert the notion of a "Single Image" (Brown, Peter 1970:22) of power which can only be legitimated by Islamic principles.[28]

The accusations of evil *ilmu* are only directed at those who perceive themselves as belonging to the Malaydom. It has been extensively argued (Marwick 1990; Douglas 1970) that witches and their accusers are usually people belonging to one community. These accusations nearly always stem from personal hostilities (Mayer 1990:62), and "in areas where unresolvable tensions exist between people in ambiguous social relations" (Douglas 1970:xvi-xvii). This is the cause of accusations of evil *ilmu* in Riau. The *OSL* and Malays believe that while non-Malays, such as the Chinese, may be harmed and poisoned by *ilmu*, accusations of evil *ilmu* are only levelled within the *OSL* and Malay communities or across the divide.

Accusations of evil *ilmu* have thus allowed the Malays and the *OSL* to cover up their hostilities. Such accusations enable the accusers to reprove (Mayer 1990) those whom they consider as being personally distasteful in ways which cannot otherwise be expressed openly (Wyllie 1990:132-139) through physical or legal means (Mayer 1990:62). The Malays see the need to bring such evilness under human control to uphold a particular moral order (Krige 1990:263).

The witch is identified as "an attacker and deceiver" (Douglas 1970:xxvi) who explicitly and triumphantly challenges the state of society that is "desired and thought 'good'" (Nadel 1990:298). Hence, as stated by Douglas (1970:xxvi), the witch is accused of using what is "impure and potent to harm what is pure and helpless. The symbols of what we recognise across the globe as witchcraft all build on the theme of vulnerable internal goodness attacked by external power." Attacks against witches are thus attacks upon

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[28]This polarisation of good and evil is compounded by Indonesian state policies which state that those who do not profess any of the recognised religions are considered communists.

the victorious enemies of the envisioned society (Nadel 1990:298). The pure Malays particularly desire to recruit the *OSL* into their way of life (Wee 1985:540). Instead, the *OSL* have resisted, and more importantly, have represented a viable alternative to being Malay. This threatens the perceived ideal Malaydom by the self-defined pure Malays. Therefore, the pure Malays in claiming vulnerability to being poisoned by the *OSL* are in fact not indicating the limits to their power and authority, but stressing the extent of their purity and goodness (Wee 1985:540).

Thus, in accusations of evil *ilmu*, punishments may be meted out on the human agents of evil -- such as the *OSL* -- who are held responsible for the frustrations suffered by the believers -- such as the self-defined pure Malays -- in the ideal. What must also not be overlooked is that the champions of the ideal society attempt to dismiss the fact that frustrations may arise from submitting to the social ideal (Nadel 1990:298).

Accusations of evil *ilmu* thus enable the Malaydom in Riau that is fraught with unresolvable conflicts and contradictions to continue functioning in an acceptable manner. In ways similar to witchcraft beliefs, accusations of evil *ilmu* free the society from the difficult task of "radical readjustment" (Nadel 1990:299). Therefore, accusations of evil *ilmu* act as a catalyst in the process of segmentation in the perceived hierarchy of "pure" and "impure" Malays in Riau. Yet, there are also means such as "entering Islam" and following the sedentary lifestyle of the pure Malays which is the basis of legitimising the authority of the pure Malays. There are also means of reintegrating (Mitchell 1990:381-390) those held to be practitioners of evil *ilmu* in the wider Malay community. These are means which do not conflict with the perceived ideals of the society.

Plate 9
The rocks jutting out of the sea are said to be the homes of the *hantu laut* (sea spirits).

Plate 10
Upon the success of a *dukun*'s *jampi* (casting of spells), a nail is dipped into salt and tamarind and licked off by both the *dukun* (shaman) and the recipient of the *dukun*'s *ilmu* (magic). The *OSL* explain that this is to "lock" the *ilmu* to ensure future successes.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE MEANING OF THINGS: CONSTRUCTIONS OF THE *ORANG SUKU LAUT*'S IDENTITY

(I) INTRODUCTION

There is a direct relationship between artifacts and skills such as the practice of magic and the expression of difference or relatedness in group identities amongst the *OSL* and Malays. Choices or avoidance in being associated with or appropriating such things can therefore be interpreted as conveying affiliation or nonaffiliation with a subculture (Miller 1987; Thomas 1991:25).

There exists a range of things within *OSL* communities. At one end of which are those with inherent meanings and values, and at the other are things whose meaning and values are redefined as they circulate through different domains of exchange (Appadurai 1988) within and beyond *OSL* communities.

My aim is to locate the analysis of these things within the broader spectrum of the perceived social order of what it means to be an *OSL* or Malay in Riau.

(II) THE RANGE OF THINGS: THE SPIRIT THAT RESIDES IN THINGS AND PEOPLE

Mauss's (1990) theory of the gift revolved around the spirit that is embedded in persons and things. This spirit is the axis around which the obligations to give, accept and reciprocate converge. Aspects of Mauss's idea of the spirit that resides in things and people are relevant to looking at the patterns of exchange, group relations and identity between the *OSL* and the Malays.[1]

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[1]Mauss's view has been widely debated by Lévi-Strauss (1987), Firth (1959) and Sahlins (1974), just to name a few. Lévi-Strauss (1987) argued for the need to look beyond reasons of the metaphysical aspect of things to the deeper reality of the structural features of exchange. He (*ibid*:46) proposed that the "whole theory calls for the existence of a structure" to see things as a totality. Refuting Mauss's theory, Firth (1959) also stressed the importance of examining the economic ethics of the thing, rather than the spirit of the person that enforces reciprocity in gift giving (see also Malinowski 1922, 1966). On the other hand, Sahlins (1974) attempted to synthesise Mauss's ideas with those of Lévi-Strauss and Firth. He looked at both the underlying structures and the practical reasons for exchange. He agreed with Mauss that gift exchange is an analogue of the social and political contract achieving the peace that in civil society is secured by the state. However, he disagreed with Mauss's idea of the

However, it is necessary to look beyond the generality of things to the particularity (Thomas 1991:18) of things in relation to their political and historical contexts. An understanding of the supernatural aspects of things within *OSL* communities will provide the basis for understanding the range of things within their communities. This will also explain the fears and expectations surrounding the acts of giving, accepting and reciprocating, and why gifts are rejected by those from other groups of *OSL* and non-*OSL* communities.

There are a number of things within *OSL* communities which are thought to embody inherent supernatural powers. Their powers are independent of any forms of exchange which might affect their inalienable value. This supernatural aspect also accounts for the indissoluble bond between certain things and their owners. This is the reason why these things cannot be given away or circulated between different communities. On the other hand, there are things within the *OSL* communities which have social value created or enhanced in them through different forms of exchange. They embody less supernatural powers.

Therefore, it is the belief in the spirit that resides in things and people which explains why others attempt to distance themselves from certain types of things originating in an *OSL*'s territory. From the perspective of the *OSL* and their non-*OSL* transactors, things are differentiated by their degrees of supernatural power. This scale of power-endowed things can be explained as follows.

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importance of understanding the spiritual essence of the donor in explaining gift exchange. In Parry's (1986:456) analysis of the Indian gift, he defends Mauss's notion of the "spirit of the gift." However, Parry argues with Mauss's notion of the ethic of reciprocity in gift exchange. He demonstrates the idea of unilateral exchanges in the Indian gift. This is because the Indian gift embodies the sins of the donor and are given to the Brahmin priests without the slightest desire for reciprocity. While I can see the plausibility of the arguments by Lévi-Strauss, Firth and Sahlins in the data of the range of things that I have collected, and have applied them in some instances to my analysis of the exchange of things within *OSL* communities, I find it impossible to completely refute Mauss's theory on the metaphysical aspect of things.

(II.I) ADOPTED THINGS

The *OSL piara*, or adopt or care for things that are of importance to them. The *OSL* and Malays also use the word, "*piara*" when they refer to the adoption of persons. Therefore, in ways similar to adopting a person, the *OSL* explain that to adopt a thing entails taking care of, feeding, protecting, raising, maintaining, and guarding the thing. Such things range from their fishing equipment, *kebun*s (small plantations, gardens or farm plots) to houses. To adopt these things also entails having to *jampi* (bespell) them. This endows the things with supernatural power. In the example given below, Meen an *OSL* from Teluk Nipah explains why he must adopt his *sampan* (boat).

> Meen:
> I adopt my *sampan* because I would not have enough to eat if I were to catch only Rp 1,000[2] worth of fish each day. Therefore, in order to travel further away safely and to catch as much as say, Rp 40,000 worth of fish, I need to adopt my *sampan* properly. I must feed and spellbind it to attain a good catch. To adopt my *sampan*, or as the Chinese would say, to "*kong*" it, I have to feed it with *pulot* (glutinous rice) and *kachang* (nuts) by placing them in front and at the back of the *sampan*.
>
> Yang (Meen's wife):
> This is to *jaga* (look after/ protect) our *sampan* so that outsiders will not disturb it.

Likewise, the following excerpts show how the *OSL* adopt their houses and small gardens respectively.

> Halus:
> It is only when Ceco finishes building his kitchen that his whole house would be considered complete. Ceco will then adopt his house by casting a spell over it and offering a plate of glutinous rice, nuts and an egg on each of the four corners of his house. These will have to be placed at the top and not at the bottom of the four corners of the house.

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[2]At the time of my fieldwork, the currency exchange rate was approximately Rp 3,000 to one sterling pound.

Meen:
If I were to adopt my small garden, I would have to give it *beras hitam*[3] (black rice grains), *beras kuning* (yellow rice grains) and *beras merah* (red rice grains) to eat. I would have to place these food offerings at the four corners and entrance of the garden. We must not clear away any of the wood and trees that surround the garden. By giving food to the garden, we are asking the garden to help and protect us. If I adopt my garden well, the garden will *pukul* (strike) any intruder who tries to enter it. In fact, if I adopt my garden very well, it would not even allow my wife to enter without me.

The *OSL* adhere to the belief that to reap plentifully from one's possession, one has to adopt the thing well. More importantly, by adopting a thing, a bond is established between the owner and the thing. This is so because the owner by deciding to adopt a thing, is also making a decision to merge the thing with the owner's identity which in essence, is the soul. Therefore, to fail to adopt these things responsibly also means endangering one's well-being. If the owner is negligent, the thing may be pummelled, harmed or become polluted by the invasion of a spirit that would either "eat" or cause danger to the owner's well-being.

Adopted things can also be polluted if prohibitions specific to them are not observed. One common example often cited by my *OSL* informants is how their fishing nets could become polluted.

Meen:
We adopt the things that we as fisher-people would own. Therefore, if my *jaring* (a type of fishing net) is in front of my *sampan*, your shoes must not step on it or I would not be able to catch any fish.[4] We also have to adopt our *sampan* very well. If we *kena sampok*

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[3]These uncooked rice grains were dyed through several methods. Sometimes artificial food colouring was used. However, more often than not, the *OSL* would pound natural ingredients for the needed dye. For example, pounded *kunyit* (yellow ginger or tumeric) is usually chosen to provide a yellow dye when needed.

[4]Endicott (1991:116) suggests that the prohibition on wearing shoes or *sarongs* (a sheath) and on carrying umbrellas in mines and fishing stakes may exist because these too strongly recall civilisation to be ignored by the spirits. Smedal (1989:88) in his study of the *Orang Lom* agrees that while this may be true in the peninsula context, he thinks that a similar interpretation in the Lom case would miss the point. He argues that in the Lom case, the prohibitions are less in order to appease the *semangat* (soul) than in order to preserve cultural difference.

> (become infected/ polluted/ contaminated) it would be very difficult for us to look for the correct medicine to cure it.

An adopted thing can therefore also be seen as a metonymic sign for the owner (Leach 1989). If this sign is destroyed, the owner would also be damaged.

Hence, one of the most feared dangers is letting things that have been adopted fall prey to the evil intentions of outsiders. This is because they would be able to poison the *OSL* through polluting or bewitching these things which have direct bearing on the latter's being.

However, this is not to say that adopted things cannot be alienated. For example, *sampan*s are often replaced by new ones. It is common for adopted things to be exchanged, given or sold away. The bond between owner and adopted thing, and the meaning and power of an adopted thing can be transformed by the way in which it is circulated through different regimes of value (Appadurai 1988). By this, I mean that greater social value in the thing and a deeper bond with the owner are maintained in the adopted thing if the thing is circulated as a gift or a bartered object, rather than sold with the use of money.

However, adopted things can only be given away or bartered by *OSL* belonging to the same group. Such forms of exchange are avoided when objects enter the sphere of inter-community exchanges where selling with the use of money is the preferred and chosen form of exchange by the transactors. This is for two reasons. First money is a kind of safety valve to distance the thing from it's owner. Second, reciprocity is involved in the exchange forms of giving and bartering. The thing given or bartered is often replaced with other objects or services rather than just money alone. Things, unlike money, embody the identity of the owner and establish a spiritual bond between transactors. Such bonds with people beyond one's group are undesirable because of the dangers posed. As explained earlier, adopted things are metonymic signs for their owners. Therefore, if this sign is harmed, so will be its owner.

(II.II) INALIENABLE (ADOPTED) POSSESSIONS

OSL heirlooms range from things such as hair pieces, musical instruments, *keris* (a wavy double-bladed dagger), sea shells, pounders to stones. These are the most highly treasured of all things by both the *OSL* and non-*OSL*. This is because these things are seen as containing inherent powers and inalienable value. Unlike adopted things, their power and value are not bestowed upon them through the adoptive efforts of their owner. Nor do the forms of exchange for their circulation endow these things with power and value. Instead, all effort is made to keep these things out of circulation, and even out of sight. I adapt Weiner's (1985) terminology to refer to these things as inalienable (adopted) possessions. I have bracketted the word adopted to denote the point that while the owners of such things usually make the effort to adopt them, these efforts are merely to enhance rather than endow the inherent magical powers and effectiveness of the things. These things can be distinguished from those in the first category as things bearing the identity of the *OSL*.

The longer family heirlooms are kept by their owners and inherited within the same family or descent group, the more their value increases. Age adds value, so does the ability to keep the thing against all urgent needs and demands that might force a person or group to release it to others. Keeping them is therefore a creation of value (Weiner 1985).

Suri, an *OSL* from Pulau Nanga, possessed several highly treasured family heirlooms. Amongst them were *siput* (mollusc), a *lesung* (pounder) with a hole at its base and a stone which the Pulau Nanga *OSL* community maintained was a gold nugget. Each of these items were believed to have immense supernatural powers. Their power was enhanced because many generations of *OSL* had spellbound over them. Water boiled with the pounder immersed in it, and then poured through the hole of the pounder would be endowed with the supernatural powers of the pounder. Drinking such water would neutralise all poison in one's body that might have entered by unwittingly eating or drinking anything poisoned by one's enemies. Drinking such water could cure headaches and backaches. Bathing on Fridays with

such water could also strengthen one's marriage by instilling faithfulness into one's spouse.

There was another pounder which Suri had inherited. Unlike the pounder with a hole at its bottom, this pounder was cracked into two. The *OSL* maintained that these two pounders contained inherent supernatural powers, but that the former was the more powerful of the two. Pounders with a hole at the bottom as compared to all other types of pounders are believed to contain the most powerful sorts of supernatural qualities. For example, they explained that one could immediately drink the water from the first pounder as an antidote without having to spellbind the water any further. However, they claimed that one might have to enhance the supernatural powers of the water from the second pounder by spell-binding it before drinking for a similar purpose.

The sea shells were also considered extraordinary. One of them had a naturally polished surface. The other had an extra cleft in its inner cover. These sea-shells were considered to contain magical powers that could clear and sharpen one's vision. To activate the magical powers of the sea shells, all one had to do was to rub the sea shells against one's eyelids. A cooling sensation would follow, and in the words of Suri, "your eyes would sparkle".

The stone which was referred to as "given by God", had been dislodged from the ground during a thunderstorm. It was believed to be so powerful in magical qualities that one did not even have to bespell it to endow it with any power. According to the *OSL*, Suri had been extremely fortunate to notice and pick up the stone and adopt it, thus bringing to it its full measure of supernatural powers. Suri explained that if she were to give anyone else this particular stone, all the recipient would have to do before going to sleep would be to rub the stone against his or her eyelids, and be able to have a clear vision of where Suri was or what she was doing at that particular time even if they were physically very far apart.

During the course of my fieldwork, a Malay woman from the neighbouring island of Karas came to Pulau Nanga in search of such *OSL* family heirlooms. She was willing to exchange between Rp 10,000 to Rp

50,000 for each of these heirlooms. The Malay woman first approached Bolong, the headman of the Pulau Nanga *OSL* community. However, he refused permission to allow these heirlooms to leave the community. He told the Malay woman that if she persisted, she could personally approach his younger sister, Suri who had inherited these heirlooms. However, Bolong had during this time secretly sent a message to Suri. He told her that a Malay woman was interested in these heirlooms, but on no account would he allow them to leave their community. Therefore, Suri refused to enter into any negotiations with the Malay woman when approached. This was Suri's explanation.

> Suri:
> These *buntut* (supernaturally endowed fortune telling things) are here to protect us. They are our *ilmu*. We do not want to give or sell them to anyone else. The Malay woman only wanted to possess them to harm others.

Inalienable (adopted) possessions, like adopted things of the *OSL*, are metonymic signs for the owner. Inalienable (adopted) heirlooms participate in the soul of the owner. However, unlike adopted things which can be transacted under certain circumstances, there is an indissoluble bond between the owner and their family heirloom. Therefore, there was even greater danger that if the Malay woman had gained possession of these things, she would have been able to use them to harm the *OSL* and even others.

In Weiner's (1985:210-211) analysis of inalienable wealth, she states that, "keeping these things instead of giving them away is essential to retaining one's social identity...[and that] the primary value of inalienability, however, is expressed through the power these things have to define and locate who one is in a historical sense. The objects act as a vehicle for bringing past time into the present, so that the histories of ancestors, titles or mythological events become an intimate part of a person's present identity. To lose this claim to the past is to lose part of who one is in the present. The quality of sacredness increases the more these things are kept out of circulation". An added significance of the *OSL*'s inalienable wealth is that it

takes on important properties in affecting the symbolic boundaries in the hierarchy of what it means to be Malay.

After the above episode with the Malay woman, Suri, who was my *mamak angkat* (adopted mother) discussed the issue with her husband and siblings. She decided with their agreement to give these heirlooms to me with the following explanation.

Suri:
Rather than having people like the Malay woman come to ask me to sell them these supernaturally endowed things, I'll only give them to people who have been very good to me. I have discussed this with my husband, Tekong and my siblings. I have decided to give you these things...The reason why I am giving them to you is because you have rendered sufficient help to me. When I die, you'll be able to say that you are my descendant. These supernaturally endowed things will enable us never to be separated.

Cynthia:
But these things mean very much to you! How can I accept them?

Boat:
You cannot refuse what my elder sister is giving you. If someone from this community gives you something, you must accept.

In bequeathing these things to me in such a manner, I the recipient, who was also an outsider, could claim descent from an *OSL*. The *OSL* community was drawing me symbolically into their community. I was reminded that by rubbing the stone against my eyelids, I could have a vision of my adopted mother and be one with her no matter what distance separated us. This was all due to the indissoluble bond that had been established by my adopted mother giving me these inalienable (adopted) heirlooms, and my receiving them. The supernatural power of the objects had already been enhanced by generations of *OSL* who had possessed them. The life of the heirlooms was therefore now flowing into me, the recipient to embody me as a descendant of this long chain of inheritors.

The giving of these things also implies acknowledging the recipient as kin. What this means is that someone not biologically related can also be made kin through the giving of such things. If these things had been given to

the Malay woman, an undesirable and indissoluble kinship tie would have been established with her. This would have been undesirable for both the *OSL* community and the Malay woman. From the perspective of the *OSL* community, such an association with the Malays would be dangerous. The Malays could and would easily contaminate their heirlooms to poison them. From the perspective of the Malays, any kinship ties with the *OSL* is considered "shameful" and undesirable. Such ties would link them with what is uncivilised, with dirt, impurity and pollution. It threatens what they consider to be the purity in their Malayness. Therefore, the Malay woman attempted to sever this bond through the use of money in obtaining these things.

However, as emphasised earlier, every effort is made to keep such things out of circulation and out of sight. Even when these things are given, a list of conditions is imposed by the giver on the recipient. The following is an excerpt of Suri's stipulations when she handed me the heirlooms.

> Suri:
>
> Be sure that no one else gets what I have given you. The minute others see these things, they will want them, and would try to steal or take them away from you. You must promise never to give them to anyone else. If you do, others will lead a comfortable life, but not you. Instead, you will be the one who will lose out.

This list of conditions represent the range of solutions which persist to enable one to keep while giving. Furthermore, when the thing is given, the giver is not in any way divorced from their possession. Instead, the giver and the recipient become united as one through the thing. This is sealed with contracts and pledges (see Mauss 1990) from the recipient to the giver to continue to adopt the thing. This way, the giver retains the status of owner in the object.

Therefore, inalienable (adopted) things are the most feared, yet most desired of all things by those outside the *OSL* community. Those outside the *OSL* community thus try to obtain these things as things bought from the *OSL*, rather than things that are given by the *OSL*.

(II.III) NON-ADOPTED THINGS

These include anything owned and/or used but not adopted by the *OSL*. In comparison with the things discussed above, non-adopted things can be distinguished as things of association. These things are seen as possessing less supernatural powers. However, they are still associated with the *OSL*. Reasons (see Thomas 1991) for this are numerous.

(a) These things bear the authorship of the *OSL*. For example, fishing spears, hand carved turtle-shelled ornaments such as bangles and pendants and hand-woven rattan baskets.

(b) These things embody the *OSL*'s practical activity and/or physical touch. For example, speared maritime products, fruits, vegetables and plants grown by them. This also includes all food, drinks and cakes prepared by them.

(c) These things have passed over, been in contact or close association with the *OSL*'s body. For example, their clothes and footwear.

Therefore, the subsequent use of these things once associated with the *OSL* by another person could endanger both parties. These things are regarded as items which the *OSL* can use to bewitch others, if they choose to do so. Otherwise, these things are relatively safe.

According to my non-*OSL* informants, these things may therefore be accepted as gifts by those whom my informants refer to as the "braver people". Below is an example of a difference in opinion over the safety of such things between a Malay couple. This concerned a Malay woman bringing home some coconuts which had been grown and given to her by an *OSL* woman.

Ein, the son of the Malay couple spotted the coconuts that his mother, Pindah had in her kitchen. Immediately, he wanted to eat them.

Ahmad (the father):
Where did these coconuts come from?

Pindah:
Suri gave them to me.

Ahmad:
Suri?! No one in this family is going to eat these coconuts. Throw them away immediately! You should have known better than to bring these coconuts home. We'll be poisoned.

Pindah:
I thought that these coconuts would be alright [safe] since they were not opened.

Ahmad:
Opened or unopened coconuts, we are not going to kill ourselves. Your greed for just a few coconuts will kill us. They [*OSL*] can even poison these unopened coconuts.

The difference in opinion between this Malay couple also reflects the differing opinions of the non-*OSL* regarding the things that may or may not be accepted as gifts from the *OSL*.[5] In the course of my fieldwork, the only things that were ever accepted by the "braver" non-*OSL* as gifts were the non-adopted things of the *OSL*. Nevertheless, should the recipient subsequently suffer from any adversity, this would be blamed upon the recipient's association with the thing that had come from the *OSL*, and vice versa.

Yet why would the *OSL* even oblige these Malays? When giving these things to these particular Malays, the *OSL* would usually offer me the explanation that in tracing their genealogy to these Malays in question, they could be seen as being related to them through the inter-group marriage of one of their ancestors. However, just as interestingly, as soon as these Malays are out of *OSL* territory, they would vehemently protest against the *OSL*'s earlier claim of kinship ties. Below is an excerpt of a Malay woman's protest.

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[5]The Malays have varying opinions concerning the degree of danger between unopened and opened fruits, food and drinks from untorn or torn packaging, raw as opposed to cooked food, cold as compared to hot food and drinks, and food and drinks out of a common pot in contrast to individual servings of food and drinks.

> Pindah:
> What an insult! How could she [*OSL*] say that we are like sisters, or that we look alike. I am Malay and she is *OSL*. Anyone can see the difference. Of course I didn't dare disagree in her [the *OSL*'s] presence in case she felt insulted and poisoned me. However, in my heart, I was telling myself, "She is insane!" Of course we are not related in the least bit. My mother and father must not get to hear of this or they would be deeply insulted.

From Pindah's protest, it is clear that this kinship relation is often disputed. The *OSL* are aware of this, and thus do not trust those Malays whom they claim to have some kinship ties with. Therefore, when things are given to these Malays, they are often non-adopted things which pose less danger to both the *OSL* and the non-*OSL*. These things can also be sold. This is in fact, the preferred form of inter-community exchange for the circulation of things between different groups of *OSL* and non-*OSL* communities.

When things are given by the *OSL* to others outside their respective group, the things are usually treated with suspicion and disposed of almost immediately when the recipients are out of sight of the *OSL*. Likewise, the *OSL* fear and dispose of all things received as gifts from differing groups of *OSL* or non-*OSL*. The exception lies in gifts given by the Chinese to the *OSL*. These are accepted without fear or suspicion by the *OSL*. The relationship between the Chinese and *OSL*, will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six.

(III) SUMMARY

Different forms of exchange create a range of things for the *OSL*. The discussion has also shown how boundaries have been set up to determine the respective forms in which different types of things may circulate. These boundaries also act as barriers with regard to the type of things which may or may not circulate out of respective *OSL* territories. These boundaries also dictate the different forms of exchange that one should or can engage in with different groups of people.

In all of this, the spirit of the person has merged either to a greater or lesser extent with the things they possess. Things therefore bear the same

identity as their owners. In this case, it relates to the question of being *OSL* or non-*OSL*. Things therefore become metonymic signs for their owners.

At this point, I draw on Leach's (1989) theory of the logic by which signs and symbols are connected. He (*ibid*:33) states that "signs, and most symbols and signals cohere as sets. Meanings depend on contrast". When signs or symbols are used to distinguish one class of things or actions from another, artificial boundaries such as pure and impure Malays, are created in a field which is perceived as 'naturally' continuous. It is also the nature of such markers of boundaries to be ambiguous in implication and a source of conflict and anxiety. The switching of boundaries or social frontiers for these things which are metonymic signs for their owners, therefore calls for a ritual. As stated by Leach (*ibid*:35), "the crossing of frontiers and thresholds is always hedged about with ritual, so also is the transition from one social status to another". In the case of the *OSL*, money is used as a vehicle to distance things from their owners when they circulate out of *OSL* communities into non-*OSL* communities. The role of money in such transactions will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six.

I conclude by borrowing, but modifying Leach's (1989:40) idea on metaphoric condensations to explain the system of social classification for the *OSL* in the Malaydom. The following argument shows the metaphoric condensations of things and how they set up symbolic boundaries for the *OSL*. I suggest that from the point of view of a member of an *OSL*, the metaphoric condensations of things in his or her group are roughly as follows:

(1) 'We, *OSL* the indigenous Malays, and Malays are all members of one social group, the Malaydom. This is because we are descended from a common ancestor'. (This is initially an idea in the mind).

(2) Similarly, 'they the Malays, are all members of one social group. This is because they are descended from a common ancestor'. (This is also initially an idea in the mind).

(3) These things and *ilmu*/services are ours (*OSL*). Those things are the Malay's etc. (These are classificatory statements belonging to the context of non-human nature or the material culture).

(4) "We" differ from "the Malays", as "things of the *OSL*" differ from "things of the Malays" is a simple metaphor.

(5) "We" are identified with things of the *OSL* because our ancestor's identity is embedded in such things. "They" the Malays, are identified or merged with things of the Malays because their first ancestors had their identity embedded in those things. Premise (5) is thus a logical consequence of collapsing premises (1) to (4).

(6) In adopting the use of money to distance our identity from a thing, and to transform the meaning and social value of things that are circulating out of our territory towards a Malay territory, we and they are showing reverence to our identity or to our ancestors. The latter to a greater or lesser degree represented in different types of things.

It is thus my argument that things and forms of exchange can be primarily located in a system of social classification in what it means to be Malay in the Malaydom of Riau.

Plate 11

Plate 12

Plates 11 and 12: There are various types of fishing spears and harpoons which the *OSL* construct themselves for the spearing of various maritime products. Here, an *OSL* is constructing a *serampang*.

CHAPTER FIVE: SHARING AND HELPING: CONSTRUCTIONS OF THE *ORANG SUKU LAUT*'S IDENTITY

(I) INTRODUCTION

Within their communities, the *OSL* observe the principles of sharing and helping as an extension of their system of reciprocities. The *OSL*'s network of sharing and helping operates in the same social context as their system of gift exchange. The individuals within the community who give things to one another, are also the very people who help and share things with one another at a household or community level. There are however, differences in social relations. Reciprocity in gift-giving is a relationship between two parties (Sahlins 1974:188), while sharing and helping is a collective group action.

This chapter looks at how and what it means for the *OSL* to circulate things within their own communities. It examines how the meanings of certain things are defined or transformed through their form of exchange. It also looks at the social relations and group solidarity that are established through the circulation of these things.

In reality there may be little or no actual sense of solidarity between the *OSL* themselves. Yet, the *OSL* feel that they ought to have or at least to display a sense of group unity through their network of exchanges. This is true of other groups such as the Vlach gypsies in Hungary (Stewart 1987:24) in relation to the wider community in which they live in. It is the self interest by calculating individuals which is an important motivating factor in fulfilling their obligations of sharing and helping.

The *OSL* use the words, "*kasih*" ("give") and/or "*tukar*" ("exchange") to describe the ways in which they circulate things within their communities. In contrast, the word *jual* (sell) is seldom used to describe the circulation of things within their community. This is so even when money is used in some instances. Instead, the word "sell" is used to refer to the way in which things circulate from an *OSL* community to a non-*OSL* community and vice versa.

The idea of a pure or free gift (Malinowski 1922) does not exist within *OSL* communities. When an *OSL* gives a thing to another member of the community, the thing given is never referred to as a *kado* (gift/ present). It is

common to hear the *OSL* complain of not receiving any gifts from other members of their community. At the very most, these things would be said to render "*bantu*" (help). Frequent networks of sharing and helping take place amongst the *OSL* of similar groups. They range from exchanges between individuals to exchanges between households at a community level.

(II) SHARING AND HELPING BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS WITHIN *OSL* COMMUNITIES

Exchanges ranging from that of food, fishing equipment, houses to labour occur almost on a daily basis between individuals within *OSL* groups. Such exchanges are preceded by house visits. These include visiting one's kin on other island communities. This situation is similar in many respects to that of Carsten's (1987) study of the Malays in Pulau Langkawi of Malaysia who regard both formal and informal visits as ways of publicly declaring the harmonisness of social relations. When social relations break, all communication ties, visits and other forms of exchange also cease.

The *OSL* often give one another raw and cooked food within their own community. The sharing of maritime products is of particular significance. It is one product which has so far withstood monetisation in intra-*OSL* community exchanges. In this respect, it stands in sharp contrast to all other items of exchange. Maritime products varying from fish, crustaceans to mollusca and other edible sea creatures constitute the paramount sign of identity of the *OSL*. To be an *OSL* is synonymous with being a skilled fisher-person who survives by the harvest from the sea. Although rice (sometimes substituted by sago in times of poor catches) now seems to be gaining in popularity, it is still maritime products which constitute the staple of the *OSL*.

As remarked by Sahlins (1974:215), "staple foodstuffs cannot always be handled just like anything else. Socially, they are not like anything else". The *OSL* do not sell or barter their maritime products with the other members of their community. It is an item above all others within the exchange system

of the *OSL* which when shared, connotes solidarity and goodwill. Below are examples of intra-community exchanges of maritime products.

Lacet's family had just returned from a fishing trip. Yearning for fish cooked with pineapple, he heard that his sister, Suri had just prepared some of this. He brought pieces of his raw fish to give Suri and asked for some of her cooked food. Suri accepted his raw fish and reciprocated it with rice and some fish cooked with pineapple.

This example shows an immediate reciprocity of raw food for cooked food. When Lampung brought his raw fish to Suri, he said that he was "giving" it to her. This act of "giving" would often be spoken of as "helping" at a later date. Yet, at the same time, he expected her to reciprocate his request and she accordingly obliged.

However, in most cases, the "giving" is not reciprocated immediately. For instance, turtle meat is considered a delicacy by the *OSL*. Occasionally, an *OSL* would be able to catch a turtle. When this happens, there is much excitement within the community. This is partly due to the fact that members of the community are aware that the turtle caught would usually be of such a size that it would be cut into various portions to be shared amongst them. The person who has caught the turtle would give the other members in the community a piece of the meat.

In one such instance, Pui's family had caught a huge turtle. News of her family's catch spread around Pulau Nanga immediately. After Pui had cut a sizeable portion of the turtle for her own family's consumption, the rest was soon given to some of the other members of the community. These were either given by Pui herself or to those in the community who had come to ask for a portion of the turtle. While there was still enough turtle to be shared, none of those who had come to ask Pui for a portion of turtle meat was refused. Pui was obliged to share and not to turn down anyone with a request.

The distinction between 'shares' and 'sharing' is crucial (Bodenhorn 1989:83). The division of certain catches, such as a huge turtle into 'shares' is expected; the members of the community with whom one must distribute the shares to is not determined. Pui could decide upon those whom she would

share the meat with. She was only obliged to share the extra meat with the others who approached her with a request. The amount of turtle meat that Pui kept for herself was significantly larger than the amount that any single household would receive through sharing.

Although Pui had the freedom to decide whom she would share her extra food with, she was also under great pressure to share it with her extended family members. As asserted by Richards (1939:200), "Food is something over which relatives have rights, and conversely relatives are people who provide or take toll on one's food". The *OSL*'s obligation to share is almost parallel to that of the Semai, the aboriginal Malays of Malaysia. The latter have "to share" whatever surplus food they can afford. If the Semai have "only a little surplus over [their] immediate needs, [they] share it with [their] nuclear family; if more, with people in [their] house or neighbouring houses; if a large amount, with all the people in [their] settlement" (Dentan 1979:49).

However, embedded in the acts of sharing and helping are the knowledge and unsigned contract by both the giver and recipient that whatever is given must be reciprocated some time in the future. The delay in reciprocity establishes a bond of trust between the transactors and aims at waiting without forgetting

The very act of Pui distributing her turtle meat in public indicates several things. First, her reciprocity to those whom she had previously received shares of meat from. Second, the paying up of her debts in public. Third, investing in the fruits of her labour for the future.

Like the Semai (Dentan 1979:49-50), the *OSL*'s system of sharing resources profits the individual in the community. For example, in the case of Pui's surplus turtle meat, this sharing system spaces out small portions of food for her and the rest of the community over the same length of time. This is because a person receives in small portions about the same amount of food they contribute in large amounts. Thus, they are able to consume more meat than they could have done if they did not share. The total amount of food available to the group within this system of sharing is greater than the amount

that would be available to all the individual members had they tried to consume it individually. Everyone profits by this system. The result is that the individual will contribute food, or for that matter, any other resources. This is not just because it is thought right to do so but because it is to one's advantage. The sharing of resources involves economic ties that make the *OSL* group more stable than they might otherwise be. Furthermore, a person can rely on the other members of their community sharing their resources with them because their sharing ultimately benefits themselves (Dentan 1979:50).

Yet, this does not mean that the *OSL* do not exercise calculative attempts not to share their surplus. These attempts are covered up to prevent accusations of "*lokek*" (selfishness, stinginess, miserliness), and having themselves edged out of the community's network of sharing and helping that would profit them.

Wee (1985:83) suggested that the *OSL* are not interested in fishing methods that would bring in a greater quantity of fish than is needed for their daily needs. They are not even keen in salting their fish for preservation. She maintains that the *OSL* find such methods "not suitable" and "counter-productive for an economy based on day-to-day subsistence". While there is some plausibility in Wee's statement, I examine another reason offered by my *OSL* informants in view of their network of sharing and helping. Lampong and his wife, Siti secretly explained why they, like the other members of their community chose not to salt their extra fish for future consumption.

> Lampong:
> We know that we can salt fish and keep them for difficult days. However, if we were to do that, many people would not go out to sea to work. They would just ask us for dried fish. If all of us go out to sea to work together, we'll be able to have fish to eat. [Under such circumstances], should my siblings not catch anything, and ask me for fish, I would give. Likewise, should I not have anything, and ask my siblings for help, they too would give me something. [This would be fair]. If we all worked together, we would all be able to have fresh fish to eat immediately. If some were not to work, then they would constantly be coming to ask for extra fish. We used to dry lots of fish. However, as soon as the fish dried, they would come and ask for fish. We still do salt and dry some fish for days when we are too lazy to go

out to sea. However, it is something that we do not want to do very much.

Siti:
Yes, as soon as the fish is dried at about three in the afternoon, people would come and ask for the fish. What can we do? We cannot say, "No!" People would say that we are selfish. We have to give. The fish disappear as soon as they are dried! What is the point of us salting our fish?

Lampong:
We might as well sell all our fish or cook everything at once and eat them all ourselves.

The issue of concern here is therefore of not wanting to share, rather than it's mere unsuitability to "an economy based on day-to-day subsistence" (*ibid* 1985:83).

Food dealings are "a delicate barometer, a ritual statement as it were, of social relations" (Sahlins 1974:215). Food is thus used as "a starting, a sustaining, or a destroying mechanism of sociability" (*Ibid*). On the one hand, the *OSL* feel obliged to share food even if they do not want to. On the other hand, they continue to share food for fear of seeming to calculate gains and losses. Underlying this is a calculated fear that should they offend another in one's pool of potential partners in the system of sharing and helping, it could jeopardise their chances of receiving necessary resources from other potential partners at a future need.

Extra care is taken not to be stingy with people who possess high-demand specialised resources. Lampung explains that one such person in the community is the midwife.

Lampong:
My elder sister, Suri possesses the skill for delivering babies. Therefore, it would be wise not to be selfish with her.

The obligation to share and help is a calculated expectation of a delayed reciprocity from the recipient. Lampung's statement can be read as: the failure to give and reciprocate would establish a norm of selfishness

In one of the Semai's (Dentan 1979:49) rules on the distribution of food, they observe that "it is *punan* (taboo) either to refuse a request or to ask for more than the donor can afford". Although the *OSL* do not use the word, "*punan*" to describe such a refusal, they employ other social sanctions to pressurize members of the community into sharing food. Very similar to the concept of *punan*, the *OSL* have (I assume) borrowed the term, "*dosa*" (sin) from other mainstream religions around them to describe the danger of not sharing one's surplus food, especially when asked for, to certain members of the community. These include the elderly, the sick, the dying and pregnant women.

Yang Ama, a young pregnant woman, did not have any food in her house. She approached her father's younger sister, Suri for raw fish. Suri obliged without hesitation. This was Suri's explanation.

If Yang Ama had asked me for anything else, I could have refused to give. However, Yang Ama is pregnant and she desires to eat fish. I cannot refuse her. It is because if Yang Ama develops complications during childbirth and dies, I would have sinned against Yang Ama forever. You must never refuse a pregnant woman food when she asks for it. Yang Ama is like a daughter to me. She is my eldest brother Bolong's, daughter.

Bodernhorn (1989:102) has noted similar pressures faced by the Inupiaq to share with such "non-productive" people in their community. She notes that these are non-reciprocal transactions. Although the *OSL* do not expect to be reciprocated immediately for sharing or helping such people, they do not see such transactions as non-reciprocal. There is an unspoken expectation that the recipients and their family must reciprocate the giver or the giver's family in any of their future needs.

The coresidence of kin is to some extent a function of the sharing of food and help. The exchange of food as argued by Gow (1991) also constitutes the central part of the idiom of ties between real kin. However, for the *OSL* and Malays (Carsten 1991; McKinley 1981), the sharing with and helping of one another with food also implies that people who may or may not be genetically related can become related through the sharing of consumption.

(III) SHARING AND HELPING: THE RELATION BETWEEN HOUSEHOLD AND COMMUNITY

In the event of a serious illness or death of a member of the community, visits by one's kin especially from those within the community, become regular and expected. In such circumstances, the entire community's participation, as compared to ad hoc individual household participation is expected.

The focus is on the in-gathering of the whole community with representatives from as many households of the entire community as possible. Members of the community are expected to share and help one another with food, labour, money and whatever extra resources they may have to alleviate the difficulties of the family concerned. There are however, no specific rules pertaining to the amounts that have to be shared. Below are two examples of how this system of sharing and helping operated during the illnesses of Ross and Endi, and the subsequent death of the latter. They were both members of the Pulau Nanga *OSL* community.

Ross contracted a venereal disease from her husband, Lacet[1]. Her condition deteriorated rapidly as the days passed into weeks. Throughout the long period of Ross's illness, Lacet was unable to carry out his daily fishing activities. As soon as Lacet informed the community -- comprising mainly of his siblings --of his plight, the members of the community were obliged to pay Lacet's family regular visits. This is how Lacet described their visits.

> Lacet:
> Siti-payong[2] came to give me fish. Den also gave us turtle meat. At five last evening, Den[3] came to spellbind Ross. I was angry with him for not helping to spellbind her earlier. I told him, "You have the *ilmu* (knowledge), why don't you help?" Too many people have been trying to spellbind Ross so it has not been effective. *Gabung, lawan lawan dia punya jampi itu* [combining contradicting spells]. She is much

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[1]Lacet had become infected after a visit to a prostitute in Tanjung Pinang.

[2]Siti-payong is Lacet's sister-in-law.

[3]Den is Lacet's older brother. Den is also Ross's step-father. Ross's mother, Yang married Den after Ross's biological father died.

better now. Den is too shy to cast spells if there are too many people around. It is because he knows that there are others who are powerful in their *ilmu*. However, Den has great in-depth *ilmu*. He is one of the best around.

A while ago, we thought of taking Ross to the doctor. She was feeling dizzy and we were afraid that she would fall out of the *pom-pom* (a motorised boat) and drown. Ceco[4] came to spellbind her so that she would not die. He has the *ilmu* for this particular need. The white [crosses] that he drew on her feet, hands and at our doorstep were to protect her. He had to cast a spell over the *kapur* (slaked lime) to draw [the crosses] on her.

Suri's eldest daughter, Yang, came to cook for us last night. Suri's family has been helping us most because her family and mine are *biak* (on good terms). Whenever I have extra money, I give her some. Therefore, when I am ill, she comes to help me. When I have extra fish, I give them to Suri too. We eat the fish together. Yang is also washing our clothes. A few days ago, Suri gave us rice with soy sauce.

Most of my siblings would help, but there are some who wouldn't. For example, Kassim's wife, Ani. She has not helped at all. When Ani was ill, we helped her. When her father died, we helped her too. I am now very angry with her. Ani and my wife, Ross share the same father, but each has a different mother. Ani is therefore my sister-in-law. Even before Ani's father died, we always helped her, but she has never bothered to help us.

Itam, who is also Ross's sister came over once. She gave us Rp 1,000 to buy milk for our children. This is because Ross was ill and unable to breast feed our children. Itam said that she would not be able to come over any more because she is too busy with her children. She does not have her own *sampan* to row over when her husband takes their only *sampan* out. It is difficult for her to row over with her babies without any help.

Right now, whoever pities us will come and give us fish. We will accept. There are some who give, and some who don't. If there are people who know that I do not have any rice, they will come and help. People will also help me throw out the water from my *sampan* if I ask for help. If my in-laws were here, they would help me too.

However, it does not matter because if it's me who needs their help today, it would be their turn to ask me for help tomorrow. If they are sick, I'll help them too, but not Ani. When Ani delivered her two children, Ross went to help her. Now that Ross is ill, she hasn't come to help us at all! Ani has made no effort to come over for even a day to help cook for us. If she helped a bit, I would not be so angry. When Ross recovers, I will not allow her to help Ani again.

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[4]Ceco is Lacet's older brother.

Lacet's description of his siblings' visits during his wife's illness can be compared to that of the visits that Endi, a baby boy in the community received during his time of grave illness. Endi subsequently died. He was Den's son.

Endi had been ill for four days. This disrupted his family's fishing activities. When his father, Den, told the community of his family's situation, the community comprising mainly of Den's siblings started visiting him. Den's siblings came and gave him money. They explained that this was to "help" Den's family purchase basic necessities such as "an injection for Endi and rice, sugar and cigarettes for the family". Den's siblings also hurried over to cast spells over a delirious Endi. Ceco, Den's older brother, was the first to rush over. He spellbound a bottle of ointment before rubbing it onto Endi. This visit was closely followed by Den's other siblings. They too helped cast spells over Endi. Boat, Den's younger brother explained that Endi's illness[5] was "difficult and complicated." As such, various people were needed to cast spells over the different parts of the baby's body.

After a close examination of the structure of Den's house, Ceco advised Den to move Endi out of the place. Ceco directed Den's attention to the latter's incorrect house construction that had permitted the entry of evil spirits. Upon hearing Ceco's instructions, Boat quickly offered Den's family refuge in his house. The family moved into Boat's house. Den's siblings continued to visit his family in Boat's house. Like his siblings, Den attempted to cast a spell over his son. However, Boat stopped him. Boat told Den that he could see through experience from the baby's eyes that "father and son did not *cocok* (match harmoniously)". Instead, Boat told Den to leave the casting of spells to the others in the community.

Expectations and obligations to share and help become more marked during periods of a community member's sickness or death. Everyone in the community with surplus food or money is expected to share and help. The giving of money in such circumstances strengthens the relationship between the giver and the recipient. First, it is seen as a token for sealing kinship

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[5]Endi was suffering from too many worms within him.

bonds and strengthening group unity. Second, it heightens the awareness of a boundary between insider and outsider relationship.

It is only the *OSL*'s own community or kin from related communities who are involved in this system of sharing and helping. If a close kin or co-villager does not pay a visit and offer something to help the family in need, their behaviour is described as selfish and bad-mannered. Thus, Lacet's criticism of his sister-in-law, Ani's behaviour. Non-participation in exchanges between kin members puts the bond at risk.

Things from non-*OSL*, especially the Malays, are viewed with suspicion and rejected. On the other hand, it is necessary for the *OSL* families undergoing a crisis to obtain things such as rice, sugar and even the white cloth for burial purposes from those whom they perceive to be "outsiders". The giving of money by their community thus reflects the awareness that money is needed to purchase these things from outsiders.[6]

The responsibility of taking care of the sick is in many cases almost completely taken out of the hands of the immediate family and made a matter for the entire community. For example, Den was advised by Boat not to interfere with the casting of spells over his son. This is also usually so when preparing the dead for burial.

Endi died in Boat's house the very evening that his family moved into the latter's home. Endi's body was not brought back to his house. Instead, his corpse was prepared for burial in Boat's house. Preparation for Endi's burial was very much in the hands of the members of the community. First, the community contributed money to Den for the purchase of a white piece of cloth to wrap Endi's body for burial. I was also approached to make a contribution towards the buying of cakes and beverages for the first *kenduri* (religious feast) to be held immediately after the burial. If I had not obliged, Den would have had to use the money given to him by his community to buy the necessary things to host the *kenduri*.

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[6]The role of money in the interaction with non-*OSL* communities will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

As Endi's parents sat aside grieving over the death of their son, the other members of the community came in to wash, powder and perfume Endi's corpse. In the meantime, the men including Lacet from the community were outside digging a grave. When the grave was almost ready, a message was sent to Boat's house. Whereupon, those who were professed Christians knelt by the corpse to say a prayer for the baby. The members of the community explained that it would have been preferable to have a Christian pastor carry out the last rites. Unfortunately, there was no such person within close proximity.

Den's siblings were aware that although Den was a professed Christian, he had never "prayed" in "the Christian way" before. Neither was he familiar with the rituals needed for a Christian burial. Tekong, another professed Christian and the only literate member of the community, was therefore asked to pray for Endi's soul.

Tekong consulted his community about the matter. Thereupon, I was asked if I could do them the favour of praying and reading something from the Bible. It did not matter if they could not understand the English language Bible that I had had with me at that time. All that mattered was that I was instructed to "recite something powerful" for the soul. Once this was over, Den with his wife beside him, carried the corpse to its grave. The community formed a procession behind Den and his wife. They carried an umbrella over Endi's body and threw yellow rice at Den's family to ward off evil spirits. The burying of the corpse was done by the other members of the community.

After the burial, Den hosted a *kenduri* for the community. The things that I had bought for the *kenduri* were passed on to Den's sister, Suri who was to oversee the arrangements for the *kenduri*. Neither Den nor his wife were in any way actively involved in the preparations for the *kenduri*. Throughout the preparations for Endi's burial, community participation was stressed.

The obligations to give, receive and reciprocate in the system of helping and sharing to hold the community together are also expressed in the community's communal ritual, the *kenduri*. A *kenduri* is held to mark death,

marriage, the appeasing of spirits and adoptions (both things and children). The *kenduri* varies in scale. It may include only members of the immediate nuclear family to all members of the community. The basic principle of all *kenduri*es is that food is eaten together at the same time.

A *kenduri* for the dead is held daily during the first forty days after the person's death. Thereafter, it is held once in every ten days until the hundredth day[7]. These are usually minor occasions where either only the immediate family is involved or food is simply offered to the deceased. However, this climaxes with a *kenduri besar* (big religious feast) on the hundredth day after the death of the person. The entire community is invited to participate in the *kenduri besar*. After the hundredth day, there is no need to hold another *kenduri* for the deceased until someone dreams of the deceased asking to be fed.

Pui's family in Pulau Nanga hosted a *kenduri besar* to mark the hundredth day after the death of her mother, Isah. This *kenduri* was also jointly held to adopt me as a member of the community. McKinley (1981:369) has also noted that amongst the Malays, "the sharing of work in preparation for many household and neighbourhood feasts is one of the experiences which causes good friends to become 'like siblings'".

There was much excitement in the community as the time approached for Pui to host the *kenduri besar*. This was because Pui had informed her guests that her husband, Jiba, was going to trap and slaughter a *pelanduk* (mouse deer) for the feast. The community considered this meat a delicacy. The excitement within the community centred very much on the fact that they were "going to eat *pelanduk*" rather than observing the hundredth day after the death of Isah. As Pui issued invitations to the *kenduri*, she also approached the women for help with the preparation of food and cakes for the designated day.

On the day of the *kenduri besar*, members of the community came to help Pui with the preparation of a variety of food and cakes. This included

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[7]There are slight variations to this between different households. However, for all of them, the hundredth day after the death of the person is indisputably the day to host the *kenduri besar* (big feast).

boiled rice, curried mousedeer with potatoes, boiled eggs, *wajik* (a cake made of glutinous rice and palm sugar), *kue rokok* (pastry rolled up to look like cigars, hence its name "*rokok*" or cigarettes), *kue ku*[8] (rice cake filled with crushed mung beans), and *kue baluh* (small cakes made from flour, eggs and margarine). Tea and cigarettes were served to accompany the spread of food and cakes. Pui herself was also directly involved in the preparation of these things.

The *kenduri besar* was not held till after four in the evening to coincide with the time of Isah's death. During the *kenduri besar*, Bolong, the headman of the Pulau Nanga *OSL* community was called upon to offer the feast to Isah. Adults of the community which included both men and women sat together to form a ring around the food. I was asked to sit and eat with them. Throughout the *kenduri*, I was continually given food and cakes to eat by the guests who represented the community. The children were not allowed to join in the feasting till the adults had finished eating.

The *kenduri* of the *OSL* as described above bears some similarities to the *kenduri* of the Malays. Their similarities lie in the richness of the dishes that are served. There is considerable uniformity in the food that is served in all *kenduri*es of the community. The intention is not to rival one's neighbours by hosting a different feast. Instead, the focus is on offering a similar display to be identical with the other members within the community. The *kenduri* is neither an "individual occasion that is being celebrated", nor an opportunity to accommodate "individual expression". Rather, the *kenduri* is a "communal event" that is "expressed in the notion of the surrender of the house" to the community (Carsten 1987:164-165).

During the other minor *kenduri*es, it was usually Isah's husband, Awang Bai who offered the deceased the food that was spread out at the *kenduri*. However, at this *kenduri besar* which was to be a feast to symbolise the community in unity, the headman was called upon as the representative, rather than the husband of the individual household. Everyone present at the

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[8]This is a Chinese cake which the Malays do not use in their *kenduri*. Although this cake does not contain any pork. Sometimes, the *OSL* serve cakes that contain pork in their feasts.

kenduri eats very quickly. Once the people have finished eating, they all help to clean up. For the *OSL*, any left over food from the *kenduri* is distributed to the community. The focus here like those of the *kenduri*es hosted by the Malays is on the "cooperative effort" of the community (Carsten 1987:163).

The significance of exchanges of food between households has already been discussed above. The continuity of the household to the community is hence once again expressed in the symbolism of food sharing. Carsten's (1987:166) analysis of the Malay *kenduri* supports the case of the *OSL kenduri*. She states that in a *kenduri*, a symbolic "phantasmagoric house" is created whereby adult members of the community gather together "to consume food of a superior quality to that consumed in mere material houses". The community represents itself as a household via the *kenduri*. However, it is "stronger and more powerful than the individual household...The household yields to the community which controls its function of food sharing" (Carsten 1987:165).

It is significant that one of the ways[9] chosen by the *OSL* to adopt me as a member of their community was via my sharing and eating their food at a *kenduri*.[10] Previous to the *kenduri*, I had already been eating with them. However, the *kenduri* further established the relationship of belonging-ness with them. Thereafter, the *OSL* of Pulau Nanga would always take great pride in stressing the fact that I had "eaten" with them when introducing me to their kin from other related communities. The fact that I had without fear and inhibitions eaten with them was synonymous to my being considered an insider and no longer an outsider.

Unlike the Malay *kenduri* (Carsten 1987) where as many as possible of the members of the community are made to participate in the labour preparations for the *kenduri*, community participation at such a stage in the *kenduri* for the *OSL* is on a smaller scale. Also, unlike the Malays where "the

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[9]The *OSL*'s adoption of me as one of them was also expressed in their giving me pieces of their family heirloom. I have discussed in the previous chapter under the section on inalienable family heirlooms.

[10]The incorporation of a person marrying into the community is also often expressed and declared via a marriage *kenduri* in which the couple and the community eat together. This is also the case with Malay marriage *kenduries*.

kenduri is taken out of the hands of the individuals who are hosting it to be taken over by the community," it is not uncommon to find the *OSL* hosting the *kenduri* to be actively involved in the preparation of the feast too. This can be seen from the case of Jiba hunting for the mouse deer and Pui making the cakes for their *kenduri besar*. For the Malays, behaviour at the *kenduri* becomes much more formal once the feasting gets under way. Men and women occupy different areas (Carsten *ibid*; McKinley 1981). In comparison, behaviour at an *OSL kenduri* ranges from the formal to a relaxed atmosphere where jokes may be told and alcohol[11] is consumed freely. It is also not uncommon for men and women to sit together at an *OSL kenduri*.

However, the place of children (Carsten *ibid*) in both *OSL* and Malay *kenduri*es is similar. The children had to sit behind the adults at Pui's *kenduri*. They ate only after the adults had finished eating. The rule is that the *kenduri* is for the adults and not for the children of the community. If the children eat before the adults, then the *kenduri* is considered as wasted. The host is seen as having *rugi* (made a loss) and regarded as not having hosted the *kenduri* at all. Below is an example of such an instance at the first *kenduri* that was held immediately after Endi's burial.

> Den:
> What you gave for the *kenduri* was sufficient. However, we have lost because it was the children and not the adults who helped us who ate all the biscuits and drank the Milo. This is not the right way for things to be done. Except for Boat who managed to drink a glass of Milo, none of my other siblings were able to get anything. You didn't even get a glass of Milo. Yang [Den's wife] and myself were too angry to have anything. I tried to ask the children to go away, but they stayed to help themselves. I could not scold the children as they are not my children. I am now *malu* (ashamed) that my siblings were not given anything after all that they gave us during our time of difficulties. [For example,] Lacet had given us rice when we could not go fishing because of Endi's illness.
>
> Mazuk:
> You did not do anything wrong. You gave sufficiently. We noticed what you gave. However, Den and you have lost because the adults

[11]The Muslim Malays consider drinking alcohol a sin.

did not get to eat anything. The *kenduri* is meant for adults, especially for those who have helped. It is not for the children.

Den:
I am angry with my *adik* (younger sibling) [Suri] for keeping the tin of Milo for herself [when she was supposed to have helped with preparations for the *kenduri*]. The tin of Milo that you gave was for the *kenduri*. The wrong person was put in charge of the *kenduri*.

The intention of the *kenduri* is to visibly reinforce the ties that unite the members of the community as a whole rather than the close individual bonds of kinship in respective households. Children in the company of their parents would contradict this intention as they would represent the closest of consanguineal kinship bonds (Carsten 1987:162). Also, children are not as yet, accorded full membership in the community. They are not able to enter into any decision-making process with regard to concerns of the wider community on behalf of the adult members of their family.

The system of sharing and helping holds the community as a group in social unity. It delineates a social boundary within which people are cooperatively related. The division between insiders and outsiders becomes most marked at the *kenduri*. The *kenduri* reflects the continuum stretching from the home to the community (Carsten *ibid*:165).[12]

It is therefore interesting to note how the invitation to a *kenduri* -- one of the very few -- from the neighbouring island of Sembur consisting mainly of Malays was received by the *OSL* of Pulau Nanga. The invitation was issued by the headman of Pulau Sembur acting on behalf of the island's mosque to those amongst the *OSL* of Pulau Nanga who had converted to Islam. The *kenduri* to which the *OSL* had been invited was to celebrate the start of *Hari Raya Puasa*, or the end of the fasting month for the Muslims.

All guests including the *OSL* were asked to bring some food or cakes to contribute towards the *kenduri*. On the appointed day, the *OSL* did not bother to turn up for the *kenduri*. Instead, they carried on with their regular

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[12]Carsten's ideas have been adapted from Lévi-Strauss' ideas (1983) concerning the centrality of the house in insular Southeast Asia.

fishing activities. When I asked Bolong, the headman of the *OSL*, if he intended to attend the *kenduri*, he told me that he had better things to do like catching fish.

In the meantime, the Malays in Pulau Sembur were kept waiting. Finally, the *kenduri* was held without the presence of any *OSL* representative. Later, when the *OSL* were asked about their absence, they replied nonchalantly, "We didn't have any eggs to make cakes for the *kenduri*, so we didn't go." This caused much anger and dismay amongst the Malays of Pulau Sembur. They began to criticise the *OSL* behind their backs in the following manner, "What? No eggs! They are simply giving a poor excuse. It is unbelievable. It is only once a year that we hold such a *kenduri*. They call themselves *Orang Islam* (Muslims), but they don't even step into the mosque to pray at all. Now, they don't even bother to come just this once for the *kenduri*. This is what we mean. They are not Muslims, they are *orang lain* (outsiders)".

Very few -- if any at all -- invitations are issued by the Malays to the *OSL*. If any invitation is issued, it is always connected to the obligation to observe some event commemorating the Islamic religion rather than a marriage or death. Yet, the *OSL* do not deem it necessary to attend these *kenduri*es hosted by the Malays. This stems from the lack of solidarity that the *OSL* have or desire to visibly express with the Malays in spite of their adopting the Islamic religion. In comparison, intra-*OSL* community invitations to *kenduri*es are mostly accepted by other *OSL* members of the community. It is important for the *OSL* to reciprocate attendance at another *OSL*'s *kenduri* especially if the host or hostess has once been a guest at their *kenduri*. However, the emerging signs of changes are beginning to surface within *OSL* communities. Those who have felt obliged to adopt Islam are no longer

allowed to eat pork.[13] These members have therefore to decide whether or not to attend the *kenduri* of a non-Muslim member of the community.

(IV) BEYOND SHARING AND HELPING: MONEY AND BARTER

The consequences of the introduction of money into the *OSL* economy bear similarities to the impact that it has had on the aboriginal Semai economy. Money has presented the "forbidden element of calculation" into Semai economic exchanges. Moreover, the Semai have realised that money, unlike food, does not spoil so sharing is unnecessary to increase their amount of wealth. Also, the Semai have found it easier to hide money so that identifying "selfish" people has become more difficult. This has resulted in the East Semai exempting money and in some cases, things bought with money from the rules governing the distribution of food (Dentan 1979:50).

The *OSL* too find it easier to hide their money and avoid their obligation to share. However, once money is used to buy extra food from outside, the *OSL* is under pressure to share. For example, when an *OSL* buys ingredients to make cakes and decides to circulate their surplus cakes within their community, they are expected to share rather than to sell these cakes.

Asmah and her daughter occasionally made cakes to sell to the other members of their Pulau Nanga community. Although the others bought Asmah's cakes, she was constantly criticised for selling rather than sharing her cakes with them.

> Pui:
> Asmah is the only person in this community who sells us the cakes that she makes. No one else does it.
>
> Suri:
> She is not ashamed.

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[13]The attempt to Islamise by some *OSL* does not contradict the issue of their non-attendance at the *kenduri* hosted by the Malays to mark their solidarity at the start of the *Hari Raya Puasa* celebrations. Wee (1985) supports this view in her analysis of the hierarchies of being Malay in Riau when she states that the aspirations of the *OSL* in converting to Islam is to belong to a larger cosmopolitan Islamic *umat* (congregation), rather than to the local community of Islamic Malays.

Pui:
I wouldn't sell cakes here. If I make extra cakes, I would give them away. Afterall, everyone here is family. Unlike Asmah, I will never be able to take or ask my relatives for their money.

Suri:
Asmah is afterall, an *orang lain* (outsider). That is why she behaves in such a way. She is a Malay. She is not an *OSL*. She is not like one of us. Ceco [Asmah's husband], my elder brother is different. He would give us the cakes.

Baggong:
She even asks us for money when we owe her beyond two days. She is a Malay. She is not an *OSL*.

Suri:
Wait and see how it is when I make extra cakes. I will give an equal share to my all siblings here. I will never sell them my cakes.

Asmah's late mother was the second wife of Suri and Ceco's father, Apong. Asmah's mother was a Malay. Her first husband was also a Malay. They had three children, of which one of them was Asmah. According to my Malay informants, Asmah's mother had been bewitched into marrying Apong. When Asmah's mother "*ikut*" ("followed") Apong to live in the *OSL* community, she took Asmah with her. Asmah later married her step-brother, Ceco. In spite of Asmah having grown up in an *OSL* community for most of her life, the *OSL* still point to her Malayness and "outsider" status because of her breach in their network of sharing and helping.

Intra-community business places the *OSL* in a difficult position. They need to define the limits of their economic relations so as not to endanger their social relations. Their social relations create problems in dealing with their customers, be it profit making or recalling their debts. In many respects, this reflects the same problems faced by the Malays (Mariam Mohd Ali 1984/85:161-162; McKinley 1981) in dealing with their kin as customers. Like the Malays, the earnings of the *OSL* are tainted by ideas opposed to kinship. Exchanges between kin should therefore be things given, shared or at the very most bartered to establish a bond between the transactors.

It is common for the *OSL* to *tukar* (barter exchange) things between themselves within their respective communities. An *OSL* explained how some of these things are circulated within his community.

> Halus:
> Yang Gaybang *tukar*ed her house with Siti Payong. This was because they each wanted to relocate their house to where the other already had her house sited. By exchanging their houses, neither of them had to deconstruct their house to use the wood for rebuilding their houses elsewhere. The only thing that Yang Gaybang took with her was her door. We often *tukar* our *sampan*s with one another too. Bolong and Boat *tukar*ed their *sampan*s. Lacet and Awang Bai *tukar*ed their *sampan*s. Jais and Niam also *tukar*ed their *sampan*s. After that, Jais *tukar*ed his *sampan* with Lampong. [Initially,] Lampong wanted to sell his *jokong* (a type of boat) for Rp 15,000. However, since Jais wanted Lampong's *sampan*, Lampong took Rp 5,000 and one prawn spear from Jais. As for Den, he *tukar*ed his *sampan*, a watch and some money for a bigger *sampan* with another sibling of his in Pulau Nanga.

It is significant that the *OSL* use the word "*tukar*" or "barter exchange", over the word, "*jual*" or "sell", for their exchanges. I turn to Smedal's (1987) discussion of the word "*tukor*" amongst the *Orang Lom* of Bangka, West Indonesia. Parallels can be drawn from his study in explaining the word "*tukar*" amongst the *OSL*. According to Smedal (1987:186-187),

> [The *Orang Lom*] categorically (i.e. linguistically) [separate] two modes of exchange; viz. sale (*jual*) and barter (*toker*), of which the differentiating characteristic is not whether or not money is part of the transaction but how the actors approach one another, i.e. how money is contextualised. The difference between the two modes of money employment lies in the presence or absence of a standard; i.e. a set price for a set weight. Thus, in the exchange (*toker*) mode I approach, money in hand, someone with a stock of rice. I show him my money, he presents some rice, and we may or may not agree to exchange. This is not selling. Selling, as the *Lom* conceptualise it, implies that the offer is constant, as it were; that buyers with the requisite amount of cash will be able to buy - whoever they are and whatever is the nature and content of their relationship. *Toker*, on the other hand, implies that the parties in the transaction are free to define the trading situation as they wish; if I don't like you I am not obliged to *toker* with you. *Toker*, therefore, depends on "the meeting of two wishes" (*kepingin sama kepingin*). It is tempting to compare this to the difference between on the one hand sex between two people desiring each other

> and, on the other, sex as a commercialised service. In the latter case the vendor (the prostitute) cannot reasonably refuse his or her client (all the latter is expected to do is to fulfil his/her part of the contract: to pay); in the former the mutual attraction obviates or negates the category of the client.

Barter must be understood in the light of its social context. As the context varies so will the features of barter itself (Humphrey and Hugh-Jones 1992:2; Needham 1975). *OSL* barter exchanges differ slightly from those of the *Orang* Lom. The *OSL*, unlike the *Orang Lom*, incorporate the notion of money into their barter exchanges and do not simply exercise the spirit of giving money alone when they barter. For the *OSL*, the focus of barter exchanges is on the demand for particular things or services which can be either similar or different in kind. *Sampan*s and houses are either directly bartered one for the other, or for an assortment of other things such as watches, fishing spears and even money.

The use of money in barter exchanges within the community does not impose any set standards for exchange. The *OSL* involved in barter exchange do not see the use of money as alienating the thing from its previous owner's. Rather, it can be argued that the use of money is socially constructed within *OSL* communities. By this, I mean that social relationships within the community shape the meaning of money. Below is an example illustrating how the use of money is perceived within the *OSL* community of Tiang Wang Kang, Batam.

> Muay:
> These rattan baskets were woven by Naomi's mother. You can easily buy bamboo-woven baskets from the market. However, you can never find rattan baskets in the market. Rattan baskets are more sturdy. I don't know how to weave them, but Naomi's mother is very skilled at weaving them. She won't sell her baskets, but she'll make them for us if we ask her. She does not tell us a fixed price for them. Instead, we use our common sense and think of things to *tukar* with her. A lot of work is involved in making these baskets. First of all, she has to enter the jungle to look for rattan. That takes up time and hard work. When she brought me the baskets that I had asked for, I gave her some rice, sugar and money in return. At other times, I may give soap or some other things with a bit of money. She wouldn't like it if I made it like

> a payment and gave her only money. I usually include some other things. The money is not to pay her. It is to help her. After all, we know that we are all poor here.

The *OSL* do not see the use of money in barter exchange as payment. Instead, it is perceived as "helping" the other member of the community who has, in the first place, agreed to "help" by exchanging their resources. Although there are no set prices for things exchanged, money is sometimes used in addition to other things to present what the *OSL* consider of as a fair exchange.

> Suri:
> Sometimes, we use money when we barter because we would not want to *rugi* (lo se out). Just think, if one of my brothers with a bigger boat were to exchange his boat for a smaller boat belonging to another brother of mine, my brother with the bigger boat would loose out. Therefore, sometimes, we add a little money to equalise the exchange.

The use of money equalises a barter exchange. It is not intended for one member to profit from the other. The transactors in choosing barter as their form of exchange desire to establish a bond between themselves. Therefore, the use of money within the *OSL* community is not to alienate the thing exchanged from its previous owner. Instead, money is contextualised as strengthening the bond by either rendering help or giving the other a fair exchange. This means that not anyone possessing money is able obtain the thing desired regardless of the relationship between the transactors. In many respects, the willingness to barter with one another depends upon the already existing relationship between the transactors.

Although barter exchanges consist of mutual payments which theoretically mean the end of a transaction, the transactors often repeat a transaction at a later date. Barter exchange, unlike a selling transaction, can also have two parts of a transaction occurring simultaneously or separated in time (Humphrey and Hugh-Jones 1992:8).

Ceco was unable to build his new house over the sea on his own. He called in his brother-in-law, Tekong, a man known for his construction skills to help him build his new house. In this exchange, neither Ceco nor Tekong

expected to pay or to be paid in terms of money for the labour services. This is because both men maintained that they were "*ipar*" ("brothers-in-law").

Nevertheless, when the house was finally completed, Ceco slipped some "*uang kopi*" ("coffee money") to Tekong for his services. Ceco acknowledged that the money that he had given Tekong was only a fraction of what Tekong would have received if he had built a similar house for someone else beyond their community. Likewise, Tekong did not demand any more money from Ceco. Instead, Ceco explained that the money he had given Tekong was merely a token establishing an unspoken understanding with Tekong that he would render Tekong, his skills or services at some future date when needed by the former. Tekong did not object to this as Ceco is a much-sought after *dukun* (shaman) in his community.

The relationship between the transactors engaged in barter exchange is prolonged by the possibility of delayed payment. When this time element enters, the idea of trustworthiness during the waiting period can be interpreted in two ways. First, the transactors must trust that a mutual payment will be made in due course (Humphrey and Hugh-Jones 1992:8-9). Second, the transactors must trust that neither would manipulate nor harm the other via the thing or skill that has been exchanged. In this case, Tekong could have either cast a spell on the house that he had built, or have deliberately constructed it incorrectly to invite evil spirits in.

The use of money in *OSL* inter-community exchanges also blurs the neat categorisation of bartering, giving and selling as separate types of exchanges (Humphrey and Hugh-Jones 1992). Below are examples of this overlap.

(i) The minimum cost of calling in the midwife services of Suri, an *OSL* in Pulau Nanga is approximately Rp 20,000, a new set of clothes, a piece of new *sarong* (sheath) material plus a chicken. The customary exchange of a threaded needle pierced into a coconut, a candle, tamarind, salt and lime for the midwife after the delivery of the baby has also to be included. However, Suri would usually only ask for Rp 20,000 and a threaded needle pierced into a coconut and a candle when

delivering the babies of her siblings and sisters-in-law. According to Suri's siblings and sisters-in-law, Suri would forgo the "extras" such as "the chicken, *pulot* (glutinous rice) or clothes" for family members. As cautioned by Lampung in an earlier quotation, there is the unspoken understanding that if one is not stingy with Suri, she would reciprocate by rendering her *ilmu* as a midwife without the extra charges when you need to have a baby delivered. Suri was even willing to deliver the babies for members of her community who could not afford any immediate payment -- except for the threaded needle pierced into a coconut, candle, tamarind, salt and lime -- but with the non-verbalised understanding that they would reciprocate a payment in some form or other at a later date when she needed any of their resources.

(ii) Often when the woman of a family is unable to row the boat for her husband as he concentrates on spearing fish, the couple would ask a child within the community to be a rowing partner for the fishing trip. This is usually the case when the couple themselves do not have any children of their own who are able to row as yet. After such fishing trips, it is an unspoken understanding that the child who has rowed the boat would be given some money from the sale of the catch -- because they "have worked together" -- in addition to some other snacks that the couple would buy from their Chinese *thau-ke*. If the couple do not give the child anything, they would come under heavy criticism from other adult members of the community. They would also not receive further help from the community for future needs.

The above examples of exchange show the ambiguity between giving, bartering and selling (Humphrey and Hugh-Jones 1992:6). The ambiguity of the exchange situations cited above is intentional. It allows the articulation of a bargaining process without making it so obvious as to hinder the establishment of a bond between the transactors.

(VII) SUMMARY

The focus in this chapter has been on how value is endowed, enhanced or redefined in things such as food, *sampan*s, fishing spears and hand-woven rotan baskets through specific modes of circulation.

Many reciprocities between the transactors are enacted along the connective and cementing networks of sharing and helping or barter exchange. Reasons for why and how the *OSL* choose to circulate things within their community in such ways can be understood at two levels.

First, sharing, helping and profit making barter exchanges are ideal representations of behaviour for the *OSL*. They imply egalitarian status, if not generosity between the transactors. For example, the movement of food especially maritime products express group solidarity. Money can enter the *OSL*'s realm of helping, sharing and barter exchange. However, it is converted into a thing that will do things, such as purchase food or white burial cloth, for the *OSL* in need. These forms of exchange endow values for the things being exchanged and seek to establish a deeper bond between the transactors.

Secondly, intra-community sharing, helping and barter exchanges carry a symbolic load of insider and outsider relations. Such forms of exchanges aim at restricting the circulation of things to insiders only. These forms of exchange construct and maintain group boundaries for the *OSL* and Malays. They perpetuate demarcations of "*orang kita*" ("us/ insiders") from "*orang lain*" ("them/ outsiders"). This determines who the participants of the transaction may or may not be.

Yet, ambiguities in the *OSL*'s network of giving, sharing and helping, barter exchange and selling are intentional and significant. They serve to combine and/or reinforce the principles governing all forms of exchange. Such ambiguities are intended to allow things to circulate within the community without curtailing calculated self-interested motives. They strike up a bargain for the thing or service being exchanged without weakening group solidarity.

Plate 13
Gamat and *nabi*, types of sea-cucumbers speared and dried by the *OSL* before they are eaten or sold off to the Chinese *thau-kes* (bosses).

Plate 14
Suri casting a spell over her sister-in-law, Ross who had contracted a venereal disease from her husband.

Plate 15
Ceco casting a spell over his delirious nephew, Endi.

Plate 16

Plate 17

Plates 16 and 17: Preparing for Endi's burial. The corpse is washed, perfumed and then wrapped in white cloth.

Plate 18:
As Den carries his son, Endi's corpse to the grave, members of the community scatter yellow rice over the father and son to ward off evil spirits.

Plate 19:
Pui's *kenduri besar* (big religious feast) celebrated on the hundredth day after her mother's death. Unlike a Malay *kenduri*, both men and women eat together at the *kenduri*. Bolong, the headman of the Pulau Nanga *OSL* community was called upon to lead the *kenduri*. Before the feasting began, Bolong rotated the plates of food over the burning pot of incense to offer the deceased. The smoke from the burning incense is an indication that the spirit of the deceased is "eating" the food.

CHAPTER SIX: MONEY: RECONSTRUCTING THE MEANING OF THINGS

(I) INTRODUCTION

This chapter looks into the symbolism of money and the power it has in Riau and Batam to affect the nature of social relationships. I also explore the meanings and moral evaluation that surround monetary and commercial exchanges as opposed to exchanges of other kinds (Parry and Bloch 1991) that take place between the *OSL* and other Malay and non-Malay communities.

I begin by examining *OSL* accounts of how they first familiarised themselves with money as a medium of exchange. The *OSL* regard the Chinese merchants and middlemen as the prime movers in their transition towards a monetised economy. I look at how the Chinese as leaders of various money-making enterprises in Riau represent an alternative to becoming progressive without becoming Malay. In addition, I consider how the Chinese also represent an inversion of power in Riau.

While the Chinese encourage the *OSL* towards a monetised economy to avoid the practical inconveniences of barter trading, the Malays avoid barter trading with the *OSL* for fear of establishing social relationships with the latter. I thus examine how the use of money has not only enabled interaction between the different groups of *OSL*, but also between the Malays and *OSL*.

(II) MONEY: ITS INTRODUCTION TO THE *OSL* OF RIAU

Money in the form of paper notes and minted coins have only recently become the main currency for trade by the *OSL*. However, there are those who continue to see that money has no place in their fishing activities.

> Bego:
> If we bring money with us while we are out fishing, we will not be able to catch any fish. If we leave our money behind with our women[1], we will be able to have a good catch. Our grandparents taught us this. This has been passed down from our ancestors.

For *OSL*, like Bego, the presence of money in their fishing voyages would only court misfortune. Yet, this did not mean that Bego considered it useless to possess money. He was merely stressing the need to keep apart an *OSL*'s maritime activities from monetary transactions.

On the other hand, there are *OSL* who acknowledge their ancestors teachings, but admit to a more relaxed attitude towards carrying money in their fishing voyages for practical reasons. The use and perception of money amongst the different groups of *OSL* is thus, still varied throughout Riau. Nevertheless, in whichever way money has penetrated into their lives, it has been a catalyst in the transformation of their identity. Therefore, the non-*OSL* communities, especially the Malays do not associate the *OSL* with a monetised economy. They compare those *OSL* who "use money" as "more progressive, modern and clever" to those who "still" practise "barter".

The use of money amongst the *OSL* is so recent that many remember how they first familiarised themselves with money as a medium of exchange.

> Imah:
> Formerly, we did not use *wang* (money). We had enough to eat, so we simply *tukar barang* (exchanged things). It was through our Chinese *thau-kes*[2] (bosses) that we first learnt to use money. In the past, there were no motorised boats. We often rowed our *thau-ke*'s goods to Singapore and back again. During these trips, we learnt through observation the ways in which the Chinese used money. We began to know the value of money and started using it too.

The *OSL* specifically highlight the role of the Chinese in their transition to a monetised economy. First, the Chinese are seen as traders involved in a long

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[1]It is common for men and women to fish as pairs. The men would usually do the spearing, while the women would be responsible for rowing the *sampan* (boat). However, there are times when men and women go out fishing independently.

[2]See Embree (1973) for the spelling of Chinese terms.

and close relationship with the *OSL*. In the course of this the skills of the *OSL* were involved in expanding Chinese business networks within and beyond the archipelago. Second, it was from the Chinese that they first learnt the value and use of money.

The *OSL* also see the Chinese as the prime movers in steering them away from a barter trading economy towards a monetised economy. An *OSL* explained his *thau-ke*'s preference for a monetised economy.

> Boat:
> Acuk[3] would rather give us money when we bring our fish to him. He says that he gets confused when his shop becomes crowded. He is afraid of getting cheated. The Malays will always plan to enter his shop at the same time with the intention of confusing and cheating Acuk. However, it is not us who cheat Acuk. So, Acuk would rather settle [with money] the fish that we bring to him immediately. Then, we go around his shop to buy what we need with the money that he has given us. Whatever money that is left is ours for us to use later.

The *thau-ke*s have confirmed such reasons for their preference to using money over barter exchange. A former *thau-ke*'s wife recalls the transition from barter trading to using money with the *OSL*.

> Mrs Cou:
> During the time when Acuk's father and I were running the shop, the *OSL* did not want money for their fish. Instead, I had to give them food and coffee each time they came in with their fish. I had to keep cooking and brewing coffee in great quantities all the time. As you know, there are no fixed times for catching fish. They came in at all times. Sometimes, they would want other things. I cannot understand why, but the *OSL* were not interested in money then. Now, it is much easier. You can settle their fish for money immediately. These days, it is much easier for Acuk's wife. It is also less confusing, especially when the shop is crowded. (Translated from Teochiu).

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[3]Acuk is the name of Boat's *thau-ke*.

Although the Chinese are directing the *OSL* towards a monetised economy, both groups recognise that the use of money has also created other difficulties.[4] It is either the case that the *OSL* do not have ready cash on hand or the cash is of no use to the *OSL*.[5] In dealing with the first problem, I will discuss in a later section the system of credit that the *thau-kes* have arranged for the *OSL* and Malays. With regard to the latter problem, although the *OSL* are aware of the strength of some other foreign currencies such as the Singaporean dollar against the Indonesian *rupiah*, they also speak of the uselessness in possessing such money in Indonesia.

> Sman:
> Ai is my *thau-ke* in Singapore for *gamat* and *nabi*[6]. Many of us will row directly to Pasir Panjang, Singapore[7] if we have as much as 20kg to 30kg of *gamat* and *nabi*. The Singapore Chinese *thau-kes* also buy smoked rubber sheets and tin-ore from Indonesians. They used to buy turtles too.[8] It is the Chinese and not the Malays who know how to eat turtles, *gamat* and *nabi*. The Chinese also want the teeth of the *duyong* (sea cow) for medicinal purposes.
>
> The *thau-kes* in Singapore give us a lot of money for these things. Here in the islands, the *thau-kes* give us less money, it is like playing around. Therefore, we do not get many things from our *thau-kes* here. There [in Singapore], we can get garlic, shallots, new clothes or gunny sacks of second-hand clothes, good quality rice, sugar, gold, radios, television sets, motors and all sorts of other things for our *gamat* and *nabi*.

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[4]Humphrey (1985) and Anderlini and Sabourian (1992) have shown that monetary exchange is neither always better than barter, nor has the former necessarily evolved out of the latter.

[5]This is also the case with the other communities, for example, the Malays, the Javanese and the Boyanese.

[6]*Gamat* (*Echinocaulis*) and *nabi* are different species of sea cucumbers. *Nabi* is the more highly valued of the two.

[7]This trading centre is also known as the Pasir Panjang Barter Trading Station in Singapore. It is a restricted area, and is opened only to Singaporeans with official entry passes. Those, like the *OSL* who may not possess any passports, are given temporary permits to trade within the restricted area for a stated number of hours. However, the *OSL* like the many others who enter Singapore via Indonesian waters face the "frightening" prospect of being "arrested, jailed and ill-treated" by the Indonesian authorities for smuggling.

[8]This is because of the present conservation laws which protect the diminishing population of turtles.

> Once, I bought a sack of second-hand clothes weighing 70kg for only S$15. Each piece was only about 30 [Singapore] cents. Our *thau-ke*s give us Singapore dollars for our *gamat* and *nabi*. We know that the Singapore dollar is good, but it is useless for us to bring it back. Therefore, we *tukar* (exchange) it for clothes, gold and all sorts of things. We can do all this within [the restricted area of] Pasir Panjang. We don't want to bring any Singapore dollars back. Our purpose of going to Singapore is to exchange our *gamat* and *nabi* for these things which are all very cheap. Pasir Panjang is a bustling place. Our Singapore *thau-ke*s are very good to us. They will always give us a packed meal -- sometimes of rice and sardines -- when they know that we are leaving.

The trading station in Singapore is dominated by Chinese *thau-kes*. This raises two significant issues. First, the Chinese recognise the importance of setting up shops for things like garlic, clothes and mechanical gadgets within the restricted trading centre for the *OSL*. This is a solution to problems that arise from a solely monetised economy. It is a means to help what the *OSL* describe as an "exchange" for their "useless cash." Second, because it is once again the Chinese who dominate this trading scene, this reinforces the perceptions of the *OSL* and the Malays of Riau that the Chinese are a trading community with extensive networks beyond the Malaydom. For the *OSL* and Malays, the Chinese represent another order of power and social structure.

In drawing the *OSL* to a monetised economy, the Chinese have also introduced several ideas of money to the former. First, money in the form of paper notes and minted coins is non-perishable. Second, money is a commodity which cannot be directly consumed. Third, it represents specific amounts of stored value which serves as a resource for future purchases or payments (Einzig 1966:314). Therefore, it is made known to the *OSL* that anyone possessing money has the means to enter into the orbit of markets at any time in the present or future (Neale 1976). This has significant implications for the relationship between the *OSL* and Malays. If either possess money, they feel more assured of having the freedom to carry out non-personalised and thus, relatively safer transactions across their boundaries as and when they want to. This freedom stems from two reasons. First, there is the fear of being poisoned through personalised non-monetary exchanges.

The use of money depersonalises the interaction between the *OSL* and Malays, thus enabling them to interact freely. Second, the use of money reconstructs the meaning of things by redefining the social context in which the exchange takes place.

Many *OSL* are able to recollect the various currencies that have been used in conjunction with the different periods of political domination that governed Riau.

> Imah:
> In my lifetime [in the Riau archipelago], I have used five different types of money. It started with the *wang dollar* (the dollar) followed by four others. I cannot remember [their order], but there was one which had the *cap burung* (seal of a bird), another which *pakai layah* (was stamped with the sail), and now, it is the *rupiah*.

The *OSL* explain that a change in the type of currency that is used often indicates a change in the central political body that is issuing it. For the *OSL*, there is thus the understanding that money is a symbol (Hart 1986) of an over-arching political authority or state that is issuing it.

Presently, the *OSL* even speak of the exchange value of different currencies. They would compare the value of the current Indonesian *rupiah* against other past and present world currencies that have been used in Riau.

> Buntut:
> The present Indonesian *rupiah* is *tak pakai* (useless). We need several thousand *rupiah* to buy anything. In the past [in Riau], we used the Singapore dollar.[9] With just one cent, we could buy lots of things. The period of the Dutch was good too. Their money was powerful. We could get lots of things with a little money. But the Japanese were *jahat* (evil). That was the most frightening and difficult time. Even with money, we could not get anything. During the Japanese

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[9] The banking sector in Riau is still heavily dependent upon the money market of Singapore and Malaysia. In fact, the Singapore currency circulated in the archipelago until about 1962 (Ng 1976:9). The current import and export businesses of the Riau Chinese middlemen are carried out using Singapore currency. The middlemen maintain that the Singapore dollar in comparison with the Indonesian *rupiah* is more reliable with less value fluctuation. It is a well known fact that, among the islanders of the remote islands in the archipelago, the only people with whom they may change any of their Singaporean currency with are the Chinese *thau-kes*.

> occupation, all of us -- it did not matter whether we were *OSL*, Malays or Chinese -- underwent similar sufferings.

In discussions concerning the use of money, the *OSL* speak of everyone -- "whether *OSL*, Malays or Chinese" -- in Riau as transacting on an equal basis. Certain features of money have made this possible. First, money operates as a standard of value and unit of account with quantifiable and definite values (Humphrey and Hugh-Jones 1992:8). Things are quantified to represent a certain amount of money for exchange purposes (Neale 1976:8). This means that contracts of exchange can be fulfilled immediately with no further obligations between the transactors. Second, money functions as a token of trust guaranteed by a central power (Simmel 1978:177). Even the aristocrat Malays recognise that in such a context, the central power is no longer vested in them. Instead, it pivots around an "external criterion" (Humphrey and Hugh-Jones 1992:8) -- such as the Dutch, Japanese and Republic of Indonesia -- to represent the community. This is a significant shift from the way in which relationships in non-monetary exchanges between the Malays and *OSL* are contextualised. Relationships are then still seen in terms of ranks structured by the period of the sultan.

As a consequence to what money symbolises, the use of money thus redefines the position and identity of the Malays and *OSL*. It frees the *OSL* from a position of subordination in the Malaydom. The basis of the *OSL*'s interaction with the Malays now rests upon the extent of their economic power.

Although money is about relations between people in society, it is also a thing which is able to enter into definite and quantitative relations with other things independent of the persons engaged in the transaction. Hence, the logic of money as a commodity is bound up with anonymous markets (Hart 1986).

(III) BARTER AND MONEY IN RIAU

I have said something about the importance of a monetised economy in Riau, and the attempts by the Chinese to orientate the *OSL* towards such an

economy. However, I have also indicated that barter as an institution of trade continues to prevail.

There are relevant points that can be drawn from Humphrey and Hugh-Jones's (1992:2-6) discussion of barter to explain the situation here. Unlike the use of money, barter is an institution of trade which can and does exist within many kinds of wider political relations and between different types of society. Unlike the symbolism in the use of money, there is no external or over-arching institution to act as a guarantol of trust for the participants. It enables its own social relations to exist in a wide range of situations. It is also able to coexist with other forms of exchange, such as gift-giving. As such the strategies and obligations in one sphere often spill across into others.

The characteristics of barter as pointed out above enable it to be a viable form of exchange between the *OSL* and Chinese. However, they are precisely also the features which account for the Malays' preference in engaging in a monetised economy, rather than a strictly barter exchange economy with the *OSL*.

The Malays want to avoid the direct exchange of things and services with the *OSL*.[10] Also, although barter is supposed to be separable from other forms of exchange, there are not always hard and fast boundaries between them. Barter in one or another of its varied forms often coexists with other forms of exchange. It is often linked in sequence with them and shares some of their characteristics. As such, social relationships are not always clearly defined. Furthermore, transactions in barter may be separated in time, and the Malays and *OSL* do not desire any such on-going relationships between themselves (Humphrey and Hugh-Jones 1992:2).

I have shown how the Malays criticise the *OSL* for practising barter. However, in reality, although they avoid engaging in a strictly barter exchange economy with the *OSL*, the Malays have not totally ceased using this form of exchange with the latter. Instead, barter trading coexists with the monetised exchange economy that the Malays favour for a safe exchange with the *OSL*.

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[10]See Chapter Four for a detailed discussion of the meaning of things.

The same can be said for the *OSL* when they engage in exchange with the Malays and with different groups of *OSL*. This coexistence of barter trading and a monetised economy is not unique. As observed by Humphrey and Hugh-Jones (1992:6), "there are few if any whole economies of any sizeable scale which are known to have operated by barter alone".

The use of money in Riau has therefore enabled the *OSL* and Malays to circulate things and services across their group boundaries. Parallels can be drawn to Parry and Bloch's (1989) study of how money is able to serve as an instrument of freedom in expanding the circle of trust in interactional patterns to provide wider social integration. However, Parry and Bloch (*ibid*) have not extended their argument to stress the common aim in gift-giving, barter and commodity exchange. I adopt Hart's (1986:648) view that these different forms of exchange form "a routinised resolution of social ambivalence" to secure "the same ends, namely circulation of commodities between independent communities".

(IV) "DOING BUSINESS" WITH THE CHINESE

The *OSL* have a closer relationship with the Chinese than with the Malays. Both the *OSL* and Malays view the Chinese as a distinct group **involved in**, but not **part of** the Malaydom.

The Chinese are referred to as "*Orang Tionghoa*" (*Tiongkok*: China) and/or "*Orang Cina*"[11] by the *OSL* and Malays. This means "a person from

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[11]Much controversy surrounds the addressing of Indonesian Chinese as '*Orang Tionghua*' or '*Orang Cina*' (formerly spelt, '*Tjina*'). In 1966, a top level army seminar replaced the terms '*Tionghoa*' (Chinese) and '*Tiongkok*' (China) with the derogatory term, '*Cina*' (China and/or Chinese). The following was sited as one of the major reasons for the change,

> ...to remove a feeling of inferiority on the part of our people [indigenous Indonesians], while on the other hand removing the feeling of superiority on the part of the group concerned [the local Chinese] within the state (Charles Coppel and Leo Suryadinata, September 1970).

In January 1967, Major-General Sumitro, then the commander-in-chief of Brawijaya, and later the chief of staff on the operational command for the restoration of security and order, urged the Chinese to accept the term '*Tjina*' because

> Indonesians of *Tjina* extraction are already in the big Indonesian family and have accepted the Indonesian culture...We can no longer tolerate the existence of Chinese temples, nor can we tolerate *petilasan-petilasan* (traces) which smell Chinese. We will restore everything to *asli* [indigenous]. Do accept our measures...Celebrations of Chinese New Year need not be continued, except by those Chinese who are aliens

China". Yet, to be more precise, the *OSL* sometimes use the terms, "*peranakan*[12] *pulau*" (an islander of mixed origins) to refer to those Chinese who were born in one of the islands of the archipelago, or "*anak* Indonesia" (child of Indonesia) which can either mean a local or foreign born Chinese who is residing in Indonesia permanently.

The *OSL* have often pointed out that because the Chinese are not "*asli Melayu*" (of the Malays), it is therefore "safe" to interact with them. The *OSL* believe that all Malays, especially those who are Muslims, possess "*ilmu hitam*". The Chinese are therefore seen as a neutral and non-threatening group. Neither do the Malays see the Chinese as possessing *ilmu hitam*[13], nor as having any interest in acquiring it to harm others. Instead, the Chinese are believed to be keen only on money-making enterprises.[14]

(*Berita Antara* (*edisi pagi*), January 5, 1967).
By 25 July 1967, the Indonesian cabinet presidium decided to refer to the Chinese as, '*Cina*' in all official documents. According to Suryadinata (1986:42-43), "'*Cina*' is now used by most Indonesian newspapers.

[12]There is much confusion over the term, '*peranakan*' in the literature on Chinese in Indonesia. Most writers use it to refer to Indonesian-born Chinese, regardless of whether or not they use Indonesian or an Indonesian dialect as their daily language (Charles Coppel 1973:143-147 for various meanings of '*peranakan* Chinese'). However some writers (see Skinner 1963; Suryadinata 1986), use it in a stricter sense to include only Indonesian-born Chinese who have lost their command of the Chinese language and speak only Indonesian. I do not intend to enter the debate on defining such terms. Instead, for the purpose of understanding how the Chinese are perceived by the *OSL*, I am merely employing the term as used by the latter. For the *OSL*, the term "*peranakan*" refers to any Chinese who has lived in Indonesia for most of his or her life. This is regardless of the Chinese's ancestry and language fluency.

[13]Although the *OSL* claim that the Chinese have sought their help for *ilmu*, the former maintain that the sort of *ilmu* obtained by the Chinese, usually love potions, is merely for personal use, and not to harm others.

[14]The majority of the Chinese are regarded as *thau-ke*s and economically better-off, and as such are unlikely to commit any evil or be thieves. During the course of my fieldwork, a *thau-ke* was arrested by the authorities. Reasons for the arrest were unclear. Some attributed it to the authorities accusing the *thau-ke* of possessing a motor without proper documents. Others said that it was due to the *thau-ke*'s smuggling in of sugar and rice from Singapore. More importantly, this was how the *OSL* defended the *thau-ke*.

> All [the authorities] want is money. The Chinese are never thieves. They are rich and can buy all the motors they need. They are not like the Malays or even some *OSL* who steal. What is wrong with bringing in sugar and rice from Singapore? It costs less and they are trying to help us. The Chinese are good. It is the authorities who are bad!

State policies[15] and to some extent, the Chinese community's own structural persistence[16] have perpetuated their separateness within the Malaydom. The former have differentiated the Chinese as an "alien population."[17] This has led to policies to curtail the economic[18], political

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[15]In spite of the long presence of Chinese in Indonesia (Ng 1976, Purcell 1980), the *pribumi* (indigenous) leaders -- a term used by the leaders themselves (Siddique and Suryadinata 1982:677) -- of the Republic Indonesia still regard the Chinese as an "alien population". The leaders see the Chinese as an exclusive group dominating the Indonesian economy, but with links to China. The loyalty of the Chinese is therefore seen as oriented towards China, and away from Indonesia. Most of the leaders also view the Chinese as untrustworthy. They believe that in the past, the Chinese had served the interests of colonial powers (Dutch and Japanese) (Suryadinata 1986). It was also not until recently (see for example, Mah 1990; Singapore Business 1990; Lee 1990, 1991; Wong and Ng 1991) that the prolonged business ties which the Chinese have had with Singapore opened them to further suspicions and criticisms of the *pribumi* leaders.

[16]Before the 1950s, the Chinese community in Riau made numerous attempts at maintaining a separate group identity. For example, Ng (1976) records that it was through the Chinese patron-client clan relationship that new immigrants formed solidarities and found work in Riau. This relationship transplanted gentry politics and power prevalent in Chinese villages to overseas Chinese communities. The Chinese elite also used the temples in Tanjung Pinang and Senggarang to create a centripetal force among the Chinese communities, and hence to establish their gentry power over the Chinese community in the nineteenth century. Another aspect of the community which perpetuated their exclusiveness also took place at the turn of the nineteenth century. This was when Riau became the economic frontier of Singapore (*ibid*:12). Tanjung Pinang, the township of the archipelago became a vibrant place of trade, and the Chinese began to centre their social activities there. Soon, this strengthened the position of the Hokkien merchants who dominated Tanjung Pinang. In 1910, the Chinese community also founded the Tuan Pun School in Tanjung Pinang to promote Chinese nationalism and the Chinese language. The Chinese written language was of immense practical value to the Chinese as it was the medium of communication in the commercial network of the Chinese middlemen. All Chinese store owners in Tanjung Pinang were expected to support the school, or face a boycott of their stores (*ibid*:33-34).

[17]According to Suryadinata (1986:191), the "*peranakan* Chinese" wanted to be regarded as one of the *pribumi sukus* (indigenous groups), just like the Bataks, the Minangkabaus, the Balinese and other regional-indigenous-ethnic minorities". This view was reluctantly accepted by President Sukarno in the early 1960s. However, the majority of leaders objected to it. Their reasons being that first, all indigenous ethnic minorities were indigenous with particular regions to identify with. However, the Chinese minority were scattered around to the extent of being a 'floating urban minority'. Second, unlike indigenous minorities, the Chinese were said to have ties with one external power which was also their land of origin. Such views have led to some Indonesian cities requiring citizens of Chinese origin to obtain special identity cards for security reasons (*Sinar Harapan* 29 January and 20 February 1975; *Tempo* 15 February 1975:18). In Jakarta, the Chinese are differentiated from other Indonesians by having the digit 0 placed at the beginning of their registration number (Wee 1985:43). The re-categorisation of indigenous and non-indigenous entrepreneurs have also reinforced the division between indigenous Indonesians and ethnic Chinese (Suryadinata 1986:193).

and cultural[19] strength of the local Chinese. The various Indonesian governments have maintained that the intention in weakening the Chinese community is to assimilate them into indigenous society. However, regulations in these policies have contradicted the declared assimilationist principles.[20] Instead, these have only perpetuated the 'separateness' of the Chinese (Suryadinata 1986:192).

There were many Chinese scattered throughout the Riau archipelago. However, in May 1959, Chinese retail trade in rural areas was banned and they were forced to transfer their businesses to Indonesian citizens by 30 September 1959. This also meant that no Chinese were allowed to reside outside certain designated administrative centres such as Tanjung Pinang, the township of Riau[21] (Wee 1985:54). The forced migration of the Chinese to Tanjung Pinang further polarised the duality of *kampung* (village) and *kota* (town): indigenous people and non-indigenous people.

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[18]In the economic field, the Benteng system in 1950 favoured indigenous importers over the Chinese. Regulations were implemented to indigenise harbour facilities and rice-mills by shifting the ownership of these things from the Chinese to indigenous Indonesians during the 1950s. Priority in issuing licenses was given to new enterprises owned by indigenous Indonesians in 1954 and 1956. Foreign investors were required to collaborate with local firms in which indigens were major share-holders in 1974, and certain loans were available only for indigenous businessmen in 1975 (Suryadinata 1986:191).

[19]Examples of policies to curtail the political and cultural strength of the Chinese included, "the requirement that Indonesian citizens receive Indonesian education (1957), the ban on alien traders in rural areas (1959), the name-changing regulations for non-indigenous Indonesians (1961, 1967), the easing of the naturalisation process (1969) [and] the closing of Chinese-medium schools (1966)" (Suryadinata 1986:191).

[20]For example, the official re-adoption of the derogatory term '*Cina*' to refer to the Chinese has offended and alienated them further. The high expenses necessary for the process of naturalisation have furthermore deterred many Chinese from becoming Indonesian citizens. The policy of re-categorising indigenous from non-indigenous Indonesians in economic activities which has favoured only the indigens has prevented the assimilation of the Chinese (Suryadinata 1986:192).

[21]This situation was aggravated after the failed coup in 1965 when,

> ...the overseas Chinese were held responsible for the alleged role of the [People's Republic of China] in the abortive Coup....Regional authorities took independent action against them. For instance, the military authorities in early 1967 prohibited alien Chinese from trading in East Java and parts of Sumatra (Suryadinata 1986:135).

The villages were, and are still largely inhabited by the indigens of Riau. This is in contrast to the towns which are inhabited by the non-indigens, such as the Chinese. The awareness of this duality is clearly indicated by language usage. Town dwellers speak *Bahasa Indonesia*, the Indonesian national language. However, "one speaks the linguistically unstandardised and officially unrecognised dialect of the place in the villages" (*ibid*:54-55). The *OSL* and Malays have often told me that a Chinese is an "*orang kota*" (town dweller). For those in Riau, Tanjung Pinang is therefore seen as the centre for the Chinese.

The impact of these policies on the Chinese in Riau have forced many into setting up their own businesses. This is because they are not eligible for positions in the civil service. Furthermore, these policies have forced many Chinese to be outwardly oriented in their business practices. Some have involved themselves in smuggling activities[22] (Ng 1976). Others have looked to the patronage of Singapore merchants to supply them with goods on credit and initial capital[23] (*ibid*) to set up businesses as middlemen in Riau.

As middlemen , the Chinese in Riau connect the Malays and *OSL*, the primary producers of maritime products and charcoal[24],

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[22]Many Chinese businesses became involved in smuggling activities during the Confrontation between 1963 and 1966. This was due to state regulations which not only banned all their businesses (Ng 1976:41), but also made it impossible for them to enter into civil service. Therefore, the high prices that Singapore offered for rubber and primary products attracted many Chinese into smuggling activities. The possibility of accumulating foreign exchange abroad was another pulling factor (*ibid*:59). Smuggling became even more attractive during the Sukarno period when a system of strict foreign exchange control was implemented. Foreign exchange could then be traded in the black market at a rate ten times its official value (*Business News* 1976 March 24:3). The Chinese used the exchange which was earned for import capital. After the Confrontation between 1963 and 1966, there was extensive collaboration between Chinese merchants and the state administrators in these smuggling activities and the authorised monopoly of exports (*Far Eastern Economic Review* June 1, 1967:478).

[23]The commercial ties between Singapore and Indonesia were so close that Singapore currency was used throughout Riau until the Confrontation started in 1963 (Ng 1976:59). Riau had been for a long time an extended part of Singapore, and the Chinese businessmen in the region were criticised for being the commercial agents of Singapore (see for example *Indonesian current affairs translation service bulletin* 1971:478).

[24]The *OSL* and non-*OSL* chop the mangrove swamps to obtain charcoal. The charcoal is then exported to Europe.

from the isolated areas in the archipelago to the big cities beyond the Malaydom. The Chinese middlemen are also the ones who facilitate the movement of consumer goods from the cities beyond the archipelago to the producers. They thus move between social groups and link the *OSL* and Malays in isolated areas to distant markets.

However, as middlemen , they have also become the *thau-ke*s of the *OSL* and Malays. They keep accounts of the transactions they make with the *OSL* and Malays. For their trusted clients, they arrange a system of credit. An *OSL* explains the workings of such a system.

> Tekong:
> The *thau-ke* keeps a book. We bring our fish to him and he writes the amount in his book. This is to cross out whatever we owe him. Then, we can take *belachan* (prawn paste), rice, sugar, chillies and cigarettes from his shop. The next time we bring our fish to him, he will open his book and the same thing happens. Sometimes, we don't have any fish to give him. However, if he knows us well, he will help us. We can take the things from his shop first. But if we have any fish, we must take them to him and not to any other *thau-ke*. Otherwise, if our *thau-ke* finds out, he will be angry and will not help us in future.

The credit system works on "the equilibrium exchange ratios" based on the principle of trust (Anderlini and Sabourian 1992:90). However, respective *thau-ke*s have set up a system of enforcement to ensure that the debts are paid up. This is done through a verbal agreement that those who have received his "*bantu*" (help) must remain loyal to him by returning with their maritime products to pay up their debts, or face future sanctions in receiving his help.

The *thau-ke*s, like middlemen elsewhere (Lima 1982:3), have also manipulated the prices of the maritime products received and the consumer goods paid out. This way, they keep their clients permanently in debt. The clients attempt to cancel their debt with their maritime products. However, no matter how much they produce, the *thau-ke*s try to ensure that the value of goods taken on credit exceeds the value of their client's production. This is possible because it is the middlemen who control the prices.

State policies emphasise the outward political allegiance of the Chinese. In addition, the outward orientation of the Chinese in their business practices

have together only served to shape the views of the Malays and the *OSL* that the Chinese are involved in, but are not part of the Malaydom. However, for the Malays and *OSL*, the Chinese represent a group with peripheral status which has come to dominate the economic realm of Indonesia.

For the *OSL*, the Chinese although a group accorded only marginal status, are mostly pork eating and not Muslims, present an alternative to being "*maju*" (progressive) without becoming 'Malay'. The Chinese also represent an inversion of power in the archipelago. First, by their activities as middlemen, they are relocating the Malaydom in a wider global market economy, where status and power structures become redefined. Second, the Malays and *OSL* now see themselves as the *anak buah* (followers/ underlings) of the Chinese.

The Chinese have clearly adapted to various changes (Wang 1990). They have seized every opportunity to improve their economic standing. This is evidenced in the numerous money making enterprises that they have embarked upon during periods of hostile government policies towards the community. The Chinese have also widened their trading partners to include the indigenous population of Riau regardless of their social standing in the Malaydom.

However, the Chinese believe that although they are not Malays, their permanent residence in the region has contributed to their being part of the Malay world. This has therefore increased their vulnerability to being poisoned by the Malays and *OSL*. Yet, as merchants, they see it as necessary to interact closely with both groups of people.

Su Lang:

> We believe that the Malays and *OSL* can poison us too if we provoke them. However, when we take their fish from them, we are doing business with them. They will not poison us when they sell us their fish. None the less, when they give us cakes or anything, we throw them away when they are out of sight. We are afraid of being poisoned. (Translated from Teochiu).

The Chinese rationalise that the use of money in the exchange of things and services, or the calculation of such exchanges in monetary terms, transform

them into "business" or "business-like" transactions. Such exchanges are regarded as safe because of the understanding that the things and services exchanged become commoditised (Appadurai 1986). This decreases possibilities of the things, and hence themselves, of being poisoned. The moral overtones in using money or the calculation of such exchanges in monetary terms imply the immediate fulfilment in the contract of exchange (Humphrey and Hugh-Jones 1992:8; Neale 1976:8). The Chinese reason that people place themselves on neutral grounds when they engage in "business" for profit-making purposes. There is thus no opportunity for poisoning. However, things such as gifts which circulate beyond a monetised sphere are considered dangerous.

In keeping with the view that safe interactions can be made with the Malays and *OSL* through "business" and other employer-employee arrangements, the Chinese have monopolised various businesses for making ice[25], snacks, boat building and repairs, tailoring and hairdressing. It is also common for the Chinese to employ the Malays and *OSL* as domestic helpers, and even to engage their midwifery services. In fact, the Chinese find it more convenient to employ the *OSL* as domestic helpers because they are able to touch pork. As domestic helpers, the *OSL* are also able to share the same meals with their Chinese employers. On the other hand, the Malays cannot eat pork. During religious feast days, some Chinese *thau-ke*s also give their surplus food to the *OSL* who are in their employment. The *OSL* interpret the handing out of food by the Chinese as acts of "giving", "helping" and "generosity". The *OSL* who have been recipients of such things from the Chinese thus claim a closer allegiance with the Chinese than the Malays. In the course of my fieldwork, no Chinese was ever accused by the *OSL* of poisoning anyone.

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[25]Ice is needed for preserving fish.

The *OSL* are of the opinion that Chinese *thau-ke*s, in comparison to Malay *thau-ke*s, are "richer and more generous, less stingy, less fussy and more willing to help."[26]

> Saya:
> When I deliver the babies for the Chinese, they give me lots of things. For example, when I delivered Asim's children, I asked for Rp20,000, a piece of cloth and a set of new clothes. Instead, he doubled the payment because he pitied me. He even added on sugar, coffee, rice and Rp30,000. This is what he gave me for each child. When the child reached a month old, he gave me some more things. The Chinese are like that. They are not selfish. But not the Malays.

Many *OSL*, like Saya would therefore rather work for the Chinese. Even though not all Chinese *thau-ke*s may be generous, the *OSL* still consider it safer and easier to work with them.

The Chinese consider all their clients and employees to be their *anak buah* (followers/ underlings). Wang (1990:15-16) explains that it was difficult for the Chinese single entrepreneurial man to start a business abroad without some degree of family backing. Therefore, the overseas Chinese merchants often entered a business by "belonging to a family or an adopted family business network, including artificial brotherhoods operating as members under family discipline. This was fundamental even though it was less obvious abroad that their business organisations had strong family characteristics". Conversely, if a Chinese *thau-ke* - employee relationship was close enough, the latter would be promoted rapidly in the business or even married into the family for a lifetime business partnership. In other words, there were cases in which family relationships were synonymous with business relationships. If the relationship was less close, then the employees displaying industriousness would remain as "loyal retainers all their lives" (*ibid*:16).

To this very day, the Chinese merchants continue to maintain aspects of this *thau-ke*-employee relationship. During the Lunar New Year, most Chinese *thau-ke*s give hampers of goodwill to their *anak buah*. A red piece

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[26]This is especially so with reference to giving credit.

of paper or a red packet symbolising good luck and good fortune is always attached to the hampers. The Malays and *OSL* readily accept these hampers without fear of being poisoned. Instead, as the *OSL* explained, this act of giving and the symbolic red paper confirm and reinforce a firm relationship between the *thau-ke* and his *anak buah*.

The *OSL* are thus able to establish a certain type of relationship through "doing business" with the Chinese which is difficult to attain with the Malays. The following is an example of how some *OSL* have been able to form strong *anak buah-thau-ke* relationships with the Chinese.

> Awang ketah:
> If you are lucky and find yourself a good and helpful *thau-ke*, you will lead a *senang* (contented) life. I was the first to settle in Dapur Enam. When my *thau-ke* came from China, I helped him build his charcoal kiln. There would have been no kiln here if not for my help. I did all sorts of work for my *thau-ke*. [In return,] my *thau-ke* gave me everything.
>
> One day, my *thau-ke* asked me, "Why don't you find yourself a wife?" I replied, "I do not have enough money." He answered, "I will take care of everything". So, I went and found a wife. When I married my first wife, he gave me everything -- chicken, pork, money, rings, a few nights of *joget* (dance) -- because I had worked hard for him. We feasted from morning till night for 3 days. When my first wife died, my *thau-ke* gave me $200 to cover all expenses.
>
> When I married my second wife, my *thau-ke* provided everything again. That *thau-ke* was the best. It was not as if he would pay me every time I brought my catch to him. Instead, there was an understanding that whenever my *thau-ke* was in any kind of difficulty, such as when thieves break into his house, I would help him. Likewise, when my children or I were in any kind of difficulty, and needed money -- at that time we used Singapore dollars --he would give it. Later, when we used the *rupiah*, and I needed thousands of *rupiah* for my children, my *thau-ke* would help too. My *thau-ke* would also give us food whenever we had nothing to eat. During Chinese New Year, he would give us *ang paos* (red packets containing money). When my *thau-ke* and his wife died, my sons and I dug their graves and helped carry their coffins for burial. I cried.

As seen above, an *anak buah-thau-ke* relationship may become so strong that it borders on drawing in the *OSL* as a member of the "family business network" (Wang 1990). Below is an example of how a loyal *OSL*, was

adopted and later made a *thau-ke* by his Chinese *bapak angkat* (adopted father).

Chung Chai Hak, was an immigrant from China who settled and worked in the charcoal kilns in Tiang Wang Kang. One day, he adopted an *OSL* boy whom he named Atong.[27] Atong's parents had often visited Tiang Wang Kang to work in the charcoal kilns. Atong would invariably meet them in Tiang Wang Kang. He recalls being in Tiang Wang Kang from 1957 to 1958 and again in April 1962. In August 1962, he married in Tiang Wang Kang and has since settled there. According to Atong, it was Chung who persuaded him to stay and work in Tiang Wang Kang.

> Atong:
> My adopted father was getting old. He wanted me close to him because he said that there was no one to take care of him...Actually, although my adopted father was our *thau-ke*, he was in fact only the headman of the charcoal kiln here. As far as my memory goes, the first *thau-ke*'s name was Lim Tuang, a Chinese Singaporean. During the period of the Confrontation, no Chinese was allowed to own any property in Indonesia. My adopted father Chung Chai Hak, who was holding on to the documents of possession for the charcoal kilns made over the papers in my name. That is how I have come to own the charcoal kilns. Lim Tuang, the *thau-ke* raised no objections. Neither did Lim Tuang's younger brother, Xiao Ti, disagree. My Chinese adopted father died on 12 April 1974. That was when he gave me all his possessions including the papers of ownership for the charcoal kilns.

The example above is an instance in which an *OSL anak buah* was recruited as part of the his *thau-ke*'s "family". The period of political turmoil as outlined in Atong's account of how he came to be in possession of the kilns highlighted two important aspects of the Chinese community in the eyes of the *OSL*. First, hostile government policies aimed at the Chinese community reminded the indigens of the Malay world that the Chinese were not Malays.

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[27]Atong is a Chinese name. It is also the name by which everyone calls this *OSL* now.

Second, the "alien" status of the Chinese *thau-ke*s forced them to collaborate with their *anak buah* for alternative business arrangements.[28]

The close relationship between the *OSL* and the Chinese has therefore led many *OSL* to consider themselves as "united with the Chinese".

> Bego:
> The Malays here pretend to be our friends. Actually, they are always looking for opportunities to harm us...The Chinese here are good. We are united with them. I have seen the Chinese being poisoned by drinks offered to them by the Malays...We are afraid of the Malays, but we like the Chinese.
>
> Awang ketah:
> I have had to help *jampi* (bespell) many Chinese who have been poisoned by the Malays here. But, I will never help the Malays.
>
> Sman:
> When I go fishing, I bring my own food and water. Otherwise, I'll ask for water from a Chinese, but never from a Malay. The Malays are *jahat* (evil) and *busok* (smelly).

The *OSL* see part of their allegiance to the Chinese as a safeguard against a common enemy threat, the Malays.

On the other hand, the Malays do not claim any such allegiance to the Chinese. However, the Malays like the *OSL* have never accused the Chinese of being obsessed with *ilmu* to poison others. Therefore, although the *OSL* and Malays may have differing views of the Chinese, it is significant that both communities regard the Chinese as a neutral community in the Malaydom. As such, the Chinese are viewed as intermediaries in adding social distance (hence neutralising and making safe) things which then become acceptable for the Malay and *OSL* communities to transact with one another. Also, with the use of money, the Chinese are circulating things and services into a different "regime of value" (Appadurai 1986).

The Malays recognise fish bearing spear marks as those that have been caught by the *OSL*. For fear of being poisoned, no Malay would accept such

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[28]According to some of my informants, the Chinese have "even married the *OSL*" in an attempt to gain Indonesian citizenship.

fish as gifts from an *OSL*. Yet, it is considered "alright" for them to buy such fish from Chinese *thau-ke*s who have purchased them from the *OSL*. When things such as maritime products from the *OSL* have passed through the hands of the Chinese middlemen, they are considered as safe to touch, and even safe for consumption. There is no fear of the fish being poisoned by the *OSL*. If the Malays are not keen to buy such fish from the Chinese for consumption purposes, it is simply because of "the knowledge" that the fish was stored in an *OSL*'s boat prior to it being sold to the *thau-ke*. However, it is not fear of such fish being poisoned because of its close association with the *OSL*. It is simply that they believe such fish are "smelly because the *OSL* relieve themselves in their boats". The Malays explain that it is "alright" to obtain such maritime products for consumption from the Chinese. Thus, they explain that that is the reason why it is safe for Singaporeans to import and consume such maritime products from the Chinese.

It is also not uncommon for the *OSL* to make *kijang*[29] (weaved leaves) and collect shell fish[30] for sale to the Chinese middlemen. Once again, the Malays consider it safe to purchase such things from the Chinese. They would therefore rather obtain them via the Chinese than to approach the *OSL* directly. In the course of my fieldwork, no Malay has ever talked of such things being poisoned.

(V) MONEY: MAKING SAFE THE INTERACTION BETWEEN DIFFERENT GROUPS OF *OSL*

Different groups of *OSL* view each other with intense suspicion and fear of being poisoned and harmed. They avoid giving and accepting gifts from each other. However, the use of money in exchange practices has enabled the *OSL*

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[29]These usually serve as roof tops for boats. Alternatively, they may be used as walls of houses and sheds or as mats for drying various maritime products.

[30]Shellfish is gathered by hand. They do not bear any spear marks. Thus, it is much more difficult to identify the people who have collected them.

to redefine certain services[31] and things. This has enabled them to interact and circulate these services and things safely between different groups of *OSL*.

The *OSL* of Pulau Nanga, and those of Teluk Nipah are examples of two conflicting groups who view each other with much fear and suspicion. Interaction between them is kept to a minimum. Invitations to weddings and funerals are rarely issued by individuals from one group to the other.[32] Yet, members of each group deem it necessary to seek the other for their *ilmu* and other services.

Lampong, an *OSL* from Pulau Nanga was left a widower after his wife, Siti's death. His son could not be consoled over the loss of his mother. This caused Lampong endless anxieties over his son's health. Finally, the father decided that he would seek a *dukun*'s (shaman's) help to *jampi* (cast a spell on) his son. It was a well known fact amongst the *OSL* that Pak Bujang, an elderly *OSL* from the opposite island of Teluk Nipah possessed the *ilmu* that Lampong needed to have his son "cured". Lampong explained why he had out of necessity to cross over to seek Pak Bujang's help.

> Lampong:
> Pak Bujang casts very powerful spells to enable children to forget their deceased parents...so that the children will be healthy again. People specialise in different kinds of spells. I paid Pak Bujang Rp 25,000 and gave him a chicken to bewitch my son. That is why my son is healthy now. That was a lot of money, but it does not matter as long as my son is healthy.

I have shown in Chapter Three that the *OSL* consider their *ilmu* to be inalienable possessions. What is transacted in all circumstances as will be illustrated in the following ethnographic examples, is not the contents of the *ilmu*, but only the act of casting the spell. The *dukun*s will never recite aloud the contents of their *ilmu*. The contents will always be kept secret (see Chapter Three).

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[31]These include the services of healers, midwives and house builders.

[32]However, it is common for members of each group to cross over to gamble with each other.

All the *OSL* whom I talked to in the field expressed great fear of being bewitched by other *OSL* belonging to conflicting groups. They avoid contact with one another lest they be harmed or poisoned by the spells of other *OSL*. Therefore, it is significant that Lampong had the courage to approach a member of a conflicting group to cast a spell on his son. The use of money redefined the moral overtones of Pak Bujang's act of casting the spell. It was transformed into a commoditised (Appadurai 1986) service that could be exchanged safely.

In a reversed situation, Meen's family from Teluk Nipah had on two occasions to seek Suri's *ilmu* as a midwife to deliver the babies of their daughters. Suri is the only midwife available to the *OSL* in Teluk Nipah and Pulau Nanga.[33] On the second occasion, the relationship between Suri's family and Meen's family had become the most strained of all relationships between the two *OSL* communities. This resulted from a quarrel that had ensued between the two families after Meen had engaged the services of Suri's husband, Tekong to help him build a new house. Hence, both sides harboured ill feelings towards each other. However, these grudges were masked with cordialities for fear of being poisoned.

Soon after the quarrel, Meen's family found themselves in the dilemma of having to depend on Suri to deliver the baby of one of Meen's step-daughters. The *OSL* believe that a successful delivery rests upon the midwife's *ilmu*. There was therefore much fear in Meen's family that Suri might use her *ilmu* during the delivery to harm the mother and baby. Meen explained the need to keep close watch on Suri during the delivery. He also stressed the

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[33]There is a Malay midwife in the neighbouring island of Sembur. However, neither the Malay midwife nor the *OSL* are keen to interact on such a basis. The *OSL* from Teluk Nipah consider calling in Suri from the conflicting and different *OSL* group of Pulau Nanga, rather than the Malay midwife as the lesser of two evils. On the other hand, the Malay midwife is keen to distance herself from the *OSL*. According to the Malays of Sembur, the midwife is afraid to deliver any *OSL*'s baby. Should complications arise during the delivery, the *OSL* would accuse her of poisoning them. In such circumstances, the midwife would be vulnerable to being poisoned by the *OSL* as a counter attack. The Malay midwife also regards the *OSL* as a people having either a different religion or none at all. This would also complicate matters for her should either the mother or baby die during the delivery. This is because she would not be able to assist in their burial and funeral rites in the expected role of a midwife.

need to practice their own *ilmu* in conjunction with Suri's. Meen prepared and cast spells on the herbal medicine which he prepared for his step-daughter. As an added precaution, he cast more spells over his step-daughter to protect her life. The reasons for these measures to safeguard his step-daughter and the baby were never mentioned in front of Suri. Meen's family feared that if they provoked Suri in any way, she could poison them. On the other hand, Suri feared that her family too would be poisoned if she refused to deliver Meen's step-grandchild. Before rowing over to render her services, Suri gave strict instructions to her children not to accept anything from Meen's family lest they should be poisoned.

Prior to the delivery, Meen's daughter and son-in-law visited Suri. They placed Rp 20,000 as *wang muka* (money up front, that is in advance) in front of her. In addition to this, Suri negotiated[34] for a set of new clothes, a piece of new *sarong*, a kilogramme of rice, a bottle of perfumed oil, a piece of soap, a chicken, a threaded needle pierced into a coconut, a candle, tamarind, salt and a lime upon the delivery of the baby. Suri explained that if she accepted the money in advance, it meant that she was sealing a promise to be in close proximity during the period when the delivery was expected to take place.

While carrying out the delivery, it was discovered that the baby's umbilical cord was wrapped dangerously around its neck. However, Suri was able to perform the delivery safely. Meen's wife, Yang explained the added cost that this incurred.

> Yang:
> We had to give Suri another Rp 10,000 because the umbilical cord of the baby was wrapped around its neck. This was not natural. The child could have died. Suri managed to save the child with her *ilmu* (magic), so we had to add on a set of clothes and a piece of cloth for her. Prior to this, we gave her Rp. 20,000 as money in advance. She asked for all this. Formerly, my sister-in-law was a midwife too. However, she never asked for anything. She simply accepted whatever we gave her.

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[34]The things that Suri had asked for are items traditionally -- with occasional variations -- requested by other *OSL* and island Malay midwives. The Malay midwives, too, cast spells while carrying out a delivery.

> She was different from Suri. We had to give Suri everything...a chicken, a set of clothes, a piece of cloth. We spent about Rp 50,000. She is a *nenek duit* (a money-grabbing grandmother) who eats money. At the end of everything, we also gave Suri and the child yellow rice to *salamat* (give greetings of peace to) them.

The *OSL* believe that in complications such as the above, it is only the power of a midwife's *ilmu* which would save both mother and child. Therefore, Suri had to cast even more powerful spells to rescue the mother and child from danger. The commoditisation (Appadurai 1986) of the casting of spells meant that such spells commanded higher exchange value. Suri justified her position by explaining that if Meen's family had gone to a "doctor"[35] for the delivery, the latter would have asked for a higher fee to cover his services. Therefore, she explained that she was like a "doctor", if not better.[36] The difference being that unlike the "doctor", she used her "*ilmu*" for casting spells. Many *OSL* believe that *ilmu* is even more powerful than medicine for delivering babies. As such, Suri claimed the right to be paid for her services in casting spells. In explaining her situation, Suri was clearly commoditising her acts of spell-casting.

The additional non-monetary things that Suri had negotiated for had to be new and unused.[37] There are two possible explanations for this. First, Suri would not have accepted old things for her services. She would have felt short-changed by such a transaction. Second, *OSL* from different communities avoid giving and receiving things that have had close associations with their previous owner. It is a precaution taken to avoid the giver from poisoning the recipient through the thing, and vice versa (see Chapter Four). The things and money that had been negotiated for the transaction with Suri were arranged

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[35]By this, Suri meant a doctor in a hospital practising western medicine.

[36]Both the *OSL* and Malays told me of cases when *dukun*s were called into the hospital at Tanjung Pinang, the township of Riau, to work alongside the doctors. Although I was not personally acquainted with such cases, I was told that these were cases in which the attending doctors could not manage the complications that had arisen during the delivery.

[37]Although it is not a common practice to give a midwife old and used things, it is possible to do so if both sides are agreeable to such a transaction. However, the *OSL* told me that this would be an exception rather than the norm, such as when one kin helps another.

on a tray for her. The money was visibly placed on top of everything. It was highly noticeable that Suri refused all other things outside the tray of things.[38]

In contrast to Yang's explanation of the patterns of exchange that they were engaged in with Suri, Meen talked about the things that they had to give to those who had "*tokang tulak*" (skilfully pushed) the belly of his daughter during her contraction pains.

> Meen:
> After three days, the people who have pushed will be given half a kilo[gramme] of pounded *beras* (uncooked rice grains). We would have to pound the rice grains on our own. If we do not do this, we would fall ill. We'll have to let those who pushed have a look at the pounded rice grains slowly. They would then rub it onto their hands and legs. If we don't give this to them, their hands and legs would be sick. It is not money that we will have to give the people who have pushed.

He explained that the skill of pushing rested upon the person's *ilmu*. It was not simply a matter of exerting pressure. Meen also pointed out that there was no need for him to give any money to the people who had helped to push. This was because they were his relatives in Teluk Nipah. Unlike the commoditisation of Suri's spells, *OSL* belonging to the same community are expected to use their *ilmu* to help one another.[39] They trust that kin would

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[38]Suri had tried not to show her refusal for things beyond the tray too visibly. She had also reminded her children to be polite and not to be too obvious in their refusal of offers for refreshments lest they too offended and provoked Meen's family into poisoning them.

[39]Kinsfolk who do not help are sometimes accused of harbouring evil intentions to inflict harm. Tut, the sister of Meen's step-daughter was helping to push her sister's stomach during the delivery. All of a sudden, she sprang backwards and fell into a fit. Meen later confided in me that they knew who had inflicted harm on his family. They told me to recall how Buntut, the oldest woman in their community, who in spite of possessing the most powerful *ilmu* in the community, had walked in and out of their's daughter's house during the entire period of the delivery without attempting to help. For them, this was an indication that she was casting spells to kill both mother and child. However, they explained that the evil spirit that Buntut had cast on the mother could not enter the latter. This was because Meen had already cast powerful spells to protect his step-daughter from being poisoned. Thus, this resulted in the evil spirit bouncing off onto Tut.

not cast spells to harm or poison one another.[40] Therefore, whilst the commoditisation of Suri's services created non-personalised bonds between the transactors, the type of exchange that takesplace between members of the same *OSL* community is aimed at creating lasting personalised bonds between the givers and recipients. Hence, the absence of using money as a means of specific worth and payment (Hart 1986) indicates that it is "help" and not service that has been rendered. As Hart (*ibid*) has rightly pointed out although money is about relations between persons, it is simultaneously a thing detached from persons. It connotes definite and quantitative relations with other things independent of the persons engaged in the transaction. Thus, it is precisely this anonymity of persons that the *OSL* are avoiding in their patterns of exchange with other members within their own community. In contrast, it is exactly the sort of relationship that the *OSL* want to establish when they circulate things and services across their boundaries with groups of *OSL* they are in conflict with.

(VI) MONEY: MAKING SAFE THE INTERACTION BETWEEN THE *OSL* AND THE MALAYS

The *OSL* and Malay communities both fear each other's *ilmu*. They exercise much care in safeguarding themselves from being bewitched by each other's

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[40]There have been cases in which relatives have been accused of poisoning one another. However, I observed that these accusations were often levelled at those who had married into the group. That is, these people belonged to a conflicting group of *OSL* prior to their marriage. For example, some *OSL* in Pulau Nanga whispered to me that their brother, Den had married a *Suku Barok* (a sub-group of *OSL*) woman. The *OSL* in Pulau Nanga view the *Suku Barok* with suspicion. They believe that the *Suku Barok* woman had bewitched Den into marrying her. When the woman became their "*ipar*" ([sister]-in-law), she entered their community and lived amongst them. She was not able to have any children of her own, and was therefore keen on adopting one of Den's brother's daughter. However, the parents of the girl, Ceco and Asmah, refused permission. On the day when Ceco's daughter drowned, the *OSL* told me that their sister-in-law had lured the girl into her home and given her food. They say that out of spite, their sister-in-law had cast spells on the food and poisoned the girl. This resulted in the girl feeling dizzy and falling into the sea. The *OSL* whispered this story to me as they "did not want anyone to hear, especially Den". This was because the latter was their "own brother". They reasoned that it was afterall not he who had done wrong, but his *Suku Barok* wife who was the culprit. Although the *OSL* may accuse others within their own community of bewitching one another, care is taken even by the family claiming to have been victimised that such news should never reach the family of the accused. They fear that this would cause divisions within the community.

ilmu. The Malays consider the *OSL* as a backward people in possession of the "most dangerous and powerful *ilmu*". However, much as the Malays fear the *OSL*'s *ilmu*, it is also this most powerful possession of the *OSL* that the Malays desire.

During the course of my fieldwork, I had several opportunities to observe how the *OSL*'s casting of spells were transformed into commoditised services which the Malays felt were safe to obtain. I was called upon to help out with negotiations in one such case.[41]

A Malay mother from Tanjung Pinang suspected that her son had been bewitched into falling in love with a girl from Pulau Tujoh.[42] Friends had informed the mother that the girl was an "*ayam kampung*"[43] who had siphoned money off several men for her pleasures. The girl was also said to have two other suitors in Pulau Tujoh. On many occasions, the mother had tried but failed to advise her son to end the relationship. As time passed, the mother was told that her son was spending lavishly on the delights of his girlfriend, and that the couple were becoming increasingly intimate in public places. The mother exerted more pressure on him to "see things rationally" and terminate the relationship. However, her son was determined to pursue the girl.

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[41]I was called upon to mediate in the negotiations for two reasons. The first was due to the distance between the woman's residence in Tanjung Pinang, and Pulau Nanga, the *OSL*'s settlement where the woman had hoped to obtain the antidote. As I returned to Tanjung Pinang at the end of each month to collect my mail, I was seen as the ideal person who was in touch with both communities. Second, the woman trusted that because of my friendship with the *OSL*, I would be able to recommend to her a powerful *OSL dukun*. I have also chosen to discuss this case because it clearly illustrates how a dangerous antidote could be transformed into a safe thing for the Malay woman to use (without being harmed). Prior to my establishing any contact with the *OSL*, this woman had out of great concern been adamant that I should not associate with the *OSL*. She feared that I would be bewitched by the *OSL* through simply touching any of them or their possessions. Yet, in this case, she deemed that this dangerous antidote could be made safe for me to handle in its transportation from Pulau Nanga to Tanjung Pinang.

[42]Pulau Tujoh (Seven islands) is a group of seven islands in the Lingga area of the Riau archipelago of Indonesia.

[43]"*Ayam kampung*" literally "village chicken", but meaning "a prostitute".

The mother finally decided to obtain an antidote from the *OSL* to stop the affair. She regarded this as "the only way" to correct the situation. The Malay woman drew me into her confidence, and reasoned that the only possible explanation for her "usually obedient and shy son" turning against her and "loving the girl to the point of insanity and without shame by displaying such intimacy under public scrutiny in broad daylight" was because he had been bewitched by the girl. To confirm her suspicion, the mother asked that I recollect how earlier that cool night when it had been raining heavily, her son had suddenly complained of feeling so hot that he had to unbutton his shirt. She explained,

> *Ibu*[44]:
> *Abang* (older brother) displayed a definite symptom of having been bewitched when he complained of feeling hot earlier this evening. The rest of us were feeling cold. It was very unusual because *abang* is always the first to complain of feeling cold. This is *malam jumat*,[45] the most powerful time for black magic to be carried out. I am certain that the girl was at home casting spells on *abang*. Poor *abang*, we must save him quickly.

It is believed that while such spells are taking their effect, the victim acts out of the norm. This includes becoming irrational and suicidal. A great sense of discomfort is also felt, such as feeling hot or experiencing a burning sensation, throwing up and choking. The mother believed that she could "save" her son by obtaining a powerful antidote from the *OSL*. She was convinced that the antidote would be able to counter the black magic that was causing her son to fall in love. I was asked to act on her behalf to negotiate with the *OSL* for the antidote.

Following the mother's instructions, I started negotiations to obtain the antidote from Ceco, a well known *dukun* in Pulau Nanga specialising in such

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[44]*Ibu* means mother. However, it is also a term used to address older women.

[45]*Malam jumat* means literally, "night Friday", that is the (Thursday) night leading to Friday. For the Malays, Fridays begin from three in the afternoon on a Thursday. *Malam jumat* is also known as *malam hantu* (night of the ghosts/ spirits) by the Malays and the *OSL*. This is therefore the most powerful period for practising black magic.

matters. Ceco confirmed that he could cast spells and concoct an antidote to stop the girl from liking the boy or vice versa. The following conversation ensued.

> 8 December 1991
> Cynthia:
> How much should *Ibu* pay you?
>
> Ceco:
> It is like this. She can give however much she likes.
>
> Cynthia:
> *Ibu* has said that she would only pay you if the spell works.
>
> Ceco:
> That is fine. She'll know whether it works or not. If it works, and she doesn't give me anything, I can reverse the spell to harm her and the couple can get together again. Many people have come to me to cast spells for such matters. Recently, a Javanese sought me out to cast a spell on a girl whom he wanted. (At this point, Ceco took out several concoctions he had prepared for his various clients to show me). Now, what you'll need to do for your friend is to buy a bottle of *minyak wangi* (the name of a perfumed oil) [46], and bring it back to me immediately. I will cast a spell on the oil. After that, you will take it to your friend and ask her to massage it over her son's body. When the oil works, she will have to give me some tamarind, salt and a nail. I will eat some of the tamarind and salt, and then you'll have to bring the nail and remaining tamarind and salt to her and ask her to eat them too. Let me know if the oil is not powerful enough. I will prepare something more powerful. Ask *Ibu* to give me a packet of *Surya Garam* (a particular brand of cigarettes) too.

After Ceco concocted the antidote, he cautioned me to "take [the oil] back safely" and not spill any of it on myself. This would have resulted in me being bewitched instead.

Although monetary payment for Ceco's antidote could be delayed until the potion proved effective, it was clear from Ceco's warning that he would reverse the spell and inflict harm on the recipients if he was not duly paid. The role that money plays in the exchange of things and services between the

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[46] *Minyak wangi* serves two purposes. It is used by the Malays for prayers, and it is used by the *OSL* when they *jampi* (cast spells).

Malays and *OSL* can clearly be deduced from Ceco's caution. Monetary payment would mean an immediate fulfilment of a contract of exchange . The relationship between the Malay woman and Ceco would cease at that point. Ceco's potions and casting of spells would be transformed into commoditised services. Once these things are exchanged with money, they will no longer be identified with him. Instead, they will become the private or exclusive ownership and right of the Malay woman.

For the Malays and *OSL*, the alienation or distancing of persons from things and skills being transacted, and from the very act of the transaction itself is an indispensable feature of exchanges using money . On 12 December 1991, I presented the Malay woman with the antidote. She massaged it on her son. However, the antidote proved ineffective. Even after its application, the boy was still seen taking the girl out.[47]

Three days later, I explained to Ceco the ineffectiveness of his antidote. Whereupon, he asked that I recount the details of the couple again. It was at the last meeting that the Malay woman told me that the girl was from Pulau Tujoh.[48] When I added this to the previous information that I had already relayed to Ceco, he accused me of omitting a vital fact in my earlier account of the couple. He explained, "people from Pulau Tujoh are very powerful in their *ilmu*". He was therefore convinced that he would have to prepare a more powerful antidote. Thereupon, he decided on another method of administering it.

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[47]After buying the bottle of *minyak wangi*, I had personally brought it to Ceco to confirm if this was indeed the oil that he had asked for. However, a Malay woman and a Chinese woman who were also close friends of mine thought that this was the wrong oil to be spellbound for such a purpose. They maintained that the oil, *minyak wangi* was to bewitch people into falling in love. Instead, they were of the opinion that the oils, *sedap malam* and *bunga tanjung*, after having been spellbound, were more commonly used to cause hostility between a couple.

[48]The Malays and *OSL* believe that there are centres of more powerful and less powerful black magic in Riau. Hence, it was common knowledge amongst them that Pulau Tujoh where the girl came from, was a powerful centre for black magic.

Ceco:
I have to see the girl and boy in order to tell if it is the girl or the boy who wants the other. By looking into their eyes, I would be able to tell if the *hantu* (spirit) has entered them. I need to speak to the boy's mother. I have only cast the spell once so we cannot expect the *ilmu* to work immediately because the girl has cast numerous spells many times over the boy. The longer you wait, the more this girl will cast spells until it would be too difficult to counter her spells. I have to cast spells several times now before it is too late.

There are several ways in which I can solve the situation. One is by massaging spellbound oil. I can also cast spells over the water for the boy to bathe in or the food that he eats. However, I have to speak to his mother first because I have to know who will be there in the family who is going to eat the food. If you bathe in the water or the food that I have cast spells over, you'd be harmed instead.

Ceco's willingness to meet the Malay woman to discuss the matter is a marked contrast to the usual avoidance of contact between the *OSL* and Malays. The use of money in this instance for the exchange of things and services between the *OSL* and Malays reassures social distance, hence safety from being poisoned through direct contact between the transactors.

Ceco suggested that if it was difficult for the Malay woman to travel to Pulau Nanga, he could go to Tanjung Pinang for four days to cast spells and prepare a range of potions until the boy was "cured". Ceco explained that this was a complicated task which could not be accomplished in a day. He stated that the woman should give him money for the cost of his passage to Tanjung Pinang and for his food. Interestingly, he never once suggested that the woman give him food instead of money for food.

At this point, Ceco's sister, Suri joined the discussion I was having with Ceco. She had been the person who had referred me to Ceco. It was not long before she started negotiating on behalf of her brother for the amount of money that the Malay woman should give Ceco for the antidote.

Cynthia:
How much will it cost?

Suri:
It is like this. *Abang* Ceco is too shy to say how much it would cost. *Ibu* will just give Ceco's wife Rp20,000 before he goes, and another Rp20,000 to him. That is Rp40,000 for four days. This is to help feed Ceco's family while he is away from his fishing activities to help *Ibu*.

Cynthia:
Ibu is not very wealthy. Will Rp30,000 be acceptable?

Suri:
[Looking at Ceco]. She is asking for Rp30,000. [Pause.] *Abang* Ceco is a very skilled *dukun*. All sorts of people have come to him, and he has helped them in various ways -- to get married, or break off relationships or to bring a couple together again when they are on the verge of a divorce.

Cynthia:
I'll have to tell *Ibu* what you have just said, and let you know of her opinion.

Ceco:
I will not speak to anyone else of this matter.

A few days after the above conversation, I conveyed Ceco's message to the Malay woman. Although she would have been pleased if Ceco had lowered his demands, she confided that she was willing to give however much the *OSL dukun* had asked for. Even though the Malay woman was aware that Malay *dukun*s would have asked for less, she brushed aside all suggestions of obtaining alternative antidotes prepared by Malay *dukun*s.

Four days later when I returned to Pulau Nanga, Ceco's wife, Asmah approached me. The following discussion ensued.

Asmah:
How much is the Malay woman going to give Ceco?

Cynthia:
She would leave Rp10,000 for you first, and give him the rest when he gets to Tanjung Pinang.

Asmah:
He would be gone for a long time. Rp10,000 will not be enough for me to buy rice and food for the family when he is gone. Neither would it be enough for him to buy petrol for the boat to take him to Tanjung Pinang. Four days is a long time. Why does that Malay woman want him to be there for so long?[49]

Cynthia:
It was because *Abang* Ceco himself said that he would need four days.

Ceco's wife, like his sister was insistent on bargaining with the Malay woman for more money in exchange for Ceco's services. This is yet another aspect of how the use of money makes acceptable conflict and bargaining between the *OSL* and Malays when they interact to set a price (Hart 1986:648) for the circulation of their things and services. This is in contrast to their need to protect themselves by masking and suppressing all conflict between themselves at all other times. Both the Malays and *OSL* have often cautioned me that overt expressions of conflict could lead to the injured party or person feeling insulted and angered. This would be reason enough for the culprit to be poisoned through the other's *ilmu*.

It was finally arranged with Ceco and the Malay woman that they would meet in Tanjung Pinang and negotiate directly. What happened in fact was that Ceco was unable to leave for Tanjung Pinang immediately. By the time he was able to, the Malay woman had in her own words, "slapped" her son "across his face four times until he cried and repented". In spite of having solved the matter with her son in such a manner, she was still of the opinion that her son had been poisoned, but had "fortunately been saved on time". The Malay woman still believed in the powers of *OSL ilmu*, and with this case solved, wanted to seek Ceco's or any other powerful *OSL dukun*'s *ilmu* to restore good working relations between another son of hers and his superior in the office.

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[49]Asmah was unhappy that her husband had to remain in Tanjung Pinang for four days. This was because whenever Ceco visited Tanjung Pinang, he would patronise the prostitutes there.

It is significant that money holds the power to transform symbolically the nature of social relationships between the Malays and *OSL*. The use of money has enabled them to interact, touch and even obtain potions from one another with less fear of being poisoned. It has blurred all symbolic boundaries in the Malaydom demarcating the pure Malays from the impure Malays. As mentioned, the Malays consider those *OSL* who use money as the "more modern and progressive" group than those who do not. It is thus significant that the *OSL* and Malays in using money for the circulation of their things and skills are now interacting on the modern market economy rather than the hierarchical Malaydom. The use of money has thus momentarily shifted them away from the temporal and spatial context of the Malaydom which has defined their identities and structured their basis of interaction. The use of money redefines the spatial context in which they are interacting in within a modern market economy, thus giving both the *OSL* and Malays reconstructed identities by means of which to interact safely.

(VII) SUMMARY

The *OSL* carry out various forms of exchange for the circulation of things and services within and beyond their community. Gift exchange coexists with barter trading and monetary transactions. The chosen forms of exchange are flexible according to variable conditions affecting the exchange and trading activities (Hart 1986:649) of the *OSL*. For example, a monetary transaction is the preferred form of circulating *ilmu* services across *OSL* and Malay group boundaries. This is because greater social distance is added between the transactors through such a form of exchange. This is to allay fears of being poisoned and harmed through the exchange of things and services originating from other communities. In contrast, monetary transactions for the circulation of things and services such as *ilmu* are avoided in inter-group exchanges. The purpose is to establish bonds between the transactors.

Therefore, the way in which a thing or skill is exchanged endows different meaning to the item. Hence, different social relationships are also established between the transactors in the exchange of such things and

services. The various forms of exchange carried out by the *OSL* can thus be considered as strategies and obligations to enable things and skills to enter and leave different spheres of social structure (Humphrey and Hugh-Jones 1992:6).

The use of money has been expressed in various ways (Parry and Bloch 1989). Through numerous ethnographic accounts in this chapter, I have shown how the Chinese merchants and middlemen have encouraged the *OSL* towards a monetised economy. In doing so, I have also indicated the need to see the use of money and markets as part of a global economy that is penetrating into the lives of the *OSL*. The ease with which the *OSL* and Malays have absorbed the modern market economy indicates the way in which money and market can be assimilated into their local conditions and economy. The *OSL* and Malays have taken on an institution beyond theirs to make it their own. This has enabled interaction across their group boundaries. The use of money has thus allowed the different groups to interact and transact on an equal basis. Thus, the use of money has also inverted power relationships in Riau. It has reconstructed the meaning of things and the identity of the *OSL*.

Plate 20
Suri (dressed in the red blouse), the midwife from Pulau Nanga was called upon to deliver the baby of this *OSL* woman in Teluk Nipah. The white crosses drawn with *kapur* (slaked lime) on the woman's hands are to ward off evil spirits.

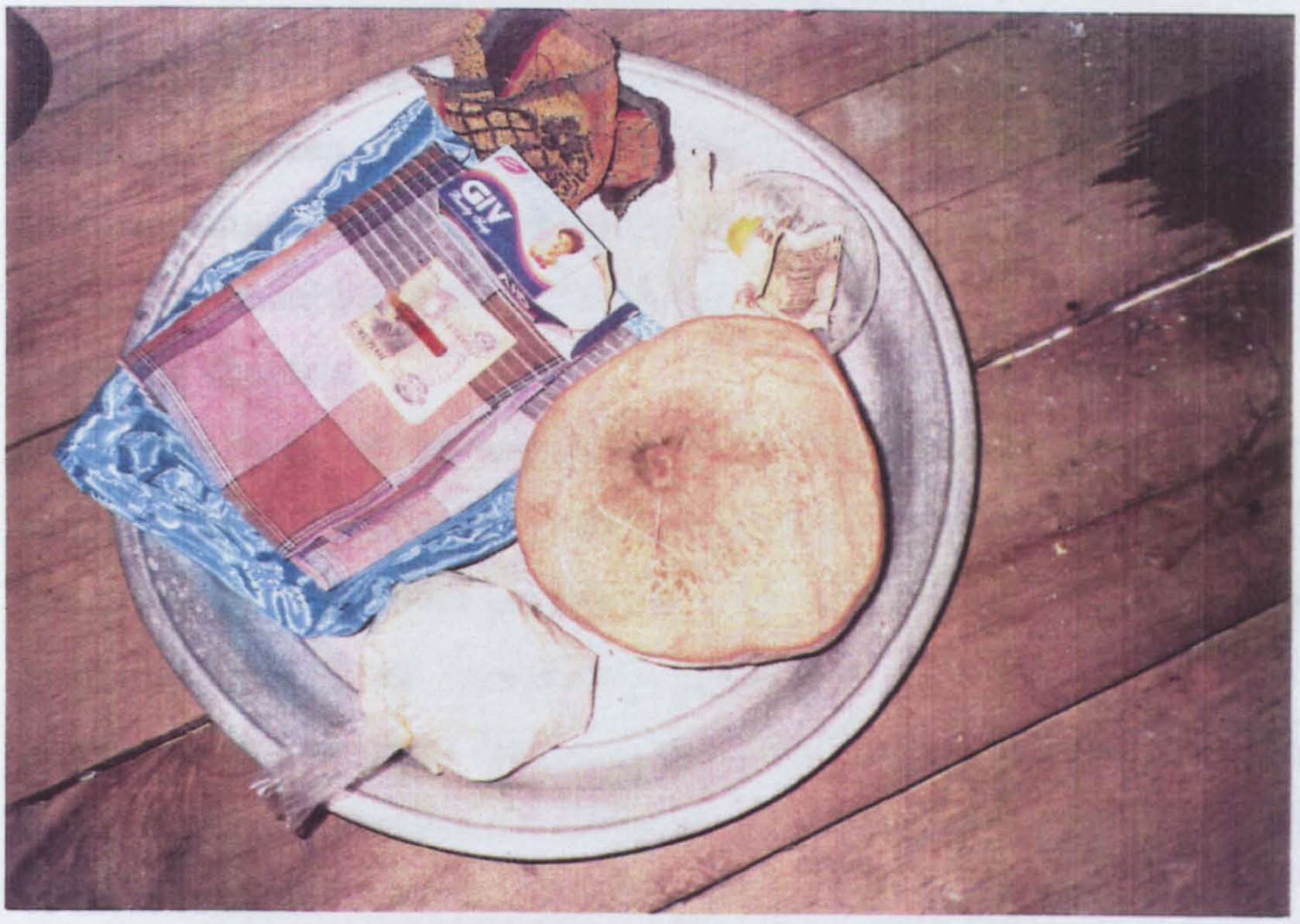

Plate 21
The tray of payment for Suri's services.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

The principal theme in my thesis has been the interpretation of the forms of exchange between the *OSL* and non-*OSL* in Riau and Batam as acts of communicating and negotiating group identity and boundaries. Various forms of inter-community and intra-community exchanges have been examined in the preceding chapters.

The heart of my argument is that the different forms of exchange amongst the *OSL* and other groups carry implications for understanding the identity of the *OSL* within the broader framework of the political and religious institutions which the community operates. As Simmel (1978:174-175) argues, society is not an 'absolute entity' existing to create exchange, rather it is exchange that creates the bonds of society. Society is itself the synthesis of these relations.

The few recent studies on the *OSL* have concentrated on questions of their ethnic identity (see for example, Sandbukt 1982; Wee 1985; Mariam Mohd Ali 1984). Issues concerning the wider non-*OSL* community's avoidance of interaction with and acceptance of things from the *OSL* have occasionally been mentioned. However, none of these studies has widened their scope to discuss the *OSL*'s identity as engendered through the exchange of things (Piot 1991) within and beyond their community.

By presenting a multiplicity of narratives and ethnographic accounts, I have shown how group identity and boundaries can be negotiated, reinforced or perpetuated through an array of exchanges between the *OSL* and Malays. The choice or avoidance of appropriating different types of material artifacts have significant implications. First, it reflects social relationships within a society. Second, it mirrors past and present points of differentiation and power relations between groups of people within the society. Thus, I argue that forms of exchange can be reinterpreted as acts of communication. Exchange not only does something, it says something (Malinowski 1922; Lévi-Strauss 1969; Leach 1989:6).

I began in Chapter Two by outlining the social-historical framework for examining the level and forms of exchange between the *OSL* and Malays

in Riau and Batam. The main thrust of my argument has been that the notion of boundaries needs to be thought about.

The aristocrat Malays regard themselves as pure Malays. They have defined the Malaydom in terms of centred positions and spaces of power. The pure Malays have correlated their authority with a spiritual power that is guided by the principles of Islam. To maintain an ordered polity, all other Malays in the periphery have been expected to uphold this centrist politics without challenge.

The pure Malays have constructed ideas (Anderson 1972; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1992) to outline the shape and meaning of the Malaydom. I have shown how these ideas have been inferred by both verbal and non-verbal signs (Barth 1969:14) such as genealogical charts, religion, language, code of conduct, physical appearances and a sedentary as opposed to a nomadic lifestyle. Such criteria have been created by the pure Malays to give sense to ethnic categories which distinguish different groups of Malays. The marking out of such categories have had important implications (*ibid*:10). First, the categories indicate differences in what could otherwise have been conceived as a homogenous group of Malays. Second, social processes of exclusion and incorporation into the Malaydom are now issues of concern. Third, social relationships in the Malaydom revolve around differences in ethnic status across boundaries.

I have discussed how the Malays accept the *OSL* as the indigenous Malays of the Malaydom. Some Malays have even spoken of a common origin with the *OSL*. However, they have also stressed how the *OSL* have departed from being part of the ordered Malaydom. This has been judged from the *OSL*'s refusal to abandon a nomadic lifestyle and refusal to adhere to the principles of Islam as a guide to a sedentary lifestyle.

Instead, the *OSL* have defined their own conception of an alternative Malaydom. The *OSL* have asserted claims to possessing the most powerful *ilmu* (supernatural knowledge) that is able to invert the hierarchy of power upheld by the Malays. The Malays do not dispute the extent of this power. However, they believe that the *OSL* have derived this power from their

allegiance with evil spirits. This is thus regarded as an illegitimate and evil source of power derived from beyond the Malaydom. The Malays fear this power. They see it as diminishing their authority and threatening the Malaydom. Therefore, the Malays are committed to subjugating this power and incorporating the *OSL* into their notion of an ordered Malaydom. Attempts have been made to draw the *OSL* towards an Islamic faith and sedentary lifestyle. Yet, the Malays also believe that the *OSL*'s power can be of use to them. As discussed in Chapter Four, some Malays have attempted to cross boundaries to obtain such power from the *OSL*.

The basis of group boundaries for the Malays and *OSL* thus lies in their points of differentiation in being Malay. The way in which purity, power and authority are conceived and defined by the Malays and *OSL* constitute significant issues in their differentiation, hence group boundary. The Malays and *OSL* thus need to cross this hurdle of differentiation to acquire things and skills safely from each other.

In Chapter Three, I showed how the *OSL* represent an alternative form of Malayness. They have contested and inverted the Malays' conception of an ordered power structure. The *OSL* have claimed to possess and practice the most potent sort of spiritual power, namely black magic. This magic is said to have the ability to gain control of the inner essence of all other *OSL* and non-*OSL*. This has posed a constant source of conflict and anxiety for the Malays.

The pure Malays have thus attempted to legitimate and preserve confidence in their power system by accusing the *OSL* of being vested with evil powers and practising witchcraft. In the Malays' and *OSL* attempt to construct category distinctions between themselves within the Malaydom, their focus has been to stress their perceived differences, rather than their similarities.

In Chapters Four and Five, I argued that "by converting ideas or mental perceptions of boundaries into material objects 'out there'", the Malays and *OSL* have given these boundaries "relative permanence" (Leach 1989:37).

I did this by explaining why different types of things even exist for the *OSL* at all.

I have examined the indigenous categories of meaning and social value of the various types of things owned by or associated with the *OSL*. An indigenous logic here links persons and things, which in turn underlines the *OSL*'s domains of kinship and exchange. The issue here is that the meaning and value of things, for example, fishing spears, boats, pounders and stones are not simply what their simple function is, but instead lies in their further symbolic meanings (Thomas 1991). For example, I have shown in Chapter Four, how a pounder whose initial utility lay in pounding things, has taken on a different symbolic meaning through time. Through wear and tear, a hole in its base has made it into a family heirloom embedded with inherent supernatural powers. For the *OSL* and Malays, it is through the production, exchange, association and consumption of these things that different relationships among people are produced and sustained.

In the latter half of the thesis, I have looked at how the exchanges of different types of things have relational implications, hence social consequences and implications for one's identity. While it is possible for the *OSL* to exchange non-adopted things with other groups, the exchange of adopted things or the attempts to keep inalienable adopted things out of circulation establishes relationships between persons. The circulation of such things create debts, bonds or forced reciprocity which provoke future exchanges. Therefore, relationships are established and maintained. Exchanges of such things also bring together the exchange partners and even entire families, and define the boundaries of groups and communities.

It can be argued that the conversion of the indigenous logic of group boundaries into such permanent material form is a way of translating mental concepts into technical definitions of boundaries. As explained by Leach (1989:37), "this has been done by creating special material objects which serve as representations of the metaphysical ideas and their mental environment".

The crossing of boundaries, just as much as the transition from one social status to another, calls for a ritual to bring about the transformation. In Chapter Six, I look at how this has come about by redefing the meaning of things through the introduction of money into exchange practices in the Malaydom. Here, I apply Appadurai's (1988) concept of the social life of things in analysing how elements of sociality are removed as things move to being commodities.

Therefore, I concluded my thesis with an examination of how market relations have redefined the indigenous categorisation and meaning of certain things. This has allowed some groups such as the Malays, to appropriate things which have either bore or been associated with the identity of the *OSL*. Contacts with a market economy constitute historically significant events. Furthermore, they produce fresh insights to deliberating and reinterpreting material culture, hence of identity (Thomas 1991).

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