

THE PATTERN OF INDONESIAN MIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT IN MALAYA

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IT IS A PRACTICE OF THOSE WRITING ON THE POPULATION of Malaya¹ to classify them as Malays, Chinese, Indians and Indonesians. This is the result of inadequate field knowledge. Whereas the term Malays is definitive in that it refers to an ethno-cultural group, the remaining three terms are not so for they have other connotations. Some have even used the terms Chinese, Indian and Indonesian communities without due recognition being given to the differences, both cultural and linguistic, that exist within each of them.²

It is the intention of this paper to show some of the differences that exist among the migrants, and their immediate descendants, from the political territory which is now the Republic of Indonesia. Emphasis will be given to the differences in the island-origins of these migrants, their general geographical distribution in Malaya, and finally, to an areal case study which will show the relative isolation of these various groups.

The Migrants — Their Island-origin and Pattern of Migration

In the 1947 Census of Malaya when a break-down of the Indonesian population in the country according to their various areas of origin was last made, the five islands from which the Indonesian migrants came were Java, Kalimantan, Sumatra, Bawean and Sulawesi, in that order of numerical importance (see Fig. 2). The total Indonesian population in Malaya was 309,150, consisting of 189,400 Javanese, 62,400 Banjarese, 26,300 Sumatrans, 20,400 Boyanese and 7,000 Bugis. The remainder were migrants from other parts of Indonesia.³

The Javanese community formed 60 per cent of the Indonesian population in Malaya. They were mostly padi-cultivators or rubber and coconut smallholders, only a few being engaged as estate labourers. In the early part

¹ In this paper the term Malaya refers to all the States in the Federation of Malaya including the present Republic of Singapore (See Figure 1).

² See M. Freedman, "The Growth of Plural Society in Malaya," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 2 (June 1960).

³ For further information on the growth of the Indonesian population in Malaya, see Tunku Shamsul Bahkin "The Growth and Distribution of the Indonesian Population in Malaya," *Bijdragen Tot de Taal —, Land — En Volkenkunde*, deel 123 (January, 1967).

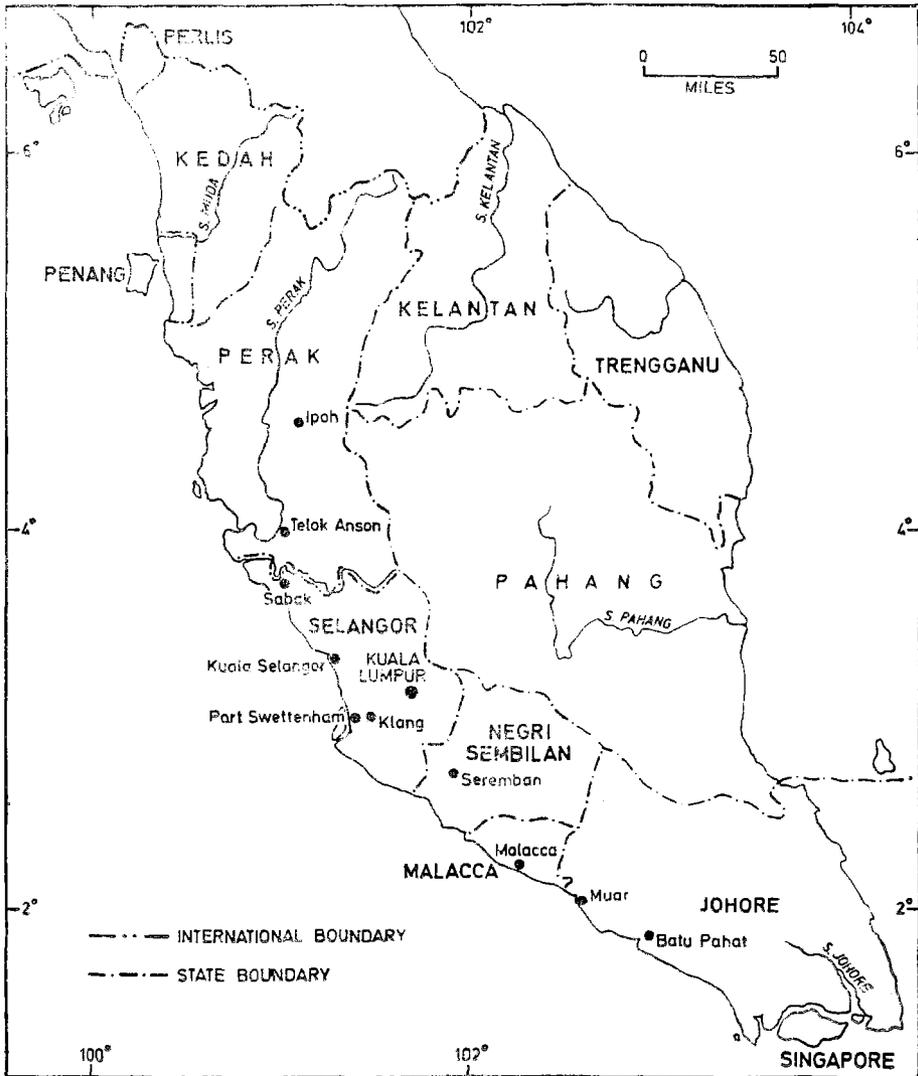


Figure 1. *The States of Malaya*

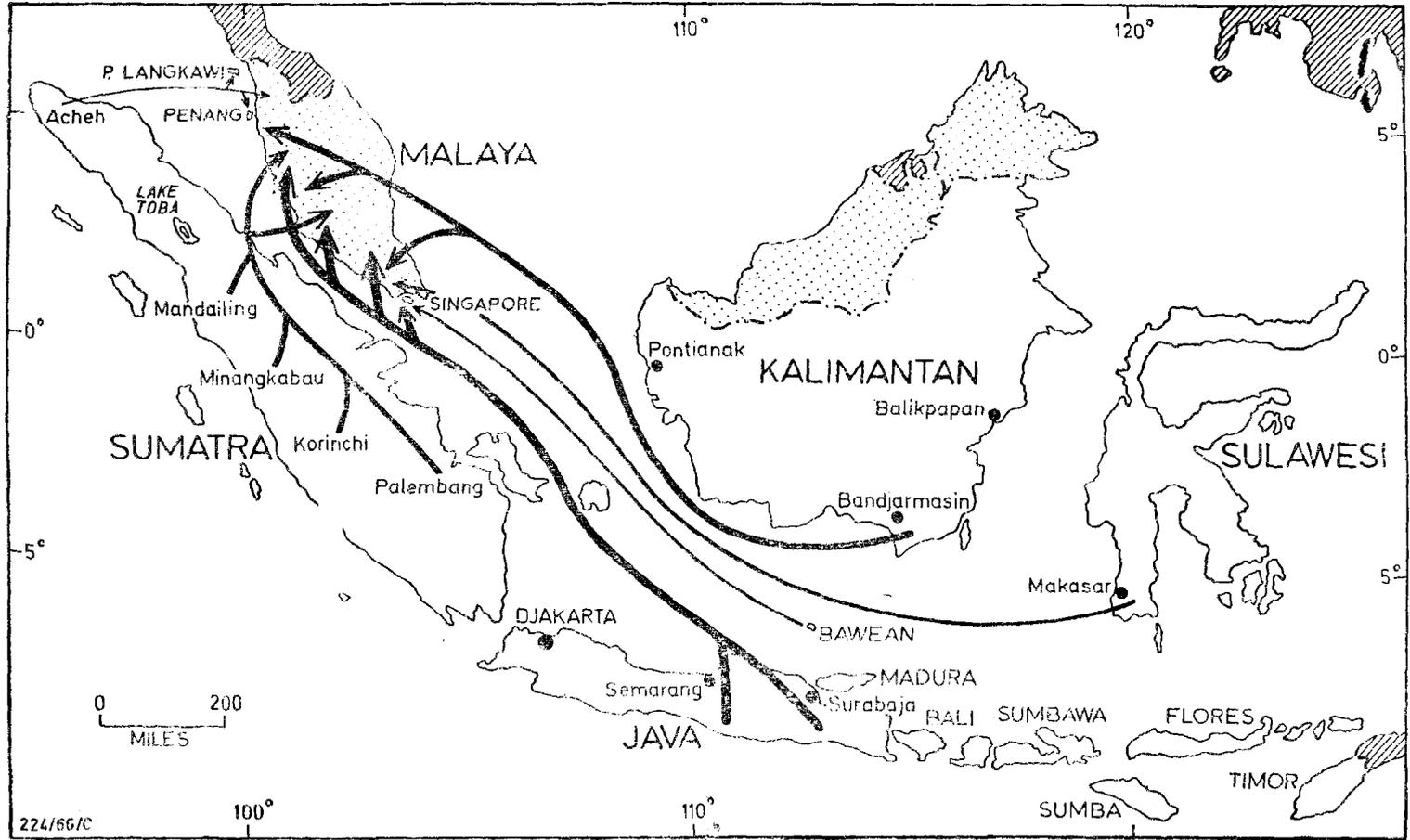


Figure 2. Indonesian Migrations to Malaya

of the development of plantation agriculture in Malaya, however, a comparatively high proportion of the Javanese came as contract labourers, many of whom after serving their terms settled in the country to work on their own smallholdings.⁴ The bulk of the Javanese came from Central and East Java and very few of them from Sunda or Madura.

The Banjarese, who hailed from the immediate hinterland of Banjarmasin in South Kalimantan, formed 20 per cent of the recorded Indonesian population in Malaya. Although the bulk of the Banjarese immigrants were rice-cultivators, a few of them were also engaged in growing rubber and coconuts on their own smallholdings.

The third numerous group were the Sumatrans, totalling 26,300 in number and forming just over 8 per cent of the Indonesian population in Malaya. The Sumatran population in Malaya can be sub-divided into a number of regional language groups or *suku-bangsas*, each originating from a different part of the island. The most numerous of these speech-groups were the Minangkabaus who formed over 40 per cent of the Sumatran population in Malaya. The Mandailings, whose number is not known, were reckoned to be next in numerical importance and they originally came from Tapanuli, the southern portion of the Batak country. Ethnically they are part of the Batak people, and although the Bataks are mainly Christians, the majority of the Mandailings are Muslims. The Korinchis who totalled 2,400 in 1947 came from that part of Sumatra immediately to the south of the Minangkabau country. The other Sumatran groups came mainly from Aceh, Palembang and Jambi.

The Boyanese formed another distinct group in the Indonesian community in Malaya. They came from the tiny island of Bawean which lies about 65 miles north of Madura and they speak a language very closely related to that of the Madurese. In 1947, the total Boyanese population in Malaya was 20,400. The majority of these, except for the few hundreds working in the estates in Kota Tinggi district, worked as gardeners, drivers and grooms in the major urban centres in the country.

The Bugis from South Sulawesi formed the fifth largest Indonesian group in the country. Although they are reputed for their business and navigational abilities, the bulk of the Bugis in Malaya, like the majority of their fellow Indonesians here, were agricultural smallholders.

The Indonesian migrants, in order to reach Malaya, had to cross a stretch of the sea whose distance varied according to the island of origin and point of departure. The Bugis had to travel by sea for a number of days before landing in Malaya, whereas the Sumatrans from the East Coast districts needed only a few hours. However, since the majority of the Suma-

⁴ See Tunku Shamsul Bahrin "Indonesian Labour in Malaya," *Kajian Ekonomi Malaysia*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (June, 1965).

tran immigrants in Malaya originated from the highland areas in Central Sumatra, they had to make an overland journey to the coast and port of departure. The Mandailings, for example, could either take the boat at Padang on the West Coast of Sumatra or at one of the East Coast ports of Si-Antar, Belawan or Medan. Even though Padang was the most convenient in terms of distance and transportation services, many of the Mandailing migrants used the East Coast ports. This was because the total cost of the journey by boat from Padang to any of the ports of entry in Malaya was more expensive than the total costs from any one of the East Coast ports. Since the majority of the migrants were peasants with little money, they even found it worthwhile, at least financially, to trek down to the East Coast ports. The large part of this overland journey had to be done by foot and river for modern transport services during the major period of the migration was non-existent. On arrival at the ports, the migrants had the choice of using either the many local crafts that made regular crossings across the Straits of Malacca or the more expensive steamships. A number of the Bugis were reported to have arrived in Singapore by means of their own native merchant-boats direct from Sulawesi. The Javanese and Boyanese migrants came to Malaya by steamships.

Many of the peasant-migrants had to sell part or all of their property to finance the journey. Others followed relatives, mostly earlier migrants, who paid their fares either in the form of a favour or an advance. On the other hand, the estate labour-migrants recruited to work in the various plantations in Malaya had nothing to worry about financing their journeys. According to their contract of service, the employers or their agents were obliged to pay, among other things, the entire cost of transportation from the place of recruitment to the place of employment.⁵

Another group of Indonesians, mainly Javanese, who did not have to worry about the finance of their transportation were, as we will call them, the "smallholding-labourers." In many respects, they were no different from the estate indentured labourers, except that they were bound by no special law of employment and they were mainly employed by rich Malay landowners. As yet very little is known about the size and nature of the employment of this particular group of immigrants. However, according to the sketchy and unverified field information, there existed, in the early decades of this century, among the Javanese community in Singapore a professional group of people known as "sheikhs."⁶ The function performed

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ The writer has been unable to collect adequate information on the extent and functions of these "sheikhs." He has also been unable to determine the connection of these labour "sheikhs" with the pilgrim "sheikhs" who were responsible for making the necessary accommodation and travelling arrangements for intending pilgrims to Mecca. See also S. Husin Ali, *Social Stratification in Kampong Bagan*, monographs of the Malaysian Branch Royal Asiatic Society, 1964, pp. 29-31.

by the "sheikh" was to provide cheap Javanese labour to those Malay landowners who wanted to cultivate their land. Like the estate-employers, the "sheikh" requested professional recruiters or his own agents to send to Singapore the required number of labourers at the "sheikh's" expense. On arrival in Singapore, the immigrants were housed and fed by the "sheikh" until such time when he could transfer the "ownership" of these labourers to the landowners who would of course have to pay the entire costs of the importation and also the "sheikh's" commission. The agreement of employment was done only by mutual understanding and trust, and in most cases the labourer was fed and housed by the landowner. It was common practice for the labourer to be given as his own private property half of the land that he had cleared and cultivated.

In spite of their poverty, the departure of these migrants was always preceded by a small feast and the offering of prayers for a safe journey. The feasts and ceremonies that preceded the departure of the Korinchi emigrants were extremely elaborate. This was because for many of these migrants, the journey to Malaya was construed as a necessary first stage, at least from the economic point of view, of the pilgrimage to Mecca. This was especially true for the early Korinchi migrants.⁷ As with most Muslims, the pilgrimage is an important occasion in the life of a person and thus has to be celebrated with due pomp and gaiety.

Before the advent of a good road and railway service in Malaya, the immigrants entered the country through a number of points, depending largely upon their destination. The Achinese, who invariably settled in northern Malaya, entered the country through Penang. The Sumatrans who migrated to Selangor, Perak and Negri Sembilan mostly came through Port Swettenham (Klang), Telok Anson and Malacca, respectively. Since the very beginning, however, Singapore had always been the major point of entry for the Indonesian immigrants.

The majority of the migrants came to Malaya direct from their home-villages. A few of them, however, migrated to other parts of Indonesia first, and thence to Malaya. The general pattern of this indirect-migration was that the Javanese and Banjarese, and a few Bugis too, migrated to the East Coast districts of Sumatra and after a time in wage labour crossed the Straits of Malacca to Malaya. The reasons behind this indirect movement were probably the dissatisfaction in Sumatra and the prospects of a better livelihood in Malaya. The majority of the Bugis indirect-migrants came via the various Bugis settlements in Kalimantan to Singapore and Johore.

On landing in Malaya those migrants who came on their own knew exactly where to go and the addresses of the persons from whom they could

⁷ Opinion expressed by Dato Semarang bin Ahmad, Ketua Kampong of Sungai Lui (Ulu Langat District). He is a Korinchi immigrant.

expect some help and assistance. In most cases, they were either relatives or friends who had migrated earlier. Often it was the earlier migrants who invited and encouraged their friends and relatives to migrate to Malaya. These earlier migrants usually accommodated the new arrivals in their homes until such time as they were able to get a job or set up their own small-holdings.

One of the first things that the new arrival had to do was to find himself a piece of land that would provide him with a reasonable income. Land acquisition in late 19th and early 20th century Malaya posed no difficulty at all. Land was abundant and free for the taking, and the large tracts of swampland being drained by the government could be settled and cultivated by the Indonesian immigrants. Land acquisition by means of block-application was both easy and common. All that the immigrants or their leaders had to do was to ask for the chief's permission. Thus, Abdullah Hukom, a dynamic Korinchi leader in Kuala Lumpur, recollected that "I presented myself before Raja Laut for the purpose of applying for a piece of land for my people. Raja Laut gave me a letter authorising me to open up land in Pudu, and at the same time he appointed me as the official leader of that area with the title Penghulu Masjid."⁸

Although land would be easily acquired in the proper and accepted manner, there were also cases of land-acquisition by squatting. In fact, this was the simplest way of acquiring a piece of land. All that the immigrant had to do was to select an unoccupied piece of State land and to clear and cultivate it with whatever crop he thought best. Once the squatter had set up his house on it, then it was most difficult for the administration to eject him from the lot. In such circumstances, ejection could only be done through a proceeding in a court of law.⁹ Land squatting by the Indonesian immigrants should, however, not be considered as a deliberate attempt on the part of these settlers to overlook the authority of the land office in Malaya. The explanation can probably be found in their concept of land-ownership. Many of them believed that the "person who cleared and cultivated an unoccupied piece of land had the sole right of ownership to it."¹⁰

Process of Opening up New Land

Once a piece of land has been acquired, the first thing that the settler had to do was to construct a shelter, a place to sleep and something that

⁸ Abdullah Hukom, "Riwayat Kuala Lumpur 50 Tahun Dahulu," *Warta Abad*, October 1935. The Selangor Annual Report of 1894 noted that "One of the Datoek Dagangs in Selangor (a Javanese) took up 600 acres of land around Klang and brought Javanese to work it."

⁹ One such case of land squatting by a Javanese community in the district of Kuala Selangor was heard in a law-court in Kuala Lumpur as recently as 1962.

¹⁰ Statement made by the District Officer of Ulu Langat (1962). A similar observation was made by Clark E. Cunningham among the Bataks in Sumatra. See his book, *The Post-War Migration of the Toba-Bataks to East Sumatra*.

would protect him from the sun and the rain. If his land was located close to an already established relative or friend, then he would normally live with him until it became very convenient for him to make a shelter of his own. The shelter, however, was nothing more than a hut, built from split bamboo and roofing-materials from the immediate surroundings. There was no need for the more sophisticated sawn-timber and planks. To put up this humble shelter would cost the settler relatively little. He would probably have to buy some of the simple equipment and nails but the rest of the essential building material could be procured, at little or no financial cost, from the surrounding jungles or swamps. It probably took less than a week for two settlers to erect such a shelter.

The next and more arduous task was to clear the jungle and undergrowth. Usually the trees were felled and burned. This phase of pioneering demanded a lot of hard work and patience from the settler. If the new area was settled by a single community, then the task of jungle clearing was usually accomplished on the basis of *gotong-royong* or mutual help. The failure or success of such mutual-assistance depended a great deal upon the solidarity of the group and the integrity of the leader.

In practice the settler did not attempt to clear all his land at once for the whole process of "felling, stumping and clearing of jungle from a four-acre lot is a very arduous task and one which takes the settler a few years to complete."¹¹ Normally the settler would clear only part of his land and plant it with dry rice, maize, bananas, etc., that would provide him sufficiently both with food and some cash for the initial pioneering years. While waiting for the harvest of the first crop, the immigrant settler would clear the remainder of his land.

Pioneer settlers in the coastal districts usually had to contend with the additional problem of drainage. In these districts much of the land was boggy and consisted of peat which could be very difficult to cultivate. The problems in the swampy areas were so acute that "some European purchasers of land in Klang district, alarmed by the peaty 'nature' of the soil, were allowed to exchange their blocks for corresponding areas selected elsewhere."¹² Be that as it may, the Banjarese and Javanese settlers along these coastal areas have done extremely well to overcome the problems of excess and brackish water. This was accomplished by either digging canals or constructing bunds, or often both, depending upon the nature of the problem and also on the type of crop planted. The use of coastal bund depended to a great extent on the seriousness of the incursions of the sea and also on the width or absence of a protective belt along the coast in relation to the pattern of

¹¹ Federated Malay States and Straits Settlements *Annual Report of the Drainage Irrigation Department for the Year 1937*, p. 16.

¹² *Annual Report for the State of Selangor for the Year 1896*, p. 13. The abandoned land was taken up and successfully cultivated by Javanese smallholders.

storm tracks and tides. However, it has been observed that coastal bunding is generally found in "those areas where padi is planted, and to lesser extent in the development of areas for coconut or other tree crops."¹³ This is because an increase in the salt-water content of the soil is more injurious to the wet-padi crops than to coconut trees.

Drainage of the swamplands was accomplished either by digging canals to the sea, or as in most parts of coastal Johore, by widening and straightening the existing streams and their tributaries so that their function as a drainage system became more effective. Efficient as they were during low tides, these canals, during the periods of high tides, especially when accompanied by local downpours, failed to drain away the excess water and this usually led to flooding. In many cases, these canals, in the absence of any proper system of gates and locks, led to the funnelling of sea-water into the fields during high tides and this usually had destructive effects. It has been noticed that "this concentrated ingress of sea-water and the abrasive action of the tidal scour soon widened the drains permitting the sea-water to move to points much further inland than would have been possible under natural conditions."¹⁴ In such circumstances, as already indicated, bunding would be a great help. Once established, the settlers could always appeal to the government for assistance to prevent their crops from being destroyed. One of the major areas where such help was given was Tanjong Karang where "in 1932, in order to arrest the rapid progress of deterioration which was threatening the entire cultivated area of 10,000 acres . . . a coastal bund 50 miles long"¹⁵ was constructed.

Whilst it was common practice for the pioneer settlers to grow catch crops such as bananas, maize, tapioca, pineapples and vegetables, the main crop varied according to local soil conditions, the period of planting and also the customary practices of the community concerned. These factors might act either singly or collectively, and it is difficult to determine which was the most important. The part played by local soil conditions seems, however, to be more obvious. Thus, in areas where the soil was extremely peaty, rubber and coconut cultivation would be preferred to the cultivation of rice. But at the same time we must not overlook the fact that in some areas, the nature of the crop to be planted was specified by the government at the time of the issue of the land-grants. The same was true in the various irrigation areas, where the crop always prescribed was rice.

The factor of time was obvious when related to the rise and fall of the market-prices of certain products. Thus, in the 1880's and early 1890's when the price of coffee was extremely high, hundreds of Indonesian im-

¹³ Observation expressed by L.A.P. Gosling to the writer in personal correspondence.

¹⁴ Lim Joo Jock, "The Geography of Padi Growing in South-east Asia," unpublished Thesis, University of Oxford, 1957, p. 283.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 286.

migrant settlers were reported to have applied for land for the cultivation of coffee. After the decline in the price of coffee in 1896, this crop was abandoned and the settlers took to less expensive and more profitable forms of cultivation.¹⁶ The effect of this drop in the market price of coffee on the agricultural geography of some of the districts in Malaya was illustrated in Batang, Padang. In 1895, the year prior to the beginning of the fall in the price of coffee, it was reported that "Batang Padang is the district in which Malays have made most progress with the cultivation of coffee and that a very large amount of coffee has been newly planted."¹⁷ A few years later the agricultural interest of the migrant settlers in that area had shifted to coconut cultivation and 1899 alone "318 applications have been received, chiefly from foreign Malays, for smallholdings to be devoted to this cultivation."¹⁸ After 1900, rubber and coconuts, especially the former, were the two major crops that were favoured by the Indonesian pioneer settlers.

The tendency for the immigrants to grow crops according to what they cultivated in their home districts in Indonesia is best exemplified by the Banjarese and Achinese communities in Malaya. The Banjarese, who were renowned for their cultivation of wet rice, have continued, wherever possible, to grow this crop. The Achinese immigrants in Yen district of Kedah attempted, at least in the beginning, to cultivate pepper, a popular crop in Acheh. According to information collected from the Achinese immigrants there, one of the first things that they grew on their land-lots was a tree called *dedap* (flame-of-the-forest), a plant that grew very easily and rapidly. The intention was to provide sufficient props for the pepper plants. But later they had to abandon pepper-growing for they found that the *dedaps* were not strong enough as props¹⁹ and pepper tended to cause the fertility of the soil to deteriorate very rapidly. The third and probably the most important reason for the abandonment of pepper-growing was the high price of rubber. The relative ease in taking care of rubber plants as compared to pepper was also a factor.

The pioneering phase, covering the period from the time of arrival at the site to the time when the fields were completely cleared and the subsistence crops began to give regular harvests, usually lasted two or three years. This phase was relatively longer in the case of the rubber and coconut smallholders. In these pioneering ventures, there were mixed results. There were those who failed and thus decided to leave to try their luck elsewhere. Some of them even returned to Indonesia. In Kuala Langat district, it was reported that "much of the land opened by foreign Malays in 1888, assisted

¹⁶ *Annual Report of the State of Perak for the Year 1897*, p. 3.

¹⁷ *Annual Report for the State of Perak for the Year 1896*, p. 8.

¹⁸ *Annual Report for the State of Perak for the Year 1900*, p. 4.

¹⁹ View expressed during an interview with Nyak Gam, an Achinese immigrant in Yen. (1962)

by advances from the Government, has either been deserted or totally neglected and the District Officer thinks it hopeless to expect such immigrants to live by agriculture alone for several years after their arrival."²⁰ Bleak as this view may be, many of the settlers were successful and subsequently decided to settle permanently in this country.

Once the crops started to produce regular harvests, enabling the settlers to save some money, the immigrants began to set up better and more permanent houses. During the initial years in their cramped huts they had refrained from making more aesthetic homes mainly because of the lack of funds, and also because of the feeling of uncertainty during the experimental stage. They were ready to try their fortune elsewhere if their expectations were not realised and if they were not assured of regular crops.²¹ In view of these uncertainties it was indeed only practical for the settlers not to have built their permanent houses immediately after acquiring their land.

Although some of the immigrants were accompanied by their families when they first arrived in Malaya, the majority of them came alone or with their male relatives and friends. The decision as to whether to bring their families as well depended on a number of factors, of which the most important was undoubtedly the availability of accommodation during their first few months in Malaya. However, the single male migrant had a number of advantages, particularly that of mobility. It was easier for a single person to be accommodated by a relative or friend than a whole family; and furthermore a single settler, if unsuccessful, could move around to other places and jobs more easily. Since the first few years of the pioneering period were usually difficult, both in terms of work and livelihood, it was preferable for the females and children to remain at home in Indonesia. After procuring a piece of land, cultivating it for a few years and saving some money, the settler usually decided to return home to visit his friends and relatives and to bring his family across to Malaya. His return to his original village usually aroused a great deal of excitement and curiosity. His fellow-villagers were normally impressed by the manner of his dress and the presents he brought home. Answers to inquiries about opportunities in Malaya were often so glowing and exaggerated, that his return to Malaya was accompanied not only by his family but also by other relatives and friends. Thus, it is commonly said that the more people went to Malaya, the more they encouraged others to go also.

One of the outcomes of the process described above was that the opportunities available in any one locality in Malaya were publicised in certain areas in Indonesia. This led to the occupation and settlement of the particular locality by the same group of people. As an example, the offers of

²⁰ Abstract of Proceedings of the Conference of Residents at Kuala Lumpur in 1907.

²¹ *Annual Report for the State of Perak for the Year 1895*, p. 18.

land made by the Perak government in the Krian Irrigation Area, officially opened in 1906, were mainly known to the Banjarese and thus this area has been predominantly settled by this group of people. Hence the eventual effects of this "chain-migration" were to cause firstly the areal concentration of the various groups and secondly the establishment of settlements or communities based on dialect or speech groups. We will study the first tendency by examining the general distribution of the major Indonesian *suku-bangsas* in Malaya and the second by examining the establishment and development of villages in the Ulu Langat Valley of South East Selangor.

Distribution of Indonesians by Community Groups

The 1947 Javanese population in Malaya, as shown in Figure 3, was essentially a coastal community. They were mainly concentrated along the two stretches of the western coast of Malaya. Firstly, beginning with Pontian in the south, the density rose sharply northwards through the districts of Batu Pahat and Muar, and declined steeply along the coast of Malacca. The second stretch began with the district of Kuala Langat and extended northwards through the districts of Klang and Kuala Selangor, ended abruptly in the district of Lower Perak. Apart from these two coastal stretches, there was also a big concentration of Javanese in Singapore. Elsewhere they were relatively few and scattered. The Javanese population in Johore consisted mainly of coconut and rubber smallholders and, to a lesser extent, some of them were engaged in the cultivation of areca-nut and as labourers on the rubber estates. In the Kuala Selangor and Lower Perak districts the Javanese were essentially a rice-growing community. In Pahang, especially in the district of Kuantan, they were previously estate labourers but by 1947 the majority of them had changed to rice cultivation and rubber growing.

The Banjarese population in Malaya, like the Javanese, were also found along the coast (see Figure 4). In 1947 they showed three major concentrations. These were the district of Krian in the north, the two coastal districts astride the Sungai Bernam and the coastal parts of Batu Pahat in the south. In that year, nearly 93 per cent of the Banjarese population in Malaya were enumerated in the four above-mentioned districts. In the districts of Krian, Lower Perak and Kuala Selangor, the Banjarese were most numerous in the rice irrigation areas of Krian, Sungai Manik and Tanjong Karang, respectively. In the southern district of Batu Pahat, they were mainly engaged in the cultivation of rubber and coconuts on their own smallholdings.

The 1947 Sumatran population in Malaya were to be found largely in the various river valleys of the interior districts of Selangor and Perak. This indeed was, and still is, the most striking difference between their distribution and that of their Javanese, Banjarese and Bugis counterparts, who were

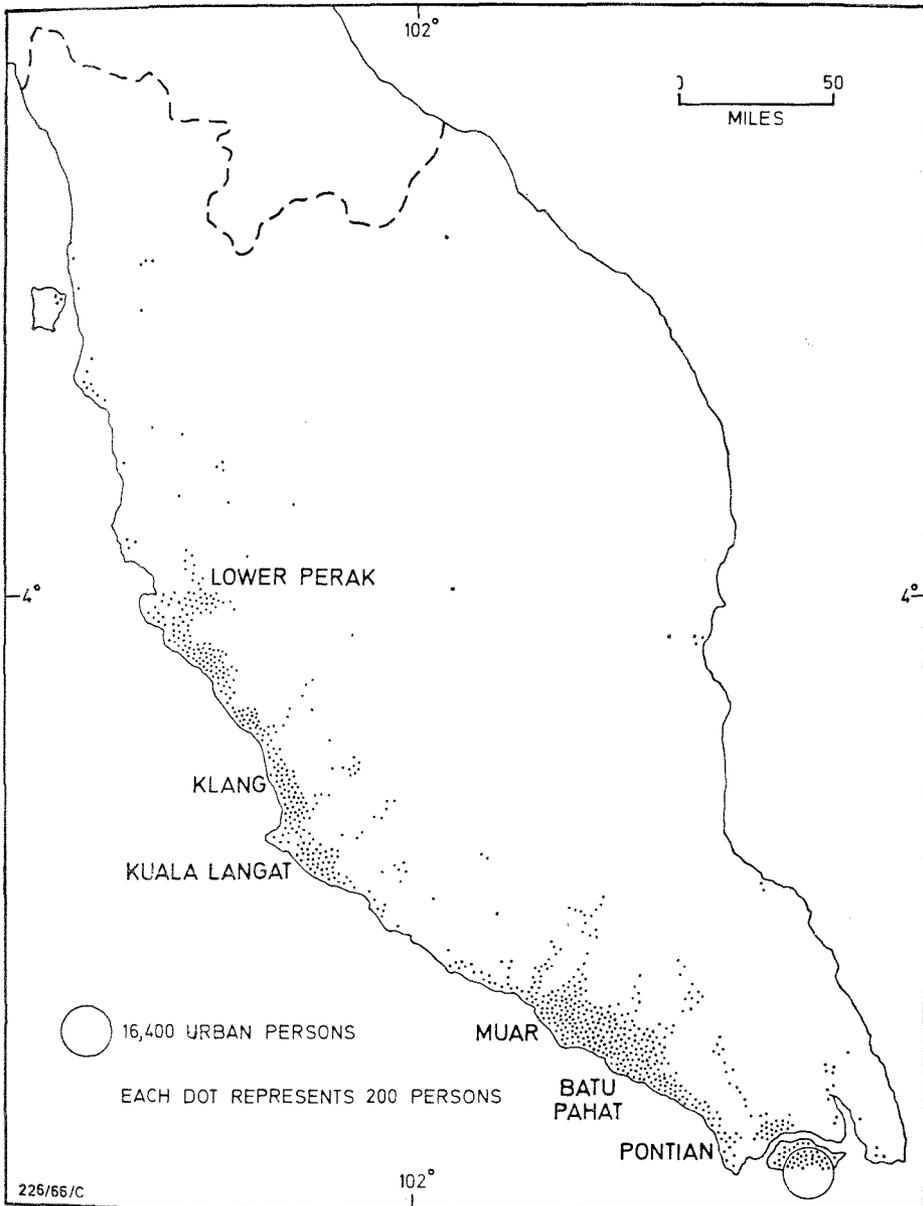


Figure 3. Malaya: Distribution of Javanese, 1947

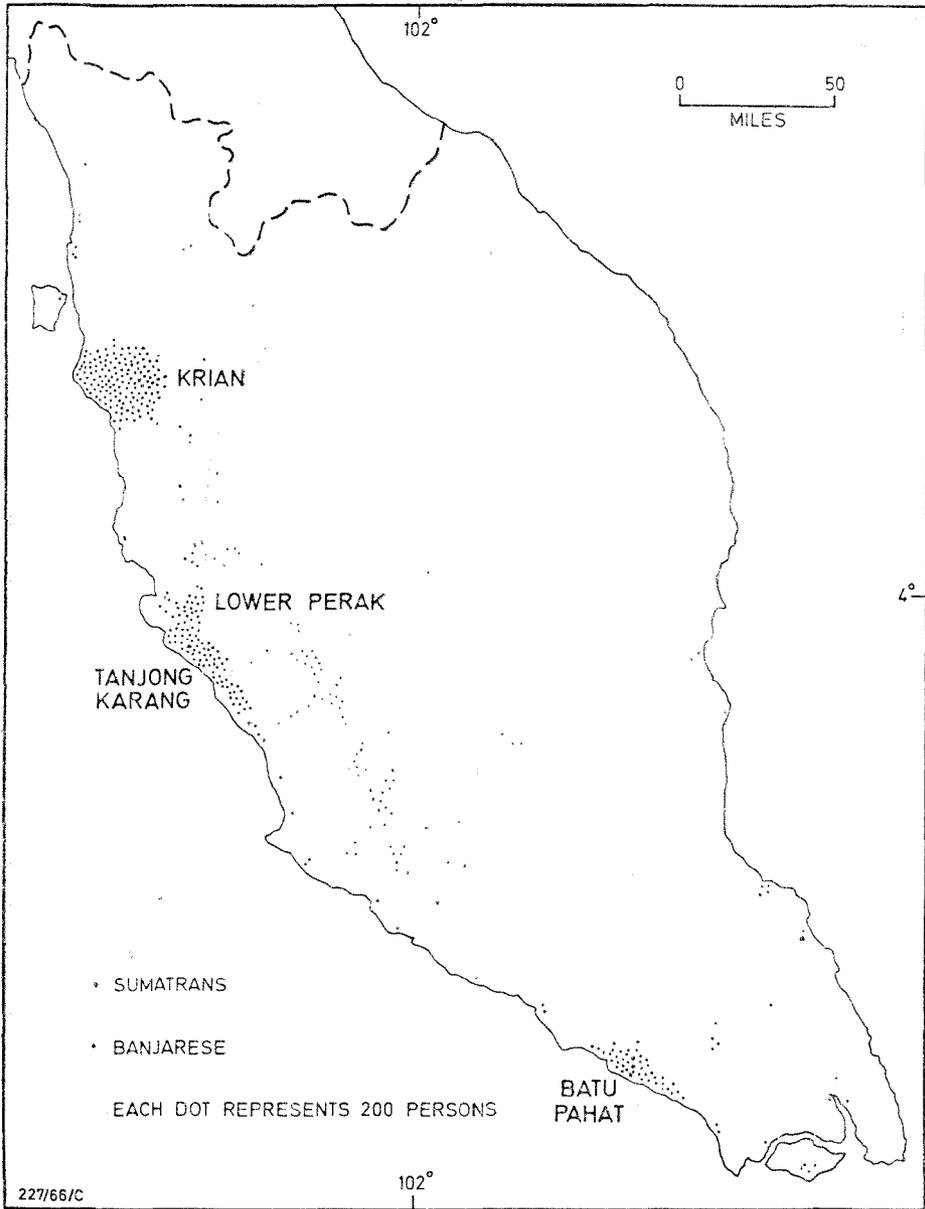


Figure 4. *Malaya: Distribution of Banjarese and Sumatrans, 1947*

mainly coastal. This peculiar tendency of the Sumatrans to settle in the interior areas was mainly probably due, at least in the initial stages, to their economic pursuits and, to a lesser extent, to environment. This can probably be explained by their attempt to live in surroundings or environments evocative of their home areas which are mostly in the central parts of Sumatra. These two factors, however, were in many ways inter-related.

Whereas the majority of the Banjarese and Javanese immigrants came because of opportunities created by the expansion of agriculture, plantation or otherwise, the forerunners of the Sumatrans in Malaya were mainly petty miners and tradesmen. Their trading was perhaps largely confined to the Malays who had settled at the river mouths or along the river valleys. With the establishment of the early mining settlements, trade spread into the interior. The first Sumatran miners, through experience in Sumatra, selected their mining sites in the upper reaches of the various river valleys. These sites became the nuclei of later settlements. This pattern of settlement development can be exemplified by Ulu Langat, as described later. With the introduction of capital-intensive and mechanised mining operations which rendered their conservative and labour-intensive "lampan" methods obsolete, the Sumatrans turned to agriculture. Most of the Sumatrans in Malaya were Minangkabaus and Mandailings from the interior and highland areas of Sumatra where their agricultural techniques were suited to such environments. They had little experience if any, in draining swampy coastal areas and they found the narrow river valleys in the interior districts of western Malaya very suitable for their settlements based on agriculture.

Unlike the other Indonesian communities in Malaya, the Boyanese are to be found in the major towns with the biggest concentration in Singapore (see Figure 5). In fact, Singapore had always been the focus of Boyanese migration for the whole of Southeast Asia with the result that apart from Bawaeon Island, Singapore has the largest Boyanese population. In Singapore, approximately 70 per cent of the 1947 Boyanese population were enumerated within the city, but the remaining 30 per cent could not be considered to be wholly rural either. On the Malayan mainland, a similar pattern existed. Thus in 1947 over 70 per cent of the Boyanese population in Selangor lived in Kuala Lumpur town, 82 per cent of the Boyanese in Perak were enumerated in Ipoh, and 97 per cent of those recorded in Penang were located in Georgetown. Only in Johore was the urban percentage of the Boyanese population below 50 per cent. This urban concentration of the Boyanese was related to their occupations. Although most of them were either farmers or fishermen in their home-island, in Malaya they were mainly drivers, peons, stable grooms, and gardeners. Most of these occupations were to be found in the more affluent urban areas.

As shown in Figure 5, the 1947 Bugis population in Malaya were to be found mainly in the coastal parts of the Batu Pahat and Pontian districts

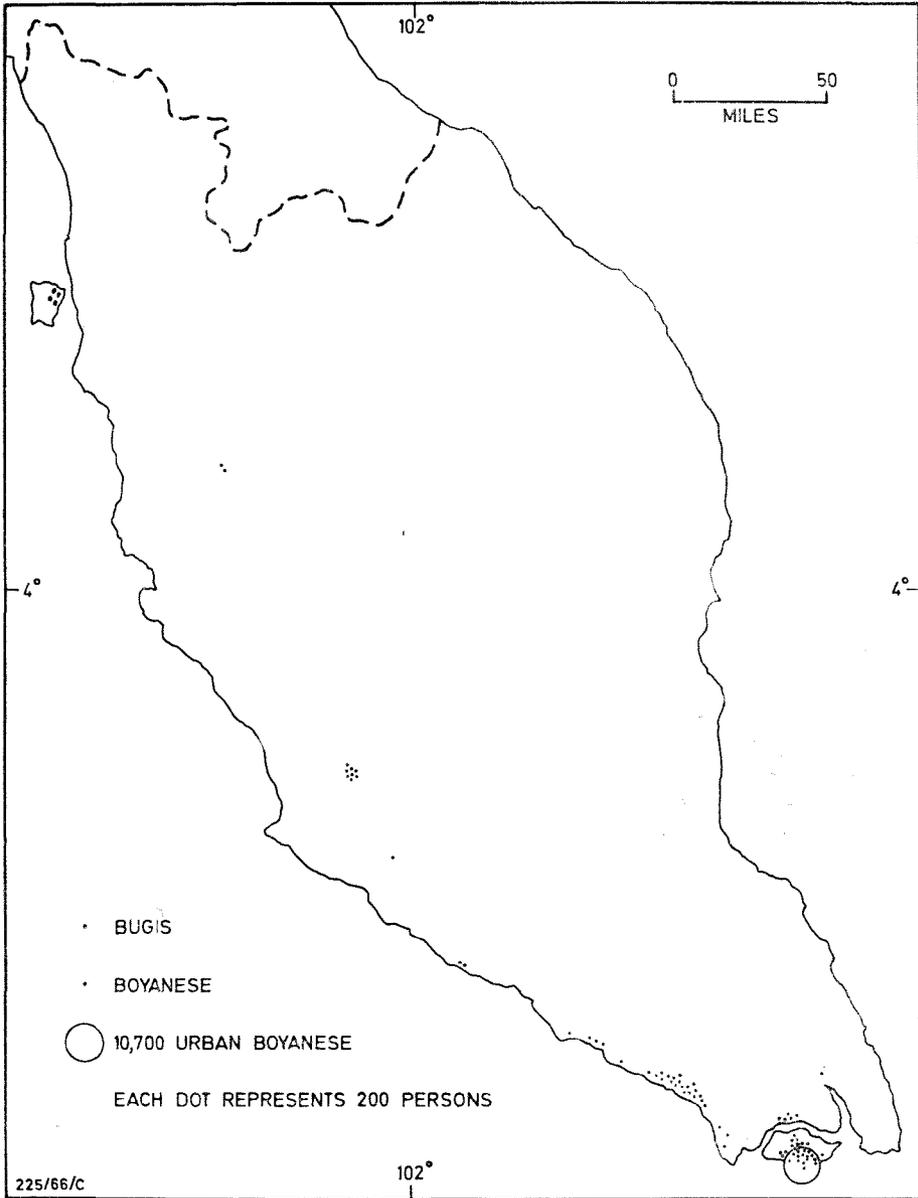


Figure 5. *Distribution of Boyanese and Bugis, 1947*

and a few in Singapore. Whereas the majority of 19th century Bugis immigrants who were then residing predominantly in Singapore were traders and businessmen, the bulk of the Bugis in Johore were mainly agriculturists engaged in coconut and rubber growing.

Ulu Langat Valley: A Study of Indonesian Immigrant Settlements Based on Speech-group

The study of the development of Indonesian settlement in the Ulu Langat valley aims to show how these immigrants tend to set up their villages according to their dialect groups or *suku-bangsas*.

The valley under study is located in the upstream area of Sungai Langat, one of the five rivers that played a major role in the economic development of the State of Selangor during the 19th century. The Ulu Langat valley is about 15 miles long, stretching in a north-east direction from the point where the Kuala Lumpur-Singapore highway crosses the Langat River to the boundary separating Selangor from Pahang (see Figure 6). The width of the valley varies a great deal ranging from about two miles to approximately eight miles at its widest part. Like most of the river valleys in the interior of Malaya, it is typified by a narrow flat bottom which is flanked on both sides by steep slopes. The total cultivated area in the valley is approximately 18,500 acres, 16,000 acres of which belong to Malaysians, 2,000 to Chinese and the remainder mainly to Indian Chettiers.²² Rubber occupies nearly 50 per cent of the total cultivated area and the rest is devoted to rice and fruit growing.

In 1955 this valley had a total population of approximately 10,000 people, consisting of 350 aborigines, 2,500 Chinese and the rest predominantly Malaysians.²³ Over 90 per cent of the Malaysian population in the valley were either direct immigrants from Sumatra and Java or descendants of such immigrants while the remaining few were the descendants of Malays from Rembau and Malacca.

The earliest known inhabitants of this valley were the aborigines who subsisted on hunting, shifting agriculture and the growing of fruit trees, mainly durians. These aborigines were pushed further and further into the upper parts of the valley by the influx of Indonesian settlers in the late 19th and early 20th century.

When the Indonesian immigrants first settled in this valley is not known exactly. However, some inferences can be made. According to local information, the earliest Sumatran settlers did not come direct to this valley. At first they went to Lenggeng, Mantin and Beranang, places lying between

²² Laidin bin Alang Musa, "Background to the Ulu Langat Valley in Selangor," *Malayan Historical Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (1955).

²³ *Ibid.*

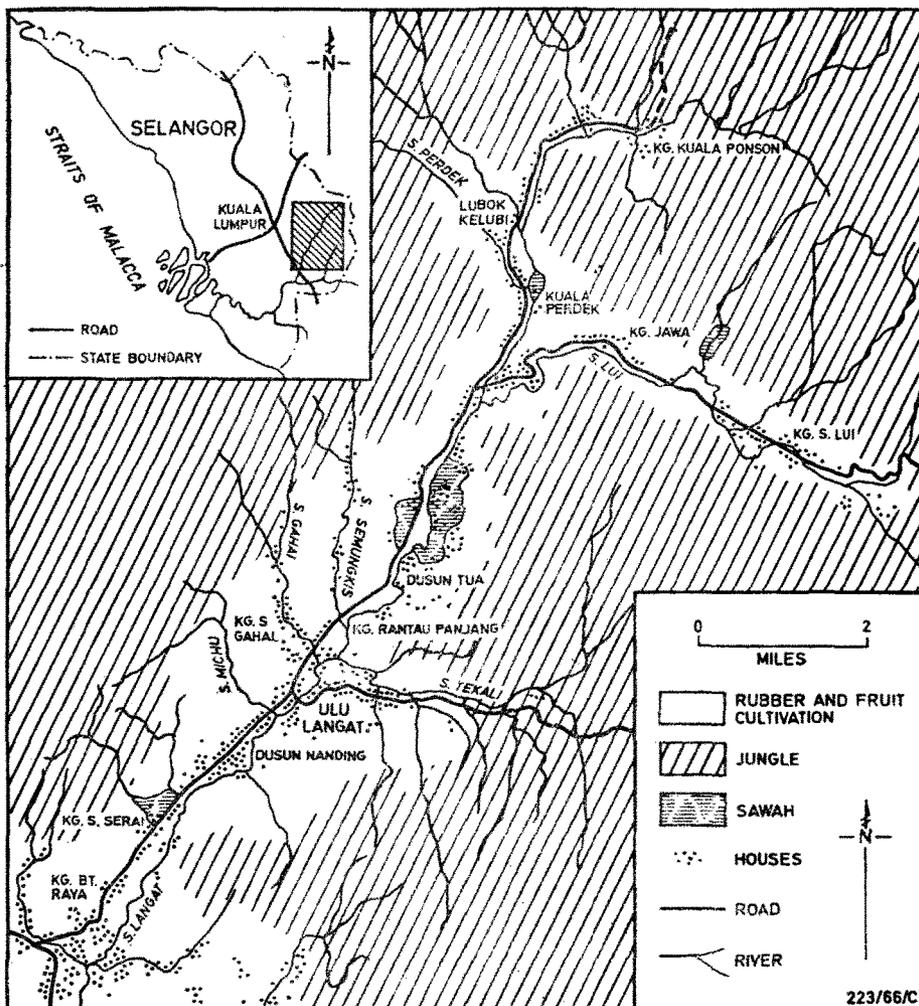


Figure 6. The Ulu Langat Valley

Kajang and Seremban, and it was from these places that they moved into the Ulu Langat Valley. The Resident of Negri Sembilan, writing in 1897, stated that the Lenggeng valley "has been occupied by settlers from Minangkabau for about 30 years,"²⁴ which means that it was settled *circa* 1868. We also know that during the Selangor Civil War (1866 to 1873) the Mandailing community in Ulu Langat was already big enough to create alarm among the British. From this scanty evidence, it can probably be deduced that the Sumatran immigrants first arrived in the valley during the 1860s.

²⁴ *Annual Report of the State of Negri Sembilan for the Year 1897*, p. 2.

Another fact in the development of settlement in this valley which is difficult to determine with certainty is which of the Sumatran communities were the first to settle in Ulu Langat. The Minangkabaus claimed that they were first, and the Mandailings made similar claims. It is most probable that they moved into the valley at approximately the same time.

However, one fact about the early settlement in the valley remained undisputed, namely that the early Sumatrans were mainly tin-miners. Most of them were engaged in small-scale mining called "lampan-mining." The intending prospector or miner had to seek permission from the local territorial chief to extract ore in the valley. Permission was easily obtained. All the miner had to pay was a mere sum of five dollars for the sole right of extracting and collecting tin from one of the many tributaries of Sungai Langat. The lease was usually for a period of one year but it could be renewed if required. The labour force needed in this form of mining was small and consisted mainly of "captured" aborigines. Some of the tributaries that were mined profitably were the Sungai Michu, Sungai Serai, Sungai Semungkis and Sungai Tekali, all of which formed the nuclei for the establishment of immigrant settlements later. Lampan-mining did not terminate in this valley until about 1920 and, even to this day, some of the mining sites are still visible. Three of the most famous sites named after their owners were called Lampan Datok Latch (an immigrant of Rawa origin), Lampan Pa' Timun and Lampan Panglima Kiri.

Although it was tin-mining that attracted the Sumatran immigrants into the valley, the real peopling of the area was made by agriculturists who came during the 20th century. Local information attributed the rapid development of the area to a man called Dato Jalil, a Mandailing immigrant. Prior to his appointment as Penghulu of Ulu Langat in 1904, Jalil was a trader in the small town of Kajang. At the time of his appointment, the Penghulu had the authority to dispose of lands in his own *mukim*. Jalil, being a conscientious leader, was determined to see that the valley would grow prosperous and the only way that he knew was by attracting and giving land to settlers for cultivation. Being a Mandailing, he invited more people of his own kind, either immigrants directly from Sumatra or Mandailings who were already in Malaya to settle there. Most of the early settlers were engaged in the cultivation of rubber and rice, while others grew gambier, tobacco, pepper and coffee.

By 1914 nearly all the settlers in the valley, besides the aborigines, were either Mandailings or Minangkabaus. It was immediately after this date that the other Indonesian groups came into the valley. Most of the later arrivals

were Korinchis, Javanese and some Palembangs. These new settlers did not come direct from Indonesia but from other parts of Selangor. The nucleus of the Javanese community in Ulu Langat consisted of persons previously employed as estate labourers in and around Kajang. The Korinchis arrived from Kuala Lumpur and the Palembangs from Petaling also in Kuala Lumpur district.

This new urge from Jalil to invite non-Mandailing groups to the valley was the result of two complementary factors. Firstly, it arose from the fact that about that time he heard rumours that some Chinese were planning to apply for mining land in the valley. He was not in favour of having Chinese in his *mukim*, but so long as the existing settlers had sufficient land and there was still much unoccupied land left, he had neither reason nor authority to stop the Chinese from coming in. Recognizing the stipulation made in the Land Enactment of 1911, that once a piece of land "had been alienated for agricultural purposes under permanent title, no right to mine the same land shall be granted to any person except with the sanction of the Ruler of the State in Council,"²⁵ he concluded that the only way to prevent the Chinese miners from settling in the valley was to invite as many Malaysian agriculturists as possible. There was insufficient time to invite more Mandailings from either Sumatra or elsewhere in Malaya, but he knew there were many other Indonesian immigrants in the vicinity of Kuala Lumpur who needed land.

Secondly, conditions at that time were such that events were moving in Jalil's favour. World War I had broken out and the supply of imported rice was greatly reduced with the immediate effect of raising the price of this commodity. Many of the Korinchi and Palembang immigrants in Kuala Lumpur who did not produce their own food were forced to find land suitable for rice cultivation. The war also led to the dismissal of a number of the Javanese labourers from the estates around Kajang. In view of these circumstances, Jalil did not find much difficulty in attracting settlers into his *mukim*. The Korinchis were allotted two sites, one at Sungai Gahal and the other at Sungai Lui.

Right from the start, the different groups were allotted different sites to establish their various settlements. The Palembangs and the Javanese were settled at Kuala Perdek and Kampong Jawa, respectively. This was done on purpose, and the two basic reasons for this segregation were cul-

²⁵ Section 12 of the *Land Enactment of the Federated Malay States, 1911*.

tural differences and administrative convenience. The Penghulu felt that even though the various communities belonged to the Malaysian race and the majority even hailed from the same island in Indonesia, each of them spoke their own language and possessed their own peculiar customs and ways of life. He must have thought that it would be to everybody's advantage that the various groups should remain separate from one another. To him, mixing would only lead to misunderstanding and friction.

This communal segregation was realistic and indeed desirable, from the administrative and organizational points of view. The pioneering phase was a difficult period, and this was especially so if work had to be done on an individual basis. Cooperation on the *gotong-royong* system was beneficial to all concerned and this was the common method of pioneering adopted by many of the communities in Ulu Langat. Land was not initially given to individuals but to the leaders of the various groups. Sub-division into individual lots was only done after the removal of the vegetation cover, and among the Korinchis after the crops had been planted. Under this system, the leader, in order to make sure that every one involved did his share of the work, had to command the respect and loyalty of all the members of the group, a position more readily achieved among members of his own community than among persons from different communities.

The same cooperation and loyalty was also essential in the day-to-day administration of the village. The administrative structure common throughout the State, and the whole country for that matter, required that each village was to have a head or leader through whom the *Penghulu* or the Government could reach every individual in the State. The village head, locally known as *Ketua Kampong*, should also be the chief spokesman for the village in all matters. The problems of nominating a leader that would be acceptable to the various sections of a plural and mixed community required no elaborations. In view of these problems and difficulties, it is quite understandable why Jalil encouraged the settlers to be organized along communal lines.

Once each site had been allocated to one particular group, more and more friends were invited and encouraged to take up land there. The rate of increase in the number of settlers in each village was rapid. Thus, Lubok Kelubi, which had only 13 families in 1911, had increased to 138 in 1962; and the 20 families that opened up Kampong Sungai Lui in 1916 had increased to 275 in 1962. The Korinchi settlement at Kuala Ponson, which was created in 1922 by Korinchis from other parts of the valley, had increased from 12 homesteads when it was first established to 34 in 1962.

The communal groupings of people according to village units in the Ulu Langat valley is summarised below:

<i>Village</i>	<i>Speech Group</i>
Bukit Raya	Minangkabau
Sungai Serai	Minangkabau
Dusun Nanding	Mandailing
Ulu Langat	Mandailing
Kampung Sungai Gahal	Korinchi
Kampung Sungai Semungkis	Korinchi
Kampung Rantau Panjang	Mandailing
Dusun Tua	Mandailing
Kuala Perdek	Palembang
Lubok Kelubi	Minangkabau
Kampung Kuala Ponson	Korinchi
Kampung Jawa	Javanese
Kampung Sungai Lui	Korinchi

There was even a tendency for people of the same speech group from different localities of the same cultural-area in Sumatra to set up different settlements. Thus, though Bukit Raya and Lubok Kelubi were both settled by Minangkabaus, the former was settled by Minangkabaus who hailed from the Batang Kapas area in West Coast Sumatra and the latter from Lubok Kaping in the sub-division of Bukit Tinggi.

Besides the above-named groups, there were also some Chinese, Indians and other Malaysians who were too few to establish their own villages, and thus had to join one of the bigger groups. The Malacca and Rembau Malays were found scattered in nearly all the villages in the valley, and a handful of immigrants from the Bilah area in East Coast Sumatra have chosen to settle with the Korinchis at Sungai Semungkis.

Recent events in the history of the valley have apparently caused some minor re-arrangements in the settlement and cultural-grouping patterns there. One of the obvious changes was the resettlement of the Minangkabaus from Bukit Raya on a site close to the junction of the Ulu Langat road and the main Kuala Lumpur-Singapore highway. This resettlement was effected in 1949, during the period of an emergency in Malaya, when an attempt was made by the Communist-terrorists to assassinate the *Penghulu*.²⁶ Also during the period of Emergency, the Government, in order to protect the less organised and isolated settlers from communist threats and atrocities, resettled a number of the Minangkabaus among the Korinchis in Kampung Sungai Lui. Recently, a land development scheme was started in the Sungai

²⁶ Laidin bin Alang Musa, *op. cit.*

Tekali area, and here, instead of the houses and settlers being divided according to speech-groups of the same Malaysian language, the division was made on the broader basis of race, namely, Malay, Chinese and Indian. However, it is most encouraging to note that regular contacts during the past forty years have tended to reduce the feeling of "differentness" among the various Indonesian communities in the Ulu Langat valley.

Innumerable examples of immigrant settlements based on speech or dialect groups can be found in other parts of Malaya. In his book *Riwayat Tanjong Malim*, Zainal Abidin observed that the various Rawa, Minangkabau, Kampar and Bugis communities set up their own communal villages in different localities in the vicinity of Tanjong Malim.²⁷ A field survey of the Bagan Serai Triangle in the Krian area revealed the "tendency of the Banjarese to live in clan-clusters rather than spread evenly among those Malays born in Malaya. True Malays predominate along the main roads, Banjarese in the interior along the parits (drains); along Parit Mahamat (the westernmost parit) all 69 households are Banjarese. The Banjarese along the main roads also show this characteristic. Only 30 Banjarese are in groups of less than three."²⁸ (See Figure 7.)

Urban Settlements

In the urban areas the Indonesians are not at all numerous. In 1947 only in three towns did the Indonesian population exceed 2,000 persons, namely in Kuala Lumpur, Johore Bahru and Singapore. The last with a total of 38,340 in 1957, is by far the most important. In the initial stages the Indonesian urban dwellers, like their rural counterparts, tended to have settlements based on regional or dialect groups. In many respects, these early urban settlements in Malaya were usually nothing more than overgrown rural villages. With the ensuing rapid changes in the structure of the Malayan towns, the pattern of the Indonesian urban settlements also underwent major changes. Today, except for some of the Javanese and Boyanese in Singapore city, the urban Indonesians in Malaya tend to distribute themselves among the various Malay settlements, thus forming an integral part of the urban Malay community.

The Boyanese in Kuala Lumpur and Singapore have created their own peculiar residential organization called "Pondok" or literally "hut" or "house." The Pondok is usually sub-divided into cubicles which are allocated to the various resident-members of the community. Each Pondok usually accommodates, on the average, a total of 50 families most of whom normally came from the same locality in Bawean. Local origin, however, is not the first

²⁷ Zainal Abidin Daud, *Riwayat Tanjong Malim*, Kuala Pilah, 1957, p. 52.

²⁸ E.H.G. Dobby, et al., "Padi Landscapes of Malaya," *Malayan Journal of Tropical Geography*, Vol. 6 (October, 1955).

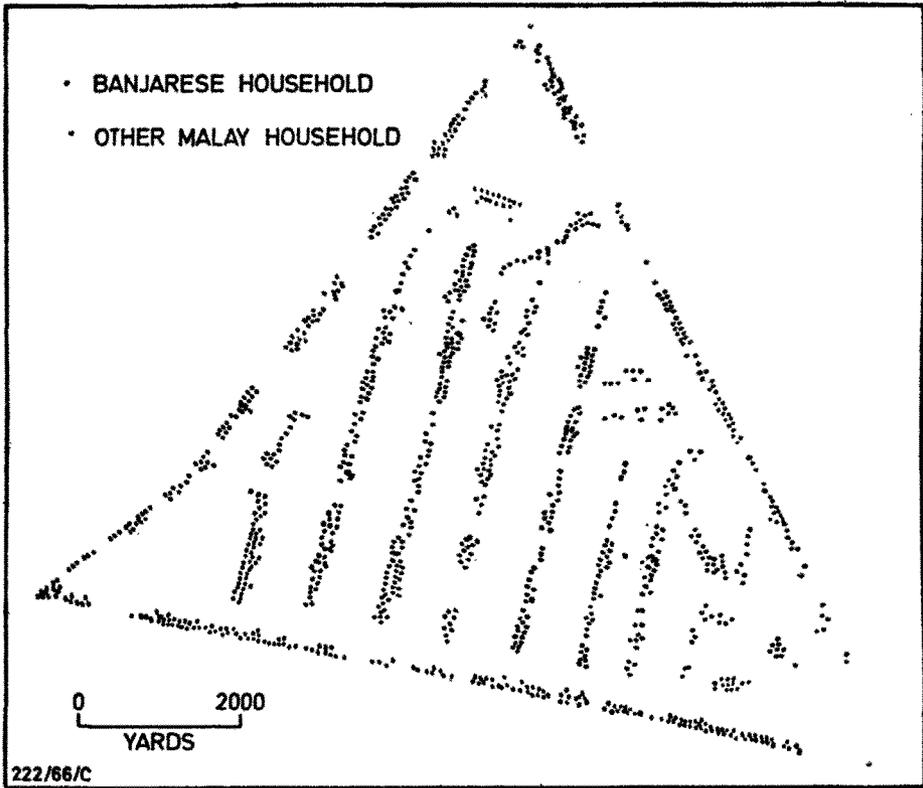


Figure 7. *Bagan Serai Triangle (Krian)*

essential requirement of being accepted into the Pondok. First and foremost, the applicant must be a Boyanese. His areal or local origin is often of secondary importance, sometimes not even taken into consideration. A Pondok is more than a place of residence; it is a social unit with its own established organization, regulations and code of conduct. In 1959 there were 67 such Pondok in Singapore city.²⁹ In Kuala Lumpur, only the stable grooms and the unemployed Boyanese reside in the Pondok which is located near the Selangor Turf Club. The majority of those Boyanese who have found jobs outside the Turf Club have left the Pondok to settle in more agreeable surroundings among the local Malays.

Although the majority of the urban Indonesian immigrants in Malaya could not reside close to one another, the feeling of belonging together and of identifying themselves with their various islands of origin is not completely

²⁹ Abdullah bin Malim Baginda, "The Boyanese of Singapore," unpublished Thesis, University of Malaya (Singapore), 1959, p. 49.

lost. As an attempt to maintain this communal solidarity, the various island communities of the Indonesian population in Malaya have organized themselves into clubs and associations. Although the majority of these clubs are located in the towns, a number of Indonesians from the surrounding rural areas are known to have become members. But in spite of the fact that the subscription fees are very small, the total membership of the various communal associations has remained very small. In 1961, the Perkumpulan Jawa Peranakan Malaya (Local-born Javanese Association) could only claim a total paying-membership of 2,000, whereas the 1960 total membership of the Kesatuan Kebajikan Peranakan Sumatra (Selangor) consisted of 60 persons.³⁰ There is no evidence to indicate these there exists an association or society which is strictly Indonesian and not confined, in one way or other, to any particular island origin. These associations are strictly non-political, and they normally have identical aims and objectives, namely:

- (1) To establish and foster relationship of brotherhood among its members; and
- (2) To safeguard the welfare of its members, both worldly and spiritually.

Conclusion

From the above study, the following observations are obvious:

- (1) That the migrants from the different Indonesian islands tend to settle in different parts of Malaya.
- (2) That even within the same island-group they tend to congregate and settle according to narrower "cultural" divisions.
- (3) That there is minimum interaction among them.

In view of the above observations it is probably no exaggeration to state that there is no such group as an Indonesian community in Malaya. What actually exist are just little communities of ethnic groups and sub-categories of people belonging to one "mother-nationality."

³⁰ On March 26, 1963, a few months after the Indonesian government's declaration of her "Confrontation" policy against the then prospective government of the Federation of Malaysia, *Utusan Melayu* carried an article stating that Inche Rashid bin Taha, the President of this Association, claimed for it a total membership of 25,000 persons. This claim, in the writer's opinion, is highly exaggerated. The 1947 total of the Sumatran population in Malaya was 26,300.