

## Pioneer Settlers and State Control: A Javanese Migrant Community in Selangor, Malaysia

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### Abstract

This is a case study of a Javanese rural community on the northern coast of Selangor, Malaysia, combining both field research and historical study. From the last decades of the nineteenth century through the beginning of the Second World War, a large number of Javanese migrated from Java to the southwestern states of Malaya. They are now integrated into the Malay population of Malaysia, but, in many cases, still maintain Javanese cultural traits such as language and customs. However, this paper is not a study of Javanese ethnicity in Malaysia. It will be shown that the history and present conditions of the Javanese have been determined by their relation not to other ethnics but the state, whether colonial or independent.

The first part of the paper examines the past history of the Javanese migrants as pioneer settlers in the frontier, their struggle against both a tough natural environment and obstacles imposed by the British colonial state. The second part deals with their life under the rural development schemes of the Malaysian government. The Javanese community under study is now divided by people's attitudes toward the nation-state and its policies. The author argues that this internal division is a reflection of their attitude toward the state: incorporation into the state or distance from it.

### I Introduction

This paper is an outcome of field research I conducted in a coconut-and-cacao-growing village of migrant Javanese on the northern coast of Selangor.<sup>1)</sup> The village, called Kampung Parit Baru Baroh, is located at the northwestern fringe of Sabak Bernam District and included in the subdistrict (*mukim*) of Sungai Air Tawar. Together with a number of the adjacent villages, it has two prominent features. First, it was established rather recently, in about 1925, as a pioneer settlement in a then-unoccupied frontier. Second, Javanese form the majority of the population in the area. Even today, almost all the inhabitants of the village are Javanese, speaking Javanese in their daily life.

The immediate aim of this paper is to document a case of an immigrant Javanese community in rural Malaysia. However, the present work is not intended to be just one more study of ethnicity in

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1) The research on which this paper is based was conducted as part of a joint research project: "Socio-Economic Change and Cultural Transformation in Rural Malaysia." The project was headed by Dr. Tsuyoshi Kato of Kyoto University and Dr. Shamsul A. B. of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. My own fieldwork at Kampung Parit Baru Baroh was conducted for two weeks in September 1987, then for two months in June-July 1988, and was supplemented by a month's archival work at Arkib Negara (National Archives) in Kuala Lumpur. For a general profile of the village and Sabak Bernam area, see also Sekimoto [1988].

a conventional sense. Though the community under study shows several ethnic traits of Javanese origin, it also shares many features with other rural communities in Malaysia which are not Javanese. Since the frequent movement of ethnically different peoples in sparsely populated frontiers is a common feature in the history of Peninsular Malaysia, this case study aims to profile not the uniqueness of Javanese ethnicity but the shared realities of rural life there.

Studies on migrant communities in general are now abundant and they usually focus on the issue of ethnic relations between the migrants and other ethnics. Ethnic identity, conflict, and assimilation are the key terms in those studies. But this paper adopts a different approach. In the general perception of the distribution of ethnic groups in Southeast Asia, the Javanese are taken to be ethnically different from the Malays. But the Javanese in Sabak Bernam—and perhaps throughout the Malay Peninsula—are not clearly separated from the general Malay community in Malaysia. They have been defined as Malays by both the British colonial authority and the present Malaysian government, and they have accepted that definition themselves insofar as it has been useful in the political context. They also maintain the ethnic awareness and customs of Javanese in their daily interactions with other sub-ethnic groups of Malays. Being Malay for them does not contradict their being Javanese.

The issue of ethnicity becomes a real problem in relation to exterior groups or forces. Since in Sabak Bernam I have found that the existence of the Javanese there is determined not in their relation to other ethnics but to the state, this paper will examine the present conditions of Kampung Parit Baru Baroh as an outcome of the complex historical relationship between the villagers and the state. When the first generation of migrants left their homeland in Java and crossed the state border to Malaya, they identified themselves with neither of the states: not with the Netherlands Indies nor with British Malaya. The state border just happened to be there. Since then, especially in the process of independence and nation-building in Malaysia, they have gradually been assimilated into the nation-state. Because of the well-known ethno-political factor in the formation of Malaysia, they could become Malaysian only by becoming Malay.

In my view, a question such as to what extent they are assimilated with the Malays or keep their Javanese identity is irrelevant if it is raised only in terms of ethno-cultural features. It is true that their stress has been shifting from more Javanese-ness to more Malay-ness, but this shift is occurring not just as a change in their cultural traits of language and customs. Rather, it should be stressed that the problem of ethnicity in the context of present-day Malaysia is one of politics, specifically the relationship between state and peasant. For the Javanese in Sabak Bernam, to become Malaysian Malays all too often means accepting ideals, norms, and policies of the state. The problem of ethnicity cannot be separated from those of economic development and nation building. Therefore, I will examine in this paper how these Javanese have been incorporated into the Malaysian nation; how and to what extent they have been assimilated to the ideals and practices of the nation-state; and how they distance themselves from the state.

## II Historical Development of Parit Baru Area

Since the present socioeconomic conditions of Kampung Parit Baru Baroh can better be grasped against the village's historical background, I will first present a brief account of its origin and its subsequent development over more than 60 years.<sup>2)</sup>

The area which later formed today's Sabak Bernam District was, in the British colonial period, a part of Kuala Selangor District and administered by the Malay subdistrict officer seated in the town of Sabak. However, until the 1910s, the area was mostly an uninhabited stretch of swampy coastal forest. There were a few Malays in the town of Sabak and in a small number of settlements scattered far apart along the banks of the Bernam River. The area then was largely a vacant frontier between the more developed areas of Hilir Perak to the north and northeast across the Bernam River, and Kuala Selangor to the south. For the period before the present century, existing documents refer only to the old settlement of Sabak with references dating as far back as

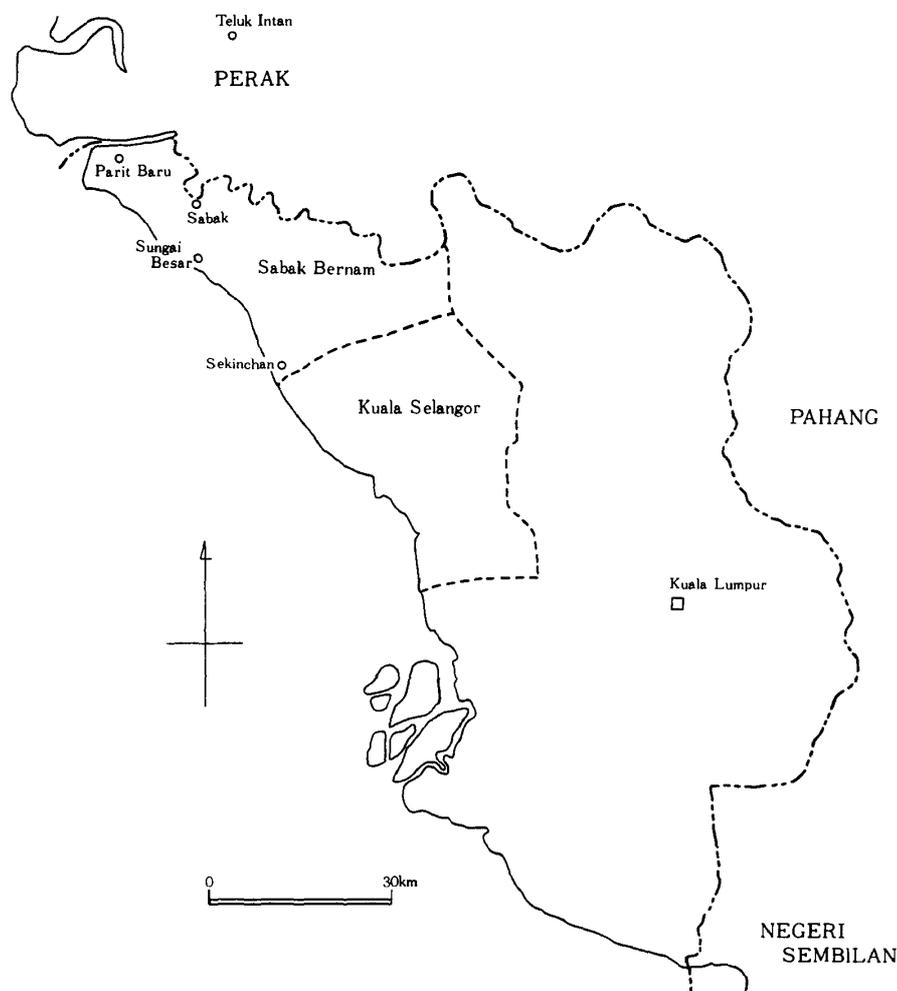


Fig. 1 Selangor

2) The following historical account of the area is based both on *Selangor Secretariat Files 1880-1950* (SSF) and on oral histories I gathered from people in the Parit Baru area.

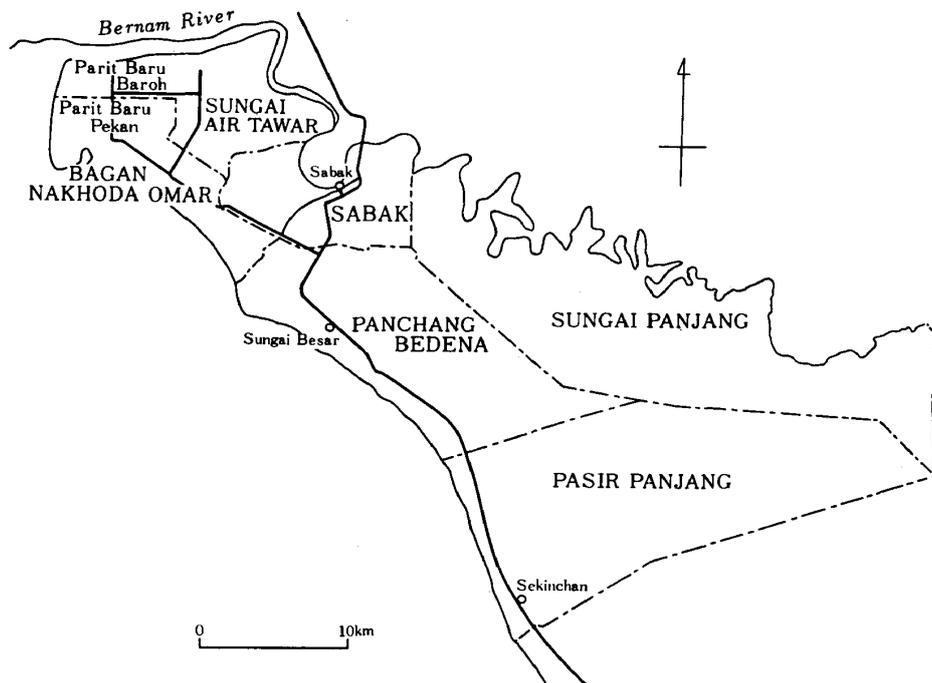


Fig. 2 Sabak Bernam District

the eighteenth century. Before British rule, Sabak was a small frontier outpost occasionally occupied by junior princes of the royal houses of Selangor or Perak. It was also at one time occupied by a losing faction of the Kedah royal family, who utilized it as a base for piracy [Andaya 1979: 53, 335; Khoo 1975: 7, 23].

From the end of the 1910s, the Sabak Bernam area was gradually filled with immigrants from various parts of the former Netherlands Indies (today's Indonesia). As is pointed out by Khazin [1984] and Shamsul [1986], such a history of immigration and subsequent amalgamation of various ethnic groups into the Malays was a very common pattern in twenty-century Selangor.<sup>3)</sup>

As of 1987, Sabak Bernam District has a population of 103,261, of which about 70 percent is Malay, 25 percent is Chinese and 5 percent is Indian (Table 1). Though I have not yet obtained statistics showing the breakdown of local Malays by ethnic group, people unanimously told me that the Javanese were the largest group, while the Banjarese, who had originally migrated from the

Table 1 Population of Sabak Bernam by Ethnicity

Malays	72,778
Chinese	25,509
Indians	4,927
Others	47
Total	103,261

Source: Sabak Bernam District Information Office, 1987

3) For the Javanese immigrants in British Malaya, see also Ramsay [1956] and Tunku Shamsul [1967]. For overseas emigration of the Javanese in general, see Lockard [1971].

southern part of Borneo, were the second. Sumatran peoples such as the Kamparese, the Minankabau, and the Achenese, as well as the Buginese from South Sulawesi are also found in the area. There are also a small number of Malays whose forefathers were the original settlers of the area or migrants from Perak and Kedah.

The Chinese came to the area no later than most other immigrant groups who are now Malay. In the early decades of the twentieth century, Chinese trade in the town of Sabak was already flourishing. At present many Chinese engage in trade and other businesses in towns and rural market places. Other Chinese in the area are fishermen, living along the coast and the estuary of the Bernam River, or farmers growing wet padi and vegetables in the southernmost corner of the district. Though most local Chinese are concentrated in their own exclusive communities, some live scattered in Malay villages, trading in and processing farm produce. This latter type of Chinese speak Malay and/or Javanese fluently.

Along the river banks in the vicinity of Sabak town, there are still several European plantations of oil palms, which were originally opened for growing coconuts prior to the coming of migrant smallholders from the Netherlands Indies. Various government documents reporting the coming of the migrants mention that the plantations had already existed [SSF 3821/1919 among others]. As early as the late 1920s, the number of Tamil schools and their enrollment far exceeded those of Malay schools [SSF 960/26], as plantation workers were, and still are, mostly Tamils. In short, most inhabitants of Sabak Bernam have been immigrants of one ethnic group or another. A distinction between natives and newcomers makes little sense. A young local Chinese told me that he found it difficult to accept the government-imposed distinction between *Bumiputera* (the natives of the land) and other Malaysians, because everyone was a newcomer in Sabak Bernam.

The modern development of Sabak Bernam, which began this century, was the outcome of economic expansion in both Hilir Perak and Kuala Selangor since the early period of British rule. At the end of the nineteenth century, the Hilir Perak area across the Bernam River was already undergoing colonial development. As European coconut plantations were opened and Javanese immigrants poured in to become smallholders and plantation workers, Hilir Perak gradually filled with people. The town of Sabak was also developing as an important river port in the area. Since there were no motor roads in Sabak Bernam through the British period and all traffic went by waterway, Sabak played a significant role in the local economy. Steamers from Singapore and Penang visited the harbor regularly and often handled more cargo than the port of Kuala Selangor [SSF 960/23]. The remains of Sabak's past fortune are still visible today in a deteriorated wharf and large, old warehouses on the river front.

While Sabak had been incorporated into the local economy of Hilir Perak, northward economic expansion from Kuala Selangor took place much later. British local officials at Kuala Selangor began to take note of the Sabak Bernam area in 1921, for two reasons. First, they saw a potential for further development of European estate agriculture in this mostly uninhabited land. Second, the British administration of the time wanted more "Malay natives" (migrants from the Netherlands Indies actually) to grow padi, so that rice imports could be reduced [SSF 286/21]. In the early 1920s, adopting a proposal by a district officer at Kuala Selangor, the Selangor State Secretariat and

several departments of the Federated Malay States made a survey of this area with a view to extending the railway line northward from Batang Berjuntai through the uninhabited swampy forest southwest of the Bernam River to the city of Teluk Anson (today's Teluk Intan) in Hilir Perak [SSF 4950/20]. This plan, however, did not materialize. But the potential of the area for native padi cultivation also drew the government's attention [SSF 3865/22].

It is interesting that the district officers at Kuala Selangor were rather reluctant to grant any large areas of land to Malays, since they were under strong pressure not to do so from the Kuala Selangor Planters Association, which represented the interests of European plantations. Any criticism from local Europeans could endanger the district officer's position in colonial society, but voices raised by natives did not pose a threat to him. Therefore British local administrators took no positive measures to enhance the natives' share of local agriculture [SSF 1841/22].

Notwithstanding the indifference and passiveness of the government authorities, natives, mostly from the Netherlands Indies, came and cleared land by their own efforts. Elderly villagers of Parit Baru told me that there had been a lot of uninhabited land there in the 1920s, and anyone who cleared the forest could take possession of the land he cleared. In legal terms, however, these lands were held by the state. Only those who registered land titles and paid land premiums and rents to the government could occupy them. British policy of the time was one of "wait and see," and local officials showed an ambiguous attitude toward these pioneer settlers. They basically had no objection to new settlements on vacant land and the subsequent increase of population and farm products. But new settlements were allowed for Malays only insofar as they grew what the government called "subsistence crops," i.e., padi and root crops. The British administration wanted to increase rice production in Malaya so that the then rapidly increasing rice imports, needed to maintain an increasing population of Chinese and Indian laborers, could be curtailed. The government also did not like Malays to participate in production of cash crops, which required constant control of overproduction. Thus they constantly tried to force Malays into the stereotype of producing only food crops for their own subsistence, and to exclude them from rubber, coconuts, and other cash crops [SSF 3865/1922 among other documents to the same effect. See also Shamsul 1986].

In the first stage of new settlement, the government's restrictions on cash crops were not a problem for the Javanese in Parit Baru, since they intended to grow padi there. When a Kuala Selangor district officer noticed that a substantial number of natives had already cleared forest and engaged in padi farming, he decided to propose to the State Secretariat that several Malay Reservations be established in Sabak Bernam.<sup>4)</sup> In 1925, Sungai Lang Malay Reservation, which included today's Parit Baru, was officially founded [SSF 2751/1925; 3809/1927]. State lands were granted to the cultivators without payment of the land premium and at lower rent on condition that they would only grow padi. Some government works were undertaken to install drainage and coastal banks, but most of such infrastructures were built by villagers themselves. This was the beginning of the local community of Parit Baru.

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4) For a brief but clear account of the creation of Malay Reservations, see Ong [1987: 18-20].

The pioneer settlers of Parit Baru came to Malaya from various parts of Java, including Ponorogo and Surabaya in East Java, and Pati, Demak, Yogyakarta, Purworjo, Kebumen, and Cilacap in Central Java. At first, most of them settled in the more developed Hilir Perak, where they could obtain help from relatives and fellow villagers who had come earlier. Those who had no one to depend on earned their living by waged or indentured labor in padi fields and coconut gardens operated by natives (*wong tebusan*) [Khazin 1984: 74], or in European plantations (*kuli*). Interviewing Javanese-born elderly people of Parit Baru on the reasons they had left Java, I found several patterns in their answers. Some came to Malaya voluntarily and could bear the travel expenses themselves. Some among them were from wealthy families in rural Java but nourished hope for a new frontier. Others crossed the sea because they could not expect to inherit farm land. Though land shortage due to population pressure in Java was the single most common reason cited by these elderly people, it would be misleading to seek the causes of their migration only in the economic difficulties they had faced in Java. Some left their homeland so that they could widen their experience or have the chances to make the pilgrimage to Mecca.<sup>5)</sup>

There are also some who were obliged, or forced, to leave Java. Some entered into labor contracts with labor agents in Java. They were then brought to Malaya at the agents' expense, sold to Malayan recruiters at the port arrival, and worked in plantations as contract laborers ("indentured" might be a better term for them), having their arms tattooed and being confined in shabby huts. Another reason for migration is not economy but a sense of shame. Some left Java because they had had troubles and were ashamed to stay in their homeland. Sorcery (*ilmu*) is also mentioned as a cause of migration. Labor recruiters in Java are said to have often had recourse to sorcery to make people obedient to them, even though these people had no intention to migrate. Thus, people came for various reasons and in various ways to Hilir Perak. However, Javanese migrants were already so abundant there that no room was left for the late-comers. The forefathers of Parit Baru eventually moved south to Sabak Bernam when they heard that a lot of vacant land remained there.

When migration to Parit Baru began, there was no road system there at all. The settlers left Perak in small boats, landed on the seashore, and made their way inland through thick jungle to get to the sites of settlement. The surviving pioneers in Parit Baru could not give me detailed answers about how the sites had been chosen, for they had been very young then. But local official documents suggest that certain leaders (*sidang*) among the pioneers made the initial plans for the settlement with the consent of local Malay officials of the lowest rank (*penghulu*) and recruited settlers from among their peers. According to a very old farmer in the village of Parit Baru Baroh, it was these *sidang* who allotted land to the settlers.<sup>6)</sup>

Upon arrival at the intended settlement site, people first cleared a small piece of land together

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5) It should be stressed that the Javanese as well as other ethnic groups in the Malaysian-Indonesian world have a long tradition of temporary migration, called *merantau* among others. Khazin [1984: 46, 54] also refers to the cultural and religious backgrounds of Javanese migration.

6) The word *sidang* is still commonly used by villagers to refer to their village headmen, who are now officially called *ketua kampung*.

to build a single communal hut, then each cleared his own allotted space to grow wet padi and banana. Though it is difficult to imagine from today's neatly developed landscape of Parit Baru, the pioneers had a constant struggle with water in the early years. Since the land was low and flat, it was always inundated with rainwater. Plank pathways had to be built across mud and swamp to connect houses. People could fish just by dropping lines from within their houses. Their next step was to construct kilometers of drainage canals and primitive tide banks to turn the desperate swamps into homes and farms. They adopted a very tall variety of padi that grew as high as a man in deep water. Until the first harvest was secured, people survived on food stocks and cash brought from Perak, but some poorer settlers had to depend on wages earned from neighbors who had accumulated wealth in Perak.

After six seasons of trials, the settlers in Parit Baru abandoned wet padi and turned to coconuts, which were better suited to the local ecology. The primary causes of this shift were difficulties in drainage and the adverse effects of saltwater incursion from the sea. However, economic conditions also played a part: the rice price was then very low after a temporary surge during the First World War, while the price of coconuts was better. The shift to coconuts resulted in a severe conflict with the district officials, who believed that the native farmers were granted land titles only to grow subsistence crops. Though the surviving pioneers did not talk much about this, administrative documents from the latter part of the 1920s include numerous reports on "illegal shifts to cash crops" by Malay cultivators. The conflict between the settlers and the government involved negotiations, petitions, and intimidations. In the course of this prolonged dispute, which ran for several years, one of the district officers at Kuala Selangor proposed to the Federated Malay States government at Kuala Lumpur that land should be confiscated from those Malays who grew coconuts in contravention of the conditions of the land grant and who refused to pay back land premiums and rents from which they had been exempted on condition that they would grow padi [SSF 1529/1927]. It appears that a compromise was reached in the early 1930s and confiscation was avoided. But the settlers had to pay the premiums and the higher rents formerly exempted or reduced [SSF-G-1/1929; SSF-G-86/1929].

People often told me that most of the original settlers of Parit Baru were men. However, once the settlement was established and some harvest secured, many of them traveled to their old homes in Java, got married there, and came back. Population increased as they now had families, and some of their relatives and friends joined them from Java. In the meantime, they also built a Javanese-style wooden mosque, which is still in use, and, in 1932, a primary school where children were taught many subjects in Javanese and Malay, all by their own collective effort.

The village elders told me about the hardships they faced in the early years of their lives, about their desperate fight against chronic floods and, what was worse, occasional high tides that destroyed all the crops by bringing in salty sea water. Though life was generally hard, stories told by the village elders reveal that economic differentiation among the settlers existed from the very beginning. Some accumulated farm land and hired many of their neighbors for coconut cultivation. Others earned a tougher living by regular migration to Perak as seasonal farm laborers. The wealthy settlers also benefited by selling parts of their large holdings to the neighbors. The

completion in 1937 of the coastal bank and drainage canal project, commenced by the government in 1932, much improved the farming and living conditions of the area. But the general living conditions, especially those of communication and transportation, did not improve until the 1960s, when the Malaysian government inaugurated a variety of rural development projects in Sabak Bernam. The narrative of an old farmer aptly summarizes the gradual change of lives in Parit Baru. Once people went to their farms and carried back their harvest by boat. Then a period came when they used bicycles on narrow, muddy paths. These were later replaced by motorcycles.

Village life has changed greatly since the 1960s. The villagers frequently talked to me and among themselves about how life was far better now than in the past. In this they referred to infrastructural projects implemented by the government. Besides the paved main roads to the towns, secondary village roads have been improved and covered with laterite, some paved, since the 1960s. Piped water reached the village in 1970, though even today the water supply is sufficient for only two-thirds of the village households. Telephone facilities have been available since the early 1970s. Electricity was introduced to the village rather late, in 1981, and extended to the whole village by 1986. Before 1966, when a new secondary school was opened in the vicinity, students from Parit Baru had to board in towns, but now they can go to the new secondary school easily by bicycle. Nearly all the village children now finish the third grade of secondary schools and the majority of them go on to the fifth grade. But only a few go further.

These changes in village life may appear to be a sign of the success of government policy for rural development. Some villagers think so. During the early days of my stay in Kampung Parit Baru Baroh, I also gained the impression that the villagers enjoyed a much better living standard than I had found in Central Java. The Javanese in Sabak Bernam appeared to present a case of successful immigration. But different stories emerged in the course of my fieldwork in the village. Not every villager thinks life is better than it was in the past. In the following sections I will discuss how different categories of villagers see their present living conditions and what the problems are.

### **III Socioeconomic Characteristics of Kampung Parit Baru Baroh**

#### **III-1. *The Village***

The whole northern part of Sabak Bernam District is now cleared of primary forest and covered densely with tall coconut palms. Closer observation reveals smaller cacao trees planted in the shadow of the coconut palms, as well as villagers' houses half-hidden by this vegetation. Kampung Parit Baru Baroh lies 24 kilometers northwest of the local town of Sabak, with which it is connected by a well-maintained, paved road.

Malay coastal villages in northern Selangor are situated one or two kilometers inland, separated from the sea by a belt of grassland or coastal forest. Seaward fringes of villages are guarded by tide banks. Along the seashore are scattered Chinese (Teichiu) fishing villages. Kampung Parit Baru Baroh, too, is thus distanced from the Malacca Straits and the estuary of the Bernam River. Water traffic on the sea and rivers was once very important for the village, the pioneer settlers of the area all coming by waters. They opened villages in swampy coastal forest and struggled continually

against poor drainage, flooding, saltwater incursion, and occasional high tides. But as a vast network of drainage canals and tidebanks has been constructed and improved since then, and the inland road system installed, present-day visitors to the village might not immediately notice its closeness to the sea.

Kampung Parit Baru Baroh has two sundry goods stores, a small coffee shop run by Chinese, a village meeting hall (*balai*) with a room for children's classes in basic Islam, and five prayer houses (*surau*). It has no other public facilities, since just across the village border in the village of Kampung Parit Baru Pekan there are a mosque, a primary school, a government clinic, and a police post. There is also a market place with more than forty stores and coffee shops, where many villagers from Kampung Parit Baru Baroh visit almost every day to shop and socialize with their neighbors.

Old Haji Omar [pseudonym], the village headman (*ketua kampung* or *sidang*) of Kampung Parit Baru Baroh, told me that there were 116 houses in the village with a total population of 999 people. This figure, however, does not reflect the demographic reality of the village. According to my own count, the number of houses approximately tallies, but some of those houses are vacant and some have deteriorated. People in the neighborhood told me that the former residents of the vacant houses had left the village and they did not know whether they would return.

The headman's estimate of the village population is also greatly exaggerated. I found that he had included many people who had left the village and settled elsewhere. I interviewed heads of 50 households and found that household size ranged between 1 and 11 persons, the average being 4.66 persons. If, then, the actual total number of households in the village is estimated roughly at 105, the total population cannot be more than 500. This discrepancy between the village headman's account and the actuality reflects the recent major trend toward urban exodus, which I will discuss later.

Coconuts and cacao are the most important economic resources in the village, and these are supplemented to a small degree by beef cattle husbandry and fishing. Although there are no padi fields in the village or, indeed, throughout the northern part of the district, 3 out of the 50 households I interviewed have small holdings of padi land in the Sungai Besar area some 25 kilometers to the southeast, which they work themselves or lease to other farmers. A few villagers earn their living as construction workers, carpenters, petty traders, motorcycle repairmen, barbers, and taxi drivers. Of the 50 sample households, only 3 include a member with a monthly salary, two as school teachers and one as a cooperative clerk.

### III-2. *Land Ownership and Labor*

The ownership of coconut and cacao gardens (*kebun*) is the single most important criterion of economic standing in the village. Compared with a village which I have researched in Central Java, where 67.8 percent of the households are landless [Sekimoto 1979], landlessness in Kampung Parit Baru Baroh may be seen as less acute a problem. Of the 50 sample households, 42, or 84 percent, are landed. However, the size of holding per household varies widely from a mere 0.25 acres to an ample 10 acres. While the average area of farmland per household is 3.17 acres, 48 percent of

households are either landless or own less than 2 acres. On the other hand, 34 percent of them hold more than 5 acres (see Table 2 and Table 3).

For the majority of villagers, land shortage poses a problem. They frequently said to me, "There is not enough land to work on (*Tak ada tempat*).” Of course, peasants with small holdings anywhere in the world will feel that land is short unless they have a good alternative source of income in the non-agricultural sector. I have found in Kampung Parit Baru Baroh, however, that the poorer villagers complain about the land shortage not so in order explicitly to advocate land reform as to reaffirm that they are on the poorer side in the village. Size of land holding for them is not a mere quantitative fact but a symbol of relative status. It is also an expression of their political relations to the state. Several former residents of the village had left for far-away places where they had obtained farmland under the government’s Felda (Federal Land Development Authority) scheme. Some current residents were able to expand their holdings by acquiring state-owned wasteland near the village through the Felcra (Federal Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority) scheme. Local government officials and village elites argue that the government has thus helped villagers to solve the problem of land shortage. But, interestingly, it is against exactly this attempt by the state that the poorer villagers direct their most explicit complaint. They allege that only those few of their neighbors who enjoy good connections with local politicians and officials have gained by these schemes. In my view, the issue of land shortage cannot be reduced to a matter of plain material subsistence. The disadvantaged villagers mention the smallness of their landholdings as an expression and a moral justification of their existence.

The problem of land shortage is more acute among younger villagers than elderly ones. Table

**Table 2** Farm Size and Age of Heads of Families of Sample Households in Kg. Parit Baru Baroh, 1988

Farm Size (A acres)	Number of Households	Average Age of Heads of Families
A=0	8 (16%)	37 yrs
A<2	16 (32%)	48
2≤A<5	9 (18%)	53
A≥5	17 (34%)	59
Overall	50	51

**Table 3** Distribution of Farm Size in Kg. Parit Baru Baroh, 1988

Farm Size (A acres)	Number of Households
A=0	8
A≤1	7
1<A≤2	9
2<A≤3	4
3<A≤4	4
4<A≤5	1
5<A≤6	3
6<A≤7	6
7<A≤8	4
8<A≤9	1
9<A<10	1
A=10	2

2 reveals a clear correlation between the size of landholding and the age of the household head: the younger the household head is, the smaller his holding. This correlation can be reaffirmed by another simple statistic. If we divide the households into two groups by the age of the household head, smaller landholdings are prevalent in the younger group, those below 50 years old: only 3 out of these 21 households own more than 5 acres. On the other hand, 14 of 29 households in the older group, those above 50 years old, own more than 5 acres.

This fact can be explained as a combined result of demographic, economic, and sociological factors. First, Kampung Parit Baru Baroh was established some 70 years ago as a pioneer settlement in unoccupied swampy forest. People came there with the hope of obtaining their own land to live on. My interviews with surviving first-generation settlers and archival work on local historical documents reveal that social differentiation between the haves and the have-nots existed from the outset. Generally, however, obtaining farmland was not as acute a problem as now in the early years of settlement, when extensive virgin forest remained. Since then population increased steadily and room for expansion of farmland in and around the village seems to have disappeared several decades ago. Today's younger villagers have less chance to obtain their own farmland. The only way they can acquire land is by purchase or inheritance. I gathered through villagers' talks that land transactions have occurred frequently throughout the relatively short history of the village. But most small landholders had, and have, no surplus capital for additional purchase of land, and the rule of equal inheritance among children generally results in fragmentation of landholdings among younger villagers.

Secondly, the pattern of family cycles and the rule of inheritance make it difficult for younger married villagers to own their own land. Here, among the Javanese as well as other Malay sub-ethnic groups, all married children are expected to establish their own independent households. They can inherit their parents' landholdings only after the latter's death, unless the parents are so exceptionally wealthy as to buy them a piece of farmland. They do not develop the system of joint family and holding between parents and their married children. For these and other reasons, the villagers feel that there is a shortage of land in Kampung Parit Baru Baroh relative to the size of the population. Several villagers said to me, "One is happy if one's parents had a large landholding but a few children. The opposite is true if the parents were small landholders with a lot of children."

Another fact should be noted in relation to the problem of land shortage. Several villagers told me that a lot of village farmland is owned, as inherited property, by village natives now living and working in urban centers. Other farmland is owned by farmers in far-away villages. These absentee landlords' holdings are worked by some villagers through either an *ad hoc* work contract or a kind of share-cropping contract (*jaga*; literally, caretaking). While only 1 of the 50 household heads interviewed admitted that he was share-cropping, in his case 5 acres of coconut garden owned by a resident of Perak, there are many villagers who occasionally or regularly earn daily wages by working on these absentee landlords' farms on a piece-work basis. Unfortunately, I did not have enough time to investigate how much of the village farmland is owned by outsiders. However, casual talks with villagers also revealed that some local Chinese processor-traders of agroproducts were leasing and operating a good quantity of the absentee landholdings and hiring a lot of farmhands

from among the villagers. None of the villagers I talked with expressed to me any bitterness against either the absentee landlords or the large leasing of farmland by Chinese. They accepted the fact, and poorer villagers rather welcomed these practices because of the chances they gained to earn wages.

What prevails in the village is not tenant farming but daily wage labor on a piece-work basis. Many villagers, most of whom own larger-than-average farmlands, depend on their neighbors' labor for a variety of works on their farms. They do so either because they are old or because they have off-farm sources of income. This means, too, that there are many villagers who earn daily wages as farmhands. These farm laborers are not necessarily landless. Of the 42 landed households as shown in Table 4, more than half of them, 23, earn wages by working on others' farms as well as their own. Added to these landholder-cum-laborers are 6 households of landless farm laborers. In all, 29 households, or 58 percent of the sample households, make their living mostly or partly as waged farm laborers. To assist their home economy, female members of these households often work for local Chinese coconut processors. Therefore, wage labor in farming and processing of coconuts and cacao is very important for a large proportion of village households. It is important since, as a number of farm laborers told me, there is ample demand for farm labor not just from their neighbors but also from the absentee landlords and lease-holders of farmland. Several landholder-cum-laborers told me that wages were more important for them than income from their own farms, since they earned 10–20 ringgits<sup>7)</sup> a day for about 20 days a month. Poorer farm laborers tend to depend more on the Chinese leaseholders, who offer them more regular jobs as well as occasional loans (payment in advance).

**Table 4** Landholding and Labor among Sample Households in Kg. Parit Baru Baroh, 1988

	Type of Household	Number of Households	Average Size of Farm (acres)	Average Age of Heads of Families
Landed households	Working only on their own farms	18	6.75	60.6
	Working both on their own and other's farms	23	2.46	51.0
	Retired, not working	1	10	80
Landless households	Working on other's farms	6	0	40.6
	No farm work	2	0	29.0
Overall		50	3.17	51.5

On the other hand, 18 households work only on their own farms. This type of household tends to own larger farmland than the landholder-cum-laborers do, and the household heads are, on the average, about 10 years older (see Table 4). Thus, the general tendency is for smaller landholders to supplement their income by part-time wage labor. However, it should also be noted that some

7) One ringgit or Malaysian dollar was, at the time of my research in 1988, equivalent to 40 cents U.S.

large landholders who are still of working age frequently work on others' farms for wages, while there are several very small landholders who do not work for others. Whether a landed household head seeks additional income as a farm laborer depends not just on the size of his farm but also on his age, the number of dependent family members, and his access to other income sources. Of the landed 18 households whose members do not earn wages on others' farms, only 7 depend mostly on produce from their own farms. Others have additional income sources in government employment, construction labor, trading, fishing, and so on.

### III-3. *Supplementary Income Sources*

Though coconuts and cacao are the mainstay of the village economy, the observations noted above make it clear that direct sales of these crops contribute only partially to the villagers' income. Besides wage labor in coconut and cacao gardens, most households have additional income sources. Significant among them are cattle raising, fishing, and contributions from children working in urban centers. To a lesser degree, a few households in favored social positions regularly earn salaries, and some poorer households depend on construction labor and other miscellaneous jobs.

Nine of the sample households raise beef cattle, and another two take care of cattle under a share-cropping contract (*pawah*). On the average, they raise 3.3 head of cattle per household. The average size of farmland of these cattle-raisers is 2 acres, and thus they generally represent smaller-than-average landholders. Since about 20 years ago, the local government encouraged villagers to raise cattle as a part of their agricultural diversification program. In the past, more villagers than now raised cattle, but many failed for various reasons (see the next section). A number of villagers who now do not raise cattle told me that they wanted to do so, but lacked the necessary land or labor. Fishing is done by three households heads: one is a full-time fisherman on board a large motor boat owned by a Chinese; one is a part-timer leasing a small boat from another Chinese; and one is a part-timer with his own small boat.

Many villagers told me that contributions from children working in urban centers are another determining factor of the well-being of individual households, especially if those children are government employees. However, I found it difficult to measure this precisely. No one I interviewed said they regularly received a more-or-less fixed income from their grown-up children. Rather, their children occasionally gave them gifts, for example, when they came home on Lebaran holidays, and those gifts were more often in kind than in cash. Older villagers whose children had a steady income in urban area often showed me new pieces of furniture or electric appliances in their homes and said they were from their children. I had the strong impression that such villagers, though their landholdings may have been smaller than the average, found in this a great source of satisfaction and saw their lives rewarded. Their houses were cleaner and neater, and better filled with modern consumer goods than others whose children were unsuccessful.

These contributions are all the more important in Kampung Parit Baru Baroh, not just in monetary terms but in terms of their social and psychological values. Not the exceptional few, but a significant number of village-born children are now working as government employees. This also means that those villagers whose children have not become government employees may acutely feel

themselves to be failures in the village.

As Table 5 shows, the 50 household heads interviewed have a total of 246 children (127 sons and 119 daughters), of whom 110 (61 sons and 49 daughters) are living with their parents in the village, while 136 (66 sons and 70 daughters) have left their parents. Table 5 also indicates the number of these children in each subcategory of status and job. What is remarkable in the statistics is that many of those who left their parents are now employed by urban private business or the government. The significant number of them on the government's payroll contrasts strikingly with the situation I found in a Central Javanese village in the late 1970s.

**Table 5** Status and Occupation of Children Born to Heads of Sample Families in Kg. Parit Baru Baroh, 1988

	Male	Female	Subtotal
Staying with parents	61	49	110
Preschool age	12	13	25
Student	26	27	53
Farmer and farm laborer	10	0	10
Construction worker	7	0	7
Government employee	1	0	1
No work	5	9	14
Having left parents	66	70	136
Student	7	7	14
Farmer and farm laborer	7	8	15
Felda participant	3	3	6
Privately employed worker in urban center	21	18	39
Government employee	25	11	36
Army serviceman	3	0	3
No work	0	23	23
Total	127	119	246

The trend toward urban exodus is apparent in these statistics. To some extent, it has reduced the population pressure in the village. But the fact that some families have had good chances to secure stable salaries from the government or private firms has engendered bitter feelings among villagers who have failed to do so. This is all the more so because I found indications that opportunities for governmental employment were distributed unequally among the village households. Some households seem to monopolize the opportunities, having not just one or two but many of their children now working for the government. Most households, on the other hand, had no children employed by the government. The villagers seem to be divided both by the size of landholding and by the fate of their children. Those villagers who feel they have failed and been left behind often find a correlation between these two factors. They claimed to me that the haves had everything—enough land, money, access to government subsidies, and opportunity to secure government jobs for their children—while the have-nots had nothing.

#### IV Socioeconomic Differentiation as Seen by the Villagers

The villagers in Kampung Parit Baru Baroh are divided implicitly into two groupings. Sociologically, this division is very ambiguous: we cannot say easily who belongs to which grouping. It is also vague ideologically, not a systematic opposition of clearly stated ideologies. As far as their official affiliation is concerned, all villagers side with UMNO, the government party, except for one or two supporters of PAS, an Islamic opposition party. The all villagers are pious Moslems. However, when they talk about their immediate living conditions, two almost totally opposite viewpoints emerge. One takes a positive attitude toward village life at present and sees further improvement possible if the villagers and the government cooperate closely under the current rural development scheme. The other sees village life as hard all the time, with only those who are wealthy and have good connections with the government able to gain a lot. Thus, the villagers themselves assess the results of the government's New Economic Policy in their own vernacular expressions. Their perceptions of their own lives are always closely related to the ongoing rural development programs. The two groupings I have mentioned can more aptly be called two different versions of social discourse circulating in the village.

In more concrete sociological terms, the villagers can be roughly divided into three different categories according to their economic standing and their views and attitudes towards the rural modernization and development that are now vigorously propagated by the government. They are: (1) those who are satisfied with their present position and do not want further; (2) those who are bitter about their living conditions and feel they have lost and are disadvantaged; and (3) a limited number of modern and entrepreneurial farmers.

The majority of elderly villagers are quite satisfied with their present situation. This is only natural because they know how hard life was in the past when they were isolated and had no modern facilities. They told me how hard it had been at that time to go to the nearest market town of Sabak, or the bigger provincial town of Teluk Anson (present-day Teluk Intan) in Perak. They cleared coastal forests, dug primitive drainage channels, built tide banks, and always worked hard in this swampy lowland along the coast. Now they are satisfied, because life has been drastically improved through modernization in the 1960s and 1970s under the government's rural development programs. Many of these elderly people have not experienced severe land shortage. Unoccupied land was still abundant when they were of working age, though the gap between the wealthier and the poorer already existed. Now they can meet their modest desire for consumer goods without great difficulty, and most of them have television sets and second-hand motorbikes. These elderly people can still influence the tone of public opinion in the village, as the more talented and ambitious among their juniors tend to have migrated out of the village.

Their positive view of village life corresponds to the brighter side of local government officials' opinions on rural development. During my stay in the village, I occasionally visited and had informal interviews with the district officer, the ADOs (assistant district officers), and other local government officials, inquiring about their policies and practices relating to rural development in the area. Though not uniform in detail, their responses invariably revealed both satisfactions with what had so

far been achieved and frustrations and doubts about what could further be done in future. The local officials are proud of what the government has achieved in the district, especially in the fields of road construction, water supply, electricity, educational facilities, and health services. What they appreciate very highly is the infrastructural development, and they attribute the success to the efforts of a state assemblyman—who is also a powerful member of the Selangor state executive council (Exco) in charge of agriculture—in attracting a good amount of state development funds to the area. They also evaluate the achievements in rural development retrospectively, saying that the general condition of the district is far better now than before. This viewpoint accords exactly with the most elderly villagers' view. But they are not quite sure what they can do to further improve the local rural economy.

In contrast to the elderly villagers, many middle-aged villagers who now bear the burden of raising and schooling their children often express a different view of their living conditions. So do younger villagers who are landless because they are yet to inherit farmland from their parents or because their parents are also landless. Most of these people compose the second category mentioned above.<sup>8)</sup> For them a comparison with the British period, which both local government officials and elderly villagers often have recourse to, is irrelevant. They take the present level of modernization for granted, not as a cause for satisfaction. They feel their living conditions are unsatisfactory when compared with those of the salaried middle-class, whether urban or rural (there are a few government employees living in the village).

Here it might be possible to find a meeting point between the government's intention to further rural development and the villagers' desire to improve their lives. But what can be seen so far in Kampung Parit Baru Baroh is more a deep chasm between two different views of rural life than a concerted effort for further development.

This is illustrated by the cases of cacao farming and cattle raising in the area. Cacao was first introduced into the area in 1970, at the initiative and with the support of the government, as an interplanted second crop in coconut gardens. Since those who tried it obtained good results, within a few years cacao farming spread to all the farmers in the area, since it has afforded villagers a better income than coconuts. Unlike coconut cultivation, which has less scope for technical innovations, cacao farming is characterized by its capital-intensive nature and the need for detailed technical knowledge and skills. Use of chemical fertilizer is essential, and frequent use of sufficient fertilizer increases harvests dramatically. Since the crop is prone to damage by insects, frequent spraying of insecticide is also needed. Despite all the expense and labor, however, good harvest of cacao is possible only when sophisticated techniques such as selection of sub-species and planting of cuttings are applied adequately. Otherwise yields are so small that growers can expect no more than a bare subsistence from the income.

Some villagers told me that they secured quite good harvests of cacao because they were keen to acquire new technical information, ready to apply it, could afford enough fertilizer and insecticide,

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8) The generation gap among the villagers is not basic to forming the two different viewpoints mentioned above. Some middle-aged and young ones who are in socioeconomically advantageous position held a positive view about their living.

and so on. Cacao is suited to this type of “modern farmer (*petani moden*)” who has capital and an entrepreneurial spirit. They are the ones whose development the Malaysian government is now campaigning for. But the majority of the villagers either cannot afford capital investment or do not want to risk their scarce capital and labor on the more intensive farming of cacao. Thus, whereas the introduction of cacao to the area has produced a new income source for farmers, it has also enhanced the income gap among villagers.

The local government is also trying to encourage villagers to raise cattle, especially milk cows. As noted earlier, the introduction of beef cattle into the village had mixed results, from minor success to failure. In the case of the milk cow, the contrast between modern farmers and others is more pronounced. Only a handful of wealthy and better educated farmers have dared to enter this new business because it needs weeks of training, ample pasture land, and a substantial amount of capital or access to a large loan.

Since the late 1960s, the local government has offered villagers several packages of aid and subsidies to further modernize their life and farming. But the government officials and some of the development-minded village leaders seemed to me to be frustrated because they thought the majority of the rural populace did not respond positively to their initiative to improve the rural standard of living. They think villagers continue to be idle and lack a progressive spirit. Some of them even think that they have wasted too much precious funds on dull and irresponsible villagers. On the other hand, a number of villagers feel that the government’s plans and suggestions for agricultural modernization and diversification involve too much investment of their scarce resources for something that is impossible or too risky.

Casual conversations among villagers about cacao and cattle evince two opposing views. The majority of the villagers, who are relatively worse off, say that the income from cacao is too small and unstable to live on, while they have no land or time to raise cattle. The minority of wealthier or modernity-minded farmers, on the other hand, say that cacao and cattle offer villagers a good income provided they invest the necessary money and labor. The latter grouping told me that many of their neighbors were ignorant, lacking in progressive spirit, and lazy. The myth of “lazy Malays” that European colonizers created long ago now circulates among the “Malays” of the village.

Throughout my stay in the village, I listened to these two viewpoints and thought about what they actually meant. The poorer villagers told me, as if they had been lecturing in economics, that any attempt by those who lacked money, land, and time (labor) was doomed to failure. Whether for the more intensive farming of cacao, cattle raising, growing cassava, or whatever, they claim that it is first necessary to have some capital. They add that by earning 10 ringgits a day as a hired farmhand and getting a small income from their small coconut and cacao gardens, their families can eat (*cukup makan*) but cannot expect to do more than just eat (*lain-lain tak*). They would welcome the chance of a higher income, but they are not sure whether the new enterprises that the government is promoting are really worthwhile and rewarding for them. The phrase “*cukup makan*,” which is very common among the villagers, is always colored by cynicism. They imply by this that their income is enough for no more than a modest subsistence. They say they might follow the government’s initiative if they had much larger landholdings and more capital. What

makes matters worse is that many frustrated villagers cast serious doubts about the fairness of both the local officials and the village elites in distributing funds and aid. Though it was impossible for me during my short stay to substantiate or repudiate this kind of allegation, that was the way a number of villagers saw things. We cannot determine simply the objective facts behind these allegations. They involve more subjective ideas about right and wrong, fair and unfair.

Though the two views are widely separated, no open dispute occurs among the villagers. If I was told one version, I would recount it to the people in the opposite camp to solicit their responses. The modernity-minded villagers reject the argument that villagers lack capital for new enterprises, saying that if capital is needed, the government will provide a loan, and that, as everyone knows, all those who have been successful embarked on their new enterprise by use of a government loan. This comment is refuted by the worse-off villagers, who claim that no one will lend money to the destitute and powerless. They say everyone knows about the government subsidies on fertilizer and insecticide for cacao growers and the loans for dairy farmers, but they allege that only the wealthy and powerful among them have got the subsidies and loans.

Hearing of this allegation, the wealthier villagers became angry. They countered by pointing out the variety of government subsidies and loans that have so far been offered to the villagers: subsidies were given for home improvement; flush toilets were given free; notepapers were distributed to school children; cacao saplings were given free of charge together with fertilizer and insecticide at the initial stage of the cacao campaign. Their point was that every villager has been given fair access to government subsidies. They pointed to the case of subsidy for beef cattle. Some twenty years ago, as a part of the agricultural diversification program, the local government distributed one head of cattle to every farmer who applied, on condition that he would later return a calf to the government. The cattle scheme, however, turned out to be only a minor success since many who had applied and received cattle sold them later and got out of cattle raising altogether. Citing this story, the modernity-minded villagers accuse others of being unworthy of government aid, in that they do not respond positively to the government's initiative and lack the determination to advance their farming.

Those villagers who have abandoned cattle raising admit the fact, but they say they were forced to do so because the district office arranged the matter so badly that the cattle were brought to the village before grass was grown. Furthermore, the grazing ground they had prepared was damaged by flood just after the cattle arrived. This resulted in poor growth of grass. They complain that it was impossible for them to purchase cattle feed, whereas some of the wealthy cattle raisers could do so. According to them, scarcity of time and labor is another factor which militated against their attempt to raise cattle. Thus, they maintain that a few of their wealthier neighbors, in collaboration with local government officials, are using these cases as an excuse to exclude them from large-scale agricultural projects introduced into the village.

Behind these conflicting viewpoints lie the policies of rural development applied to the area under the New Economic Policy. Some local government officials I met told me of bitter experiences in the past of premature agricultural subsidy programs. If loans in cash and kind or gifts are extended to villagers who lack the necessary technical knowledge and physical facilities for

the new venture, the funds are sure to be wasted. Therefore, the government is becoming very cautious and selective about awarding subsidies. The aforementioned third category of villagers has arisen from this situation. A small number of modernity-minded farmers are emerging who are equipped with good education, have accesses to large loans, and show a nascent entrepreneurial spirit. The government's selective support for them causes bitterness among the majority of villagers, who see a handful of their neighbors getting subsidies and becoming prosperous. A number of villagers told me that only those few who are already rich, well-educated, and allegedly have good connections with local politicians can get subsidies and assistance.

I cannot say which party's view is correct. It is not that one party is telling the truth while the other is lying. Each party see the ongoing rural development policies and their effect on villagers' life from its own point of view. What is important is that there exists a clear break between two conflicting views of local community life and that the local community lacks moral unity.

It has to be reiterated that the existence of these two conflicting views do not mean the villagers are clearly divided into two camps. Those who support the government's policies for rural development are the village UMNO leaders, the members of the village council (JKKK), and their allies. Economically, all of the most well-to-do villagers belong to this category, while none of the destitute villagers are committed to rural development. Between these two poles are a number of villagers who are neither very poor nor very wealthy. Their views on rural life vary according to their individual circumstances. Everyday life in the village appears to be calm and peaceful, with no open dispute. The conflicting views, accusations, and allegations are hinted at only through casual conversations and rumors. If, however, we listen to the conversation of various individuals, the gap in ideas become apparent.

How can we characterize these two groupings of villagers? There is not much difficulty in doing so for the group supporting rural development. They side with the Malaysian state in favoring capitalistic development of the country. They generally hold favorable opinions on the recent trend of development in Malaysia and intend to improve their own lives by engaging in profitable farming. Though their first priority is their own personal benefit, they believe that other villagers could improve their lives if they too followed the same path. The implicit accusation by the unfavored villagers that these village elites make personal gains by utilizing their wealth and political connections seems to have some justification, but the accused have their own justification, too. They believe that people can profit only when they are responsive to good chances.

How, then, can we characterize the group who regard the current rural development with bitterness? Apparently, they have not adjusted their lives to the current capitalistic development of the country. The now-familiar class analysis may be applicable here, by which we could argue that the current capitalistic development of Malaysia is enhancing social differentiation between the rich and the poor in the village community. But such an argument, though not wrong in itself, gives too generalized a picture. Compared with the padi-growing village in Kedah which has become familiar through Scott's work [1985], the recent trend toward socioeconomic differentiation in Kampung Parit Baru Baroh is less drastic. It is true that relatively few villagers make good profits by intensive farming of cacao and cattle while others see no progress in their household economy. However,

the situation in Kampung Parit Baru Baroh—or the coconut and cacao farming area in northern Sabak Bernam generally—differs from the case Scott presents in that there is still considerable demand for wage labor within each village. Scott reports the adverse effects of mechanization in padi-farming in Kedah, which deprived poorer villagers of chances for wage labor. In contrast to this, coconut and cacao are not as fit for mechanization as padi. Both their cultivation and processing still demand a considerable amount of manual labor. Therefore, a kind of status quo has been maintained in Kampung Parit Baru Baroh between the wealthier and the poorer, but the fact that only a small number of villagers have made economic progress under the government schemes for rural development makes other villagers uneasy. They complain about small returns for their hard work but accept the current socioeconomic condition of the village as a given fact. Many villagers are envious of their rich neighbors, but, unlike in Scott's case, they do not directly and systematically blame them for their own plight. Only when issues concerning government policy are raised, whether about subsidies or opportunities for government jobs, do the worse-off villagers become very vocal.

These villagers may, from a liberalistic viewpoint, seem to be claiming fairer distribution of government resources. Such a view makes sense, since the villagers' frustrations are particularly keen with regard to the selective or unfair allotment of government funds. But it is doubtful whether the frustrated villagers really want rural development under the government's initiatives. If they do, their frustrations could be solved by more justice and fairness on the part of the government and the formal village leaders in their application of development policy. However, what I have found in the village is that those villagers who are seemingly on the losing side do not accept the government's reasoning on the need for rural development. They do not explicitly and consciously repudiate ongoing rural development, as some Malaysian urban intellectuals do, but they distance themselves from it. I think that this is why the local government officials and the village elites seem to feel frustrated at the majority's dull response to the development schemes.

People on the government side hold the theory that government subsidies are wasted if they are not used effectively to promote growth of the local economy, which could, as they often told me, eventually attract the local youths who are now mostly emigrating to cities. They believe in the classical economic teaching of an eventual harmony between profit-seeking individuals and the good of society as a whole. But they do not know how they can attain their moral hegemony over the other villagers.

In contrast to these proponents of development in the village, the others do not think their lives are inevitably tied to the development of the state. This does not mean they are the free-thinking and independent individuals as idealized in modern Western societies. They know they are weak and have to adjust themselves to conditions imposed by the powerful Malaysian state. But they do not appear to think that they are inseparably incorporated into the nation as a binding moral community. It is exactly in this sense that I suggest that they place highest priority on to their own living rather than abstract ideals of the development of the state. They are not powerless victims who cannot survive without government aid. Whether they can receive subsidies or not, they have to live by their own efforts. The problem they find is that of inequality in access to government

funds.

I should point out that I am not reporting what the villagers told me word for word but interpreting their talks and attitudes. Most villagers in unfavorable positions told me that they would want government grants if they were not tied to impossible conditions, but that they can hardly get them, whereas a few of their neighbors have got generous awards. Only one farmer told me explicitly and somewhat proudly that the villagers can, and ought to, make their living independently of government aids, and was scornful of development projects. However, I see a common perception held by him and other complaining villagers. They would welcome state funds if they had the chance, but they would make use of such funds according to their own needs just as they would welcome road construction projects but use the roads as they needed. They are indifferent to high-sounding terms like development of the local economy or development of Malaysia.

## V The Past and Present of the Javanese Immigrants

In the previous section I have shown the deep chasm that exists between two opposing perceptions of village life. Rural development in Kampung Parit Baru Baroh is at a stand-still so long as moral unity is lacking. Now I will attempt to synthesize the present of the village with its past history. It should be noted again that the village was established in an open frontier and developed solely by the group of pioneer settlers. During my stay in the area, I heard frequently, both from the Javanese and other ethnics, that the Javanese pioneer settlers had really been hard-workers. The story went on that the present Javanese in Sabak Bernam were enjoying a good life by virtue of their forefathers' long struggle in the frontier.

I also heard another story. Local government officials and village leaders complained that the villagers were too dependent on government aid programs and lacked self-effort. It would be irony if the pioneer settlers' back-breaking effort in a coastal swampy forest had ended in the passive dependence of their descendants on government subsidies. The officials and village leaders say this because a number of villagers distance themselves from the state's logic for national development, which is always accompanied with subsidy packages, and also because the villagers resist the selective subsidy programs for so-called "modern farmers" that have recently been adopted by the local government in the face of indifference on the part of villagers. The officials and village leaders interpret this indifference as a sign of villagers' backward mentality and irresponsibility.

Kampung Parit Baru Baroh was once a settlement of pioneers working hard with little assistance from the overlying state of British colonizers and their Malay allies. Now the villagers are divided by their closeness to, or distance from, the independent Malaysian state. A brief comparison of them with their ex-compatriots in Java will help us gain a broader perspective. A stereotypical view, held both by the Javanese themselves and by outside observers, is that the Javanese are wet padi growers. The Javanese in Kampung Parit Baru Baroh deviate from this stereotype. People in Sabak Bernam think rather that the Javanese do not like wet padi while the Banjarese do. However, the Javanese of the area have devoted themselves to coconuts and cacao

not because of their ethnic preference but because of the particular ecological and historical conditions they have faced since migration. The shift from wet padi to coconuts did not mean they suddenly shed their former mentality of subsisting peasants and turned into modern cash-crop producers. They adopted a crop suitable to the ecology and economy of the area just to maintain their livelihood.

I would argue that the stereotypical notion of the Javanese only as wet padi growers is one-sided, and the case of the Javanese in Sabak Bernam is not a singular deviation from the Javanese rural way of life in general. Javanese peasants in the lowland plains of Java have always maintained two different modes of agriculture. First, they grow coconuts, fruits, peas, vegetables, and root crops in their home gardens, which are important for income as well as for home consumption. Second, they grow wet padi in fields set apart from the clustered hamlets of their homes and gardens. It seems to me that, instead of keeping up this dual practice, the Javanese in Sabak Bernam maintain just one of them, namely, the home gardens. Thus, their agricultural practices may not be a drastic deviation or a shift from the typical way of life of the Javanese in Java.

I would suggest that, in Java, padi fields are of a public nature while home gardens are private. Both Javanese and colonial rulers have always tried to keep tight control over the padi fields, since both taxation and recruitment of corvee labor have been based on the size of padi fields and their produce. The official status of each villager in a community also used to be determined by ownership and size of padi fields. As I have pointed out above, the British colonizers in Malaya also tried hard to maintain the stereotype that the Malays were, unlike the Chinese and Tamil migrants, subsistence peasants who always preferred padi.

My point is that Javanese peasants grew padi, not only in Java but in Malaya, because of the social conditions under which they lived. They were quite willing to adopt crops other than padi if they found other crops to be more suitable both economically and ecologically. Thus, the pioneer settlers in Parit Baru shifted to coconuts in the face of tough restrictions imposed by the British rulers. In the course of immigration and settlement, they kept their distance from the state, and engaged in farming of a private nature in their gardens just like the Javanese in the homeland do in their tiny home gardens. I suggest that what we observe in present-day Kampung Parit Baru Baroh is a half-hidden but persisting conflict between two modes of agricultural life: the gardening of more private nature by frontier settlers on one hand, and farming that is tailored to development policies of the state on the other.

As I noted in the introductory section of this paper, the Javanese immigrants in Kampung Parit Baru Baroh left Java for a frontier across the sea, the intervening state border being irrelevant to their movement. Once away from the ruling hierarchy in Java, they built a Muslim community that was more independent and egalitarian than those they had left in Java. Though they had to deal with a situation imposed by the British rulers and the allied Sultanate of Selangor, the latter did not have a deep cultural and moral hegemony over them. They have kept their ethnic identity as Javanese quite naturally, since they have built and developed their own community in an unoccupied frontier without facing pressure from any majority group.

The development policy of the Malaysian government since the 1960s has aimed to lift rural

Malays from their state of backwardness. This governmental intervention has accelerated a process by which the Javanese in Sabak Bernam have been incorporated into the Malaysian nation through becoming Malaysian Malays. At present the people hold two mutually conflicting self-images. One image tells them they are socioeconomically far behind and have to develop themselves under the government's leadership. The other self-image is that of frontier Javanese who have built their own lives through their own effort. These two images circulate among them, causing a number of small, implicit conflicts and embarrassments.

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