

Situated Thinking

Or How the Science of Race was Socialised in British Malaya

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the contextualisation of the science of race in colonial British Malaya. I argue that though British scientists brought their ideas of race and anthropological training with them to Malaya, the application and enunciation of those ideas underwent change due to the scientists' encounters with other ways of conceiving of human difference. The dominance of the local term for Indigenous people, Sakai, and the awareness within colonial circles of 'tamer' and 'wilder' sections of this generalized group had to be taken into account by anthropological research. Physical anthropological studies by scholars such as W.W. Skeat and Nelson Annandale had to be rationalised not only within the developments of anthropological thinking on race but also within the social circumstances of their subjects of study and the colonial situation in Malaya. The resulting science of race was thus deeply socialised in the colonial context of British Malaya.

'THINKING', SAID HISTORIAN OF SCIENCE IN THE ARCTIC MICHAEL BRAVO, 'is always situated'.¹ A corollary of situated thinking about race is the socialisation or contextualisation of the science of race in specific places, times and settings. This paper examines a particular instance of situated racial thinking in British Malaya, highlighting the interplay between the colonial context and the racial science produced by anthropologists who worked there. Such situated knowledge mediates between metropolitan racial classifications and field experience.

Written works in the 19th and 20th centuries on racial schemas and their circulation among metropolitan scholars often gave the impression that racial categories came about in a vacuum comprising only intellectual thought and ‘evidence’ gathered based on persons living or dead. Often, however, the very processes that went into the formation of racial categories were shaped in a colonial milieu. George W. Stocking, Jr., noted that concepts of race in mid-19th-century Britain were impacted by ‘broader social and colonial’ contexts.² Henrika Kuklick has also commented on the reliance of anthropological endeavours in Africa on colonial patronage and infrastructure in African territories.³

Focusing the analysis at the level of colonial governments can be very rewarding in the attempt to expose the idiosyncrasies of colonial states and situations and how these might have impacted on the formation of ideas about race. For the case of Malaya, I shall show, as did Charles Hirschman, that racial categories were widely employed in the everyday process of governing and, in particular, the production of government censuses.⁴ Hirschman focussed on the consolidation of racial categories through the censuses of Malaya and then Malaysia from the late 18th until the late 20th centuries as evidence of a hierarchy of racial emphases within the ruling governments of the time. In this article, I investigate the construction of aboriginal race categories and argue that governmental ‘working categories’ played a large part in determining the character of those categories, even though they were also often based partially on anthropological thinking. At least to some extent, anthropological thinking on race needed to reckon with the preponderance of such racial categories and their uses in the government sphere. The division and classification of aboriginal races within scholarly thought had to take the colonial situation into consideration, as another way of describing ‘reality’ and ‘difference’.

This article also resonates with other scholars’ work on colonial censuses of British India. Bernard S. Cohn has shown that administrators and social scientists of the late 19th century contributed to discussions about the definition and list of castes that should be enumerated for Bengal, such that the spheres interacted and were related but were not exactly the same.⁵ I comment on an analogous interaction in another colonial situation, paying close attention to anthropologists’ conceptions of aboriginal races in Malaya with census operations and governmental logics in close view as well. Similar to the comment made by

Arjun Appadurai that “colonial classifications had the effect of redirecting important indigenous practices in new directions, by putting different weights and values on existing conceptions of group-identity”, I will illustrate the ways in which local differences were taken in several directions by governmental and anthropological spheres in Malaya.⁶

This article focuses mainly on the work of two scholars and scientists trained in Britain, W.W. Skeat and Nelson Annandale. Skeat was a prominent figure in the application of physical anthropology in the serious study of Indigenous peoples in Malaya. He led the Cambridge Expedition to the Malay States from 1899 to 1900 which established or confirmed three racial divisions of aboriginal peoples in Malaya: the ‘woolly-haired Negrito tribes called Semang’, ‘the wavy-haired tribes called Sakai’ and ‘the straight-haired tribes called Jakun’. This racial categorisation also amounted to a ranking, with Semang considered by Skeat as ‘representative of one of the wildest races of mankind now extant’, while Jakun were placed closer to the civilised Malays by their informal designation of ‘savage Malays’, and Sakai were the intermediate group.⁷ Skeat and Annandale regarded ‘aboriginal peoples’ of Malaya as distinct from ‘Malays’, who, though still considered as being of the region and ‘native’, were seen as having a higher level of civilisation than the aboriginal peoples. The divisions of aboriginal peoples had been proposed previously by the anthropologist Rudolf Martin in somewhat different form. Martin’s first two categories, ‘Semang’ and ‘Sakai’, were retained by Skeat, while Martin’s third group, ‘Mixed Tribes’, was instead referred to by Skeat as ‘Jakun’.⁸ Annandale was a junior scholar in comparison to Skeat. He graduated from Oxford University in 1898 and the following year joined the Skeat expedition as a zoologist. From 1901 to 1903 he visited the Malay Archipelago again with another scholar, H.C. Robinson, and together they published material on racial divisions at this important juncture of race studies in Malaya.

Both Skeat and Annandale were products of their anthropological training in Britain. In broad terms, they embody the shift of British scholarship from an emphasis on linguistics to the dominance of physical anthropology in addressing questions about the division of human beings into distinct races.⁹ Their published works attest to the influence of metropolitan thought on ideas about race. At the same time, however, the very fact of having conducted research in many parts of what was then colonial Malaya and engaging with local

ideas about divisions of people meant that their work had to take into account other modes of differentiation. This points to a colonial socialisation of their science whereby their ideas about the aboriginal races of Malaya were formed within a colonial situation which had its own ways of differentiating aborigines. Colonial socialisation was an over-arching context for the work of both authors, illustrating the situated thinking involved in the theorising of races.

The Malay Peninsula and the science of race

The Malay Peninsula featured in the science of race insofar as a 'Malay' segment was present in divisions of man from the 18th century. In 1778, Johann Reinhold Forster theorised that migrating Malays had displaced and supplanted an already present 'aboriginal black race', also known as 'Papuas', who were the people of New Guinea and neighbouring islands.¹⁰ In 1795, Johann Friedrich Blumenbach classified the 'five foremost varieties of mankind, one true species', as 'Caucasian', 'Mongolian', 'Ethiopian', 'American' and 'Malay'.¹¹ Subsequent 19th-century British writers who visited the Malay Archipelago and the Peninsula, in particular, reinforced the distinction between two types of people in the region, whether or not these were considered different races of the same human species or different human species altogether. John Crawfurd, George Windsor Earl and Alfred Russel Wallace all wrote about the people found in the Archipelago in terms of two fundamental types: the Malay and the Papuan.¹²

Both Malay and Papuan types were considered by Crawfurd to be indigenous to the region.¹³ At this time, British colonial activity in the Malay Peninsula mainly involved coastal dwellers who were identified as 'Malay' and sultanates that were considered 'Malay'. Malays were too civilised to be accorded much anthropological interest for long, given the primary focus of the emerging discipline on 'primitive' races. The attention of writers on the Malay Peninsula turned instead to the 'wild' component of Indigenous peoples which, by the 1820s, was understood to comprise not only a 'Papuan' or 'negro' element but also other 'wild' non-Malay Indigenous peoples.¹⁴ During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, scholars such as Skeat and Annandale turned their attention to determining the precise divisions of the non-Malay 'wild' Indigenous component of the populations of the Malay Peninsula.

Physical anthropology in colonial contexts

The pattern and process of colonial engagement are important factors for contextualising the early physical anthropological studies of the Malay Peninsula. These studies were produced primarily by J.R. Logan who single-handedly started the *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia* in 1847. He came to Penang in the 1830s and was a practising lawyer and member of the Straits Bar.¹⁵ Penang was one of three British colonies in the region of the Malay Peninsula in the late 18th and 19th centuries. The island was ceded to the British from the Sultan of Kedah in 1786 in the hopes of gaining British protection from the Siamese. Singapore was also ceded to the British by the Temenggung of Johor in 1819 and Melaka was returned to the British from the Dutch in 1825. Together they were formed into a crown colony in 1826.¹⁶ This group of colonies was composed of islands off the coast of the Malay Peninsula or settlements on the coast itself. Henceforth, the British sphere of influence and exploration spread from these settlements into neighbouring areas which lay directly on the Peninsula. From Logan's base in Singapore, he furnished his journal with several articles on the Indigenous peoples of neighbouring Johor, in addition to long treatises on the ethnology of the 'Indian Archipelago', as the Malay Archipelago was often then called.¹⁷

Logan did not write specifically about physical anthropology. His interest tended more towards philology and he used his knowledge of languages to draw connections between races. However, in the first volume of the journal in 1847, he and the engineer J.T. Thomson tried their hand at collecting and analysing material on physical anthropology. A group of people whom Logan called the Mintira lived in the vicinity of Bermun Mountain in Melaka and were brought to Singapore by a person identified only as his 'Malay clerk'. Logan had lithographs drawn and measurements taken of these people as well as several other 'aboriginal tribes' in Singapore, the Orang Sabimba and Orang Biduanda Kallang.¹⁸ In a series of articles, he provided comments on all the lithographs, guiding the reader as to what should be noted or how a lithograph failed to capture particular features of the faces. For instance, Logan wrote that a man from the group of Biduanda Kallang had shoulders that were 'narrow and arms fleshless, approaching in this respect to the Australians. The woman's face is very broad across the cheek bones, so as to present the most Mongolian of all the heads'.¹⁹

The emphasis on the skull and bodily measurements taken by Logan illustrates what Paul Turnbull has characterised as the ‘centrality of bodily measurement within anatomical and anthropological circles’ in Britain by the mid-19th century.²⁰ Logan presented the data in table format and calculated facial angles. He did not interpret the data in terms of gradations of civilisation suggested by the measurements but left the reader to draw such conclusions. However, his acknowledgement of the significance of facial angles was implicit. It was obvious that the facial angle of an individual, Pawang, from the Orang Mintira was the highest and Logan had said that: ‘His head was decidedly intellectual in its formation’.²¹ Not coincidentally, Logan identified Pawang as a respected man amongst his peers. Thus Pawang’s high facial angle confirmed what Logan already perceived, which was his apparently higher intellect and position in his society.

The social circumstances of encounters with Indigenous people provided an important frame for the generation of data and scientific theory alike. The coincidence between physical anthropological data and social facts as perceived by the authors is also apparent in Thomson’s ‘Remarks on the Sletar and Sabimba tribes’ and his comments on plates that he annexed to the article. A lithograph of subjects was set against a grid, allowing the reader to calculate the facial angles. Thomson based his drawings on the Dutch anatomist Petrus Camper’s ‘celebrated facial angle’. The proportions of the heads, he argued, ‘would place the Orang Slétar intermediate between the European and Negro in expansion of the organs of intellect, and again shews them to possess a greater developement of the jaws and “organs subservient to sensation and animal faculties than either.”’ The last section was (mis)quoted by Thomson from James Cowles Prichard’s *Natural History of Man* (1843) and he also mentioned other methods of calculation that he attributed to Blumenbach.²² Just as Logan’s placement of Pawang was mediated by his standing among his peers, Thomson’s positioning of Orang Sletar was predicated on comparisons with Malays. The ‘part Malay conductors’ who brought two families to see Thomson ‘assumed over them an air of superiority and command, which is never witnessed in the [Malays] ... when in the presence of Europeans alone, and affording at once, I might say, a standard for judging of the place which the Oráng Slétar should hold in the ranks of civilization’.²³

The intersection between socially-construed realities and the findings of physical anthropological methods shows one of the ways in which thinking about races was situated. Physical anthropological findings had in some way to be rationalised within the perceived context in which those findings were generated. In the later years of colonisation of Malaya, scholarly work on aboriginal tribes in Malaya had to situate itself within a way of thinking about Indigenous peoples prominent in colonial government discourse, that of 'Sakai' and its relationship to Malays.

Colonial socialisation: 'Sakai' and the government

The principal colonial situation that influenced the anthropological distinction of races was the general category 'Sakai', with its various qualifiers.²⁴ Though in 'proper' racial classification Sakai was but one of three aboriginal races of Malaya, it also became a shorthand term for all aboriginal peoples of Malaya or those Malays who were not seen as being fully Malay. The term Sakai or 'Sakei' made its first published appearance in English in 1824 in a book by the Penang government official John Anderson who added an appendix on 'the Aboriginal Inhabitants of the Malayan Peninsula'.²⁵ Anderson remarked: 'In my inquiries amongst the Malays I have not been able ... to discover, that the term Orang Benua, (which is literally Aborigines or people of the land,) is ever applied to any particular race of the Malayan Peninsula, the supposed aboriginal tribes being styled Sakei or Orang Bukit, Orang Laut and Semang'.²⁶

At this juncture, Sakai was but one of many terms for Indigenous peoples and not necessarily the one most commonly used by British writers. As Anderson stated, other names in use included Orang Bukit (Hill People) and Orang Laut (Sea People). Thomson in 1847 claimed that Malays referred to the Orang Sletar as Orang Utan (Jungle People).²⁷ Anderson's writing on the matter emerged from earlier interest in a supposedly 'negro' or 'negrito' group of people in the Malay Archipelago. Crawford in 1820 had posited two races indigenous to the region: the 'black' already mentioned and the 'brown', represented by groups such as Bugis and Malay. In 1824, Anderson did not include Malays as part of the 'aborigines' category and thus only the 'negrito' element was considered aboriginal. He then introduced 'Sakei' as part of the Indigenous race that was neither 'negrito' like Semang nor civilised to

the degree that Malays were. He thus created more conceptual space for aboriginal categories to be introduced outside 'negrito'.

By the mid-19th century, Sakai commonly referred to all manner of Indigenous people and not just to one section of this category. In 1886, reports on Sakai were sought by the Selangor government from all district officers in the state. These reports were then reprinted in a local newspaper, the *Selangor Journal*, in 1895. Regardless of what individuals and communities called themselves, they were included under the heading of Sakai if they were identified as such by colonial officers trying to make sense of the variety of people found in the quickly developing state.²⁸ Sakai was also used by more knowledgeable writers even though they knew that, anthropologically, the term only referred to a section of Indigenous people and that in everyday use it was often derogatory. This is evidenced by the report written by W.W. Skeat, himself an anthropologist, in the second round of reports on Sakai published again in the *Selangor Journal* in 1896, 10 years after the initial reports were written. The metonymic usage of Sakai was inscribed governmentally when the census of aboriginal peoples was informally named the 'Sakai census' despite the term's obviously misleading reference to only a section of aboriginal peoples.

The tendency to name all aboriginal people Sakai might have resulted from the multiplication of colonial records centring on areas of the western Malay States and the southern state of Johor where many people were classified as Sakai. This followed the spread of British influence and the colonisation of various areas of the Peninsula. The first Malay state to come under British protection was Perak in 1874. This state is located on the west coast and included forested areas that covered the main mountain range running through the middle of the Peninsula. Prior British involvement in Perak consisted of agreements over the supply of tin from Perak on terms of trade favourable to the British.²⁹ The British then helped determine who would succeed to the throne in Perak. The Pangkor Agreement was signed between Raja Abdullah and his party and a representative of the British government in 1874, with the effect that many areas of government were placed under the influence of a British adviser in exchange for British support.³⁰ Selangor, the state neighbouring Perak on the west coast, and Sungei Ujong, the district next to Melaka, also came under British control in that year.³¹

In most of the government and public documents surveyed, the term Sakai is not qualified. This is the case in the *Selangor Secretariat Files* where the particular lifestyle of Sakai when they entered the colonial records is not addressed. They are identified only as Sakai, as people who collected jungle produce and were possibly treated unfairly in their dealings with those outside the jungle.³² Questions of lifestyle were also absent at the end of the 19th century when Sakai are mentioned in the *Straits Times* newspaper in reports on development projects. The designation Sakai appears to have functioned as an occupation, with the assumption that Sakai were usually forest produce collectors with a specialised knowledge of the jungle.³³ The interest shown by officials in forest collectors demonstrates the colonial preoccupation with resource management in Malaya as pointed out by T.N. Harper. Illustrating the governmental concern with Sakai utilising what was considered to be colonial resources, a forest officer in the state of Perak wrote in 1902 that “these Sakeis[Sakai] have from ages ago been in the habit of doing just as they please in *our jungles* ... At present they cut nearly all *our* rattans free and we get no royalty or anything else.”³⁴

Despite the prevalence of reporting on Sakai in tandem with jungle collection, there was also an increasing awareness of different segments of Sakai, most commonly divided into ‘tame’ or ‘wild’. The term ‘tame Sakai’, in particular, was usually specified in contradistinction to ordinary Sakai who were assumed to be wild. In 1911, ‘tame Sakai’ entered the vocabulary of the Census of the Federated States of Malaya, the first time ‘tame Sakai’ were listed separately in any census in Malaya. ‘Aborigines’ had been enumerated since 1884 but they were not divided into a tame or wild component. The 1911 Census dedicated a specific chapter to a discussion of ‘The Sakai’ written by R.J. Wilkinson, a colonial administrator who held the post of Resident of Negeri Sembilan and wrote several articles on aboriginal tribes.³⁵ He had himself used the term ‘tame Sakai’ in a pamphlet written the year before in which he represented them as a means of getting in touch with ‘wilder’ Sakai.³⁶

The various grades of Sakai appear to derive from local usage among Malay speakers and others familiar with people living in the interior of the Peninsula. Tame and its converse wild were English translations of the words *jinak* and *liar* respectively in Malay. The Malays, wrote the Russian ethnographer N. Miklouho-Maclay in 1875, made a distinction between

'*Orang Sakai-liar* and *Orang Sakai-jina* (the wild and tame Orang Sakai)'.³⁷ The term 'tame Sakai' again appeared in 1879 in an article on 'The Aboriginal Tribes of Perak' by W.E. Maxwell, a prominent administrator in Malaya: 'A Patânî Malay confessed to me, some years ago', Maxwell wrote, 'that he cultivated the acquaintance of some *Sakei jina*, (tame *Sakeis*, who mix with the Malays) because he could get them to steal children for him', presumably from Sakai who were still 'wild'.³⁸ William Marsden's Malay to English dictionary of 1812 gives several English translations for *jina*, including 'tame', 'domesticated', 'familiar' and 'meek'. Crawford's dictionary of 1852 translates *jina* as 'Tame, not wild', 'docile, tractable' and 'easy or reconciled to one's position'. Marsden gave the example of '*benātang liar*', 'a wild beast', while translating *liar* as 'wild', 'untamed' and 'savage'. Frank Swettenham's Malay to English dictionary of 1901 adds 'uncivilised' to these meanings.³⁹

It would be more accurate to describe the specification of Sakai, whether tame or wild, not as a set of static categories but as a gradation or scale of stereotypes and expectations about aboriginal behaviour and lifestyle. At one end of the spectrum, wild Sakai supposedly never encountered Malays. Miklouho-Maclay, who himself used the concept of 'gradations' between *Orang Sakai-jina* and *Orang Sakai-liar*, wrote that wild Sakai 'live isolated in the dense forest, and probably never came into any direct contact with the Malays'. He added in a footnote:

it proved to be impossible to converse with the *Orang Sakai liar* when by chance or after long searching I surprised them, even those whom I could inspect, measure and sketch. They either did not understand Malay or their brains and their tongues were so paralysed with fright at being in the presence of a being whom they had never seen before—a white man—that they remained silent when I questioned them. The short list of words which I noted down and which I have published I obtained from the *Orang Sakai jina* who however had several times to apply for information to their wild fellow-country-men.⁴⁰

At the other end of the spectrum, tame Sakai were supposedly acculturated to Malay lifestyle and people and were in contact with Europeans. Miklouho-Maclay confessed that he was only able to talk to *Orang Sakai-jina*, tame Orang Sakai, throughout his trip. Of the tame Sakai, he said:

though they retain their nomadic habits [they] have a certain amount of intercourse with the Malays. They mediate the exchange of jungle produce ... They also work for the Malays for short periods ... and it is not uncommon for them to give their daughters in exchange to the Malays and Chinese who settled down in their neighbourhood.

These *Orang Sakai-jina* generally speak Malay and their children for the most part forget their original language.⁴¹

The distinction between ‘tame’ and ‘wild’ aborigines is repeated in colonial officer D.F.A. Hervey’s article written in 1881 about the Jakun he met in Johor. After providing details about their settlement and language, he specified that: ‘The foregoing may be described as the *orang hulu jinak*, or the tame tribes of the interior. There are ... a few representatives also of the *orang liar*, or wild men, as the *tamer tribes*, conscious of their own superior civilisation, are proud to call them’.⁴² A section of Jakun were identified as tamer compared to another section who were, by virtue of the earlier designation *and* by virtue of the *Indigenous* discrimination, which in this quote actually constitutes the category, the wilder component.

The categories ‘tame’ and ‘wild’ Sakai, as well as ‘Malay’, were all related to one another and were intricately tied to stereotypical perceptions of Sakai and Malay dress, culture and general physical description as benchmarks. The categories could be understood as relational in that each was dependent, or at least tied to, the other two for its being or definition. ‘Wild Sakai’ was defined in its relation to ‘tame Sakai’ and Sakai as a whole was defined in relation to Malay. Taking the three categories, ‘wild Sakai’, ‘tame Sakai’ and ‘Malay’, together formed a gradation of categories starting from the wild and uncivilised ‘wild Sakai’ to the presumed civilised ‘Malay’ with ‘tame Sakai’ somewhere in between. The gradation of stereotypes of Sakai was sometimes extended to include the category of ‘jungle Malays’, splintering the ‘Malay’ category as part of the continuum after ‘tame Sakai’. In one of the 1886 reports on Sakai in Selangor, F.E. Lawder stated: ‘The men here [in Kuala Selangor district] call themselves Sakais, but as they only speak Malay, and conduct themselves exactly like jungle Malays, with the one exception that they eat almost anything they can kill, they can hardly be considered to be Sakais’.⁴³ Self identification as Sakai in this

case was not sufficient to put them in that category in this particular officer's eyes. They were instead placed closer to the Malay end of the scale as though they had entered a subtly different phase of being.

The decision to place aborigines on the 'Malay' scale entailed the possibility of connecting the two, a process which was already in operation in the governmental sphere. In the 1891 census of Perak, 'Aborigines of the Peninsula' were placed beside the category 'Malay'. For Selangor, they were placed under the larger heading of 'Malays and other natives of the Archipelago', showing them to be part and parcel of that larger group.⁴⁴ In 1901, the writer of the census report at one point called all Indigenous peoples 'aboriginal Malays', reflecting the tendency to assume that Indigenous people were 'underdeveloped' Malays.⁴⁵ The following censuses of 1911 and 1921 both considered Sakai to be part of 'Malays and Allied Races' and as such they were the only segment of this category besides Malays to be given a separate chapter.⁴⁶

The relational dimension of designations of 'tame' or 'wild' Sakai was not overtly highlighted in the censuses of early 20th-century Malaya. Nevertheless, the presence of this relational component was apparent in the reports that accompanied the censuses, showing how the enumerators' ideas of tamer and wilder Sakai, as well as of Malays, and their placement in a graduated series, influenced census enumeration. As mentioned above, 'Aborigines' or 'Aborigines of the peninsula' had been enumerated separately at least since the 1891 census of Perak and Selangor.⁴⁷ Wilkinson's chapter on 'The Sakai' in the 1911 census report referred to the Indigenous population as 'Sakai', 'wild tribes', 'aboriginal population' and 'tame Sakai', a relatively new census category, listed separately, even though the phrase had been used informally. In a note to the main figure of 26,277 aboriginal people, Wilkinson stated: 'Including "tame" Sakai, the complete total is 27,218', or nearly a thousand more. Elsewhere in the chapter, Wilkinson explained: 'Besides the above, a certain number (941) of people of aboriginal descent were included in the regular Census schedules through their marrying or settling down among the civilized peoples of the country'.⁴⁸ The number of 'tame' Sakai was broken down according to state and district, gender and occupation. Wilkinson defined them as 'wild tribesmen' who had abandoned their own language with the use of Malay. Yet it was not solely language that determined who was 'tame Sakai'. In this

census, it appeared that ‘tame Sakai’ was not an *a priori* category but one employed pragmatically to deal with some of the people who were returned as aboriginal in the regular census.⁴⁹ Thus, in this instance the very fact of their being enumerated in the ‘normal’ census, where households were visited, instead of the Sakai census, where people were invited to attend feasts held by headmen, seemed to be the determining factor.

Individual reports from officers responsible for enumerating Sakai in different districts around Malaya showed yet another understanding of ‘tame’ Sakai in the 1911 census. A report for the district of Batang Padang, Perak, stated: ‘I have no doubt that the return of “tame” Sakai is approximately correct. I much doubt if the record includes the wild tribes (Semang)’.⁵⁰ ‘Tame’ Sakai in this case referred to people who chose to answer the invitation to attend a feast in order to be enumerated. It could be surmised that the author considered those present to be ‘tame’, since they did not hesitate to attend, while he considered ‘wild’ those groups which did not attend. The author’s use of ‘tame Sakai’ clearly is different from that of Wilkinson who judged identity solely on the basis of their inclusion in the regular census. Yet another possible interpretation is that whether Sakai were ‘tame’ or ‘wild’ depended on which of the three sections of aboriginal people were enumerated. Semang, who were considered anthropologically the most lowly, were also considered the most ‘wild’, hence conflating ‘wild tribes’ with ‘Semang’.

The method of differentiating aborigines within a complex of relationships between Malays, tame Sakai and Sakai, mixed with the more anthropological categories of Semang, Sakai and Jakun, was evident throughout the census and sometimes needed explanation or clarification. Wilkinson stressed that:

It must not be inferred that the aborigines who speak Malay are merely ‘tame Sakai,’ *i.e.*, wild tribesmen who have abandoned their own language for the use of Malay. On the contrary, it is probable that the use of a Malayan dialect by the tribe known as ‘Biduanda,’ ‘Blandas,’ or ‘Mantra’ ante dates the first coming of the Malays to Malacca.⁵¹

This remark illustrates the two related systems of differentiation in operation in the census. Wilkinson acknowledged the dominant system of situating Malay-speaking aborigines as ‘tame’ but stressed the importance of placing some of them as another category of aborigines

who were Malay speakers according to anthropological racial classifications and not yet necessarily closer in scale to Malays. Despite his endorsement of the latter anthropological understanding, the concept of ‘tame Sakai’ and the gradations it evoked was still the cornerstone of census categorisation of aborigines in the 1921 census.

The main report on ‘The Aboriginal Races’ by Richard Winstedt in the 1921 census completely abandoned the designation ‘tame’, substituting it with ‘settled’. Aborigines appeared to be counted as ‘settled’ in the same way they had been adjudged ‘tame’ in 1911, by virtue of being enumerated in the regular census.⁵² Several paragraphs were devoted to the question of ‘settled’ as opposed to ‘nomadic aborigines’. Greater detail was provided as to how settled differed from nomadic aborigines and from Malays. Winstedt stated:

It has been apparent to every one who has come in contact with the wild tribes during the last few years that in many districts they are tending to settle down among Malays, and that, even where they keep apart, they often lose their nomad habits and form semi-permanent settlements.⁵³

The report even retrospectively calculated figures for settled versus nomadic aborigines for the separate states for the previous census period of 1911.⁵⁴ In 1921, Winstedt was frank about the slippage between being enumerated as Sakai or Malay: ‘In States, like Negeri Sembilan, the merging of the aborigines into the Muhammadan Malay is rapid: only to an enumerator acquainted with them, or able to detect their descent, would many settled aborigines admit their race; converts to Islam would always be recorded as Malay’.⁵⁵

Yet even though tame had been replaced by settled in the main 1921 report, enumerators still employed the earlier concept, pointing towards its continued relevance and salience within the process of differentiating aborigines. ‘Tamer’ was mentioned in the report of J.E. Kempe, District Officer of Pekan, Pahang, in reference to the Sakai of Rompin, Pahang. He stated that ‘the Sakai are less interesting than those of Keratong, but obviously of the same type. As one gets nearer the sea, they become “tamer”, and the use of the blow pipe disappears half-way down’.⁵⁶

Within the confines of the 1911 and 1921 censuses, the categories ‘tame’ and ‘settled’ had a particular function. The quality of ‘tameness’ evidently originated in the realm of

general knowledge, as a way for ‘Malays’, ‘aborigines’ and the colonial government to understand divergences from the stereotype of the quintessential Sakai. The knowledge of this manner of differentiation and its use came through the interaction of colonial officials and scholars with ‘Malays’ and ‘aborigines’ as indicated by the writings of Miklouho-Maclay and Hervey. The movement of ‘tame’ into the census came about historically, due to the presence of people who were identified, either by themselves or by enumerators, as aboriginal but who were not enumerated through the special Sakai census. As previously indicated, this meant that they lived in households that could be visited, instead of having to be invited to a particular location through word of mouth. ‘Tame’ and ‘wild’ denominations were used in the census to deal with the variety of ‘Sakai’ within the areas enumerated. The terms were readily incorporated into the vocabulary of the census since it had already formed part of the larger discourse of Sakai within colonial Malaya.

The categories ‘tame’ or ‘settled’ and ‘wild’ or ‘nomadic’ were not freestanding terms. They captured the dizzying variety of ways of being and categorizing ‘Sakai’ and even took into consideration the subject’s possible movement out of the Sakai category and into Malay. Where people lived, what they spoke and what religion they practised were all used to define whether or not they were Sakai (tame or wild) or Malay. The system, if such it could be called, harboured numerous idiosyncrasies. The census was predicated on working categories or categories in progress such that from one census to the next changes were made to even the most important category, that of ‘Malay’, in order to reflect the general use of the term at the time of the new census.⁵⁷

Situating aboriginal races anthropologically

Anthropologists used different, though related, conceptual tools to categorise aborigines. The gradations of Semang, Sakai and Jakun in anthropological discourse were slightly removed from the ‘wild’ and ‘tame’ Sakai and Malay distinctions. The three terms were used to group certain cultural and physical characteristics. For instance, Sakai described people who partially cultivated the land and used the blowpipe, Semang were supposedly nomadic and used the bow, while Jakun had habits that were close to Malays but were still ‘savage’. Semang, Sakai and Jakun were in the main not comparative categories but rather described

different kinds of aborigines altogether who were then also different from Malays. The recognition given to ‘tame Sakai’ as a distinct category of Indigenous peoples within the census is in stark distinction to anthropological works produced at the same time in Malaya. References to tame or wild Sakai were relatively unusual in early 20th-century published anthropological reports and studies on the aboriginal races of Malaya. After Miklouho-Maclay’s 1875 publication which devoted several paragraphs to a description and discussion of ‘tame’ and ‘wild’ Sakai, there was no sustained analysis and use of those categories among anthropologists. Yet the vocabulary of tame versus wild influenced racial classifications on a different level by appealing to the assumption of gradations of civilisation that was usually inherent in racial classification. From Semang towards Sakai and Jakun there were still assumed to be increasing levels of civilisation and judgment about whether Sakai were tame or wild occasionally found itself mapped on the three races. For instance, in the 1911 census, a report had assumed that ‘wild’ Sakai were actually just Semang.⁵⁸

W.W. Skeat’s career followed the colonial activities of the British in the Malay States. He was District Officer in Kuala Langat, Selangor, before becoming District Magistrate for Larut, Perak, in 1898. After a career in the civil service, he organized an anthropological expedition to the Malay Peninsula – the ‘University of Cambridge Expedition to the North-Eastern Malay States and Upper Perak, 1899-1900’. The expedition was supported by ethnographer A.C. Haddon who had recently led his own Cambridge expedition to the Torres Strait and Borneo.⁵⁹ Skeat’s expedition included Nelson Annandale who undertook a second trip to the Malay Peninsula from 1901 to 1903 with funding from the universities of Liverpool and Edinburgh.⁶⁰ The major work arising from the Cambridge expedition was *Pagan Races of the Malay Peninsula* (1906) by Skeat and C.O. Blagden, a former member of the Straits Settlements Civil Service. From 1894, Blagden wrote several articles for the *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (JSBRAS)* on linguistic subjects and the influence of various peoples on the languages of the Malay Peninsula. From 1894 to 1905, he and Skeat were the principal contributors of articles on Indigenous peoples to the *JSBRAS* and other international journals.⁶¹

The main finding from the Cambridge Expedition to the Malay States was the establishment, or the confirmation, of the tripartite racial division of the aboriginal races in

Malaya. This was reported in the first substantial article published about the expedition in 1902 and repeated in the main publication of 1906. In 1902, Skeat wrote that there were ‘at least three groups of savage and heathen tribes’ which could be discerned on the basis of their hair. The first was the ‘woolly-haired Negrito tribes called Semang’, the second ‘the wavy-haired tribes called Sakai’ and the third ‘the straight-haired tribes called Jakun’. Skeat here acknowledged the work of Rudolf Martin who had introduced this racial division. Skeat’s own classification, he said, differed ‘solely in the isolation of the third (Jakun) type, which is included in Martin’s third group under the heading for “Mixed Tribes.”’⁶²

The other prominent publication arising partly from the Cambridge expedition was *Fasciculi Malayenses* (1903-6),⁶³ jointly written by Annandale and Robinson though not as comprehensive in its treatment of anthropology as Skeat and Blagden’s *Pagan Races*. The anthropology of Indigenous peoples and other groups of interest comprised only one part of *Fasciculi Malayenses* though it was the most prominent. The book also contained sections on zoology and musicology. Annandale was connected to the Indian Museum for much of his professional life after this period and wrote numerous articles on anthropology and zoology.⁶⁴ Robinson, on the other hand, became director of museums in the Federated Malay States and continued writing on Indigenous people of the Malay Peninsula and on ornithology.⁶⁵

The place of physical anthropology in *Pagan Races* and *Fasciculi Malayenses* typifies the prominence of this method in the academic study of the Indigenous peoples of Malaya, as elsewhere at this period. The discussion of results leading up to the publication of *Pagan Races* and the threefold classification of aboriginal races itself relied for proof on physical anthropology, as expressed in Skeat’s dictum that ‘Racial classifications must be based on racial facts’.⁶⁶ In 1901, he had written: ‘There are on the east coast [of the Malay Peninsula] two sharply-contrasted racial types, but as the conclusions of Messrs. Duckworth and Laidlaw (the latter of whom took the measurements and the former is largely helping to work them out) are not yet fully published ... it is impossible to go into this question now’.⁶⁷ Skeat was, as yet, hesitant to promote Jakun as a third racial type in Malaya and instead restricted his comments to the two races that he and other scholars such as Martin agreed on. Skeat acknowledged that his major source of ‘racial facts’ was W.L.H. Duckworth, Reader in Anatomy at Cambridge University. Duckworth wrote articles on physical anthropology,

focusing on Malaya and skulls from the region, and a textbook on physical anthropology intended for use at Cambridge.⁶⁸

Following Skeat's 1901 publication, in which he stated that he was awaiting Duckworth and Laidlaw's results before firmly proposing the existence of two races of aborigines, he wrote in 1902 that there were three groups of aborigines whose 'physical contrast' was 'most fortunately sharply drawn'.⁶⁹ Skeat was adamant that 'racial facts' be used to determine 'racial classifications' and yet he did not state which facts led him to his divisions. Skeat represented 'pure types' of the three aborigines as 'antagonistic elements', thus propping up the assumption that those types were objectively present and easily recognised.⁷⁰ Despite Skeat's insistence on the presence of the three racial types, the physical anthropological data on which the types were supposedly based was patchy and uncertain at best. Duckworth's conclusions about the skull and skeletal material collected during the expedition were general and unspecified. In 1902, he wrote of the skull of a member of the 'Pangan tribe' or 'Pangan Sakai' that 'the characters of the skull are not such as will cause it to be referred at once and unhesitatingly to any well recognized type'.⁷¹ He went on to claim, however, that 'certain characters of inferiority... often seen in lower races' were found. The 'Pangan Sakai' skull resembled, said Duckworth, skulls of the 'negro races' and were comparable mostly to 'African and especially certain Central African crania rather than to those of Oceanic negroes'.⁷² Reading the measurements collected from the living did not give clearer indications as to their racial type. In the table of measurements of 11 aborigines collected by Laidlaw, the 'race' of the people measured was entered as 'Pangan' and/or 'Orang Teku', names given to the people by themselves or others and not among the three anthropological racial divisions.⁷³

Where physical anthropologists were hesitant to state the more specific racial affiliation of skulls and living people, the knowledge from colonial situations was paramount in classifying the race of the subject, along with the racial type-casting associated with physical characteristics. Duckworth's report stated that the 11 aborigines measured by Laidlaw were either slaves or the children of slaves, non-Muslims, with thick lips and/or curly or woolly hair.⁷⁴ The social position of the subjects already placed them in a separate category from the general 'Malay' by virtue of their being slaves and not Muslim while their

physical characteristics, associated with those of 'negroes', were used to place them as aborigines.

The physical anthropological data was too opaque to offer ready-made racial categories. Thus, those categories had to be imposed from without, often with doubt attached to earlier analyses. The classification of the skulls and measurements on living people transformed from the time of the initial report by Duckworth in 1902 to the publication of *Pagan Races* in 1906. In Duckworth's 1902 article, the skulls and skeletal material collected were classed from the outset as 'Pangan Sakai'.⁷⁵ Skulls written about by another prominent physical anthropologist and Professor of Anatomy at the University of Edinburgh, Sir William Turner, were also identified as Sakai.⁷⁶ In 1903, however, Duckworth used inverted commas when naming Turner's 'Sakai' skull, indicating some doubt about the naming and classification of the skull and that he was using 'Sakai' in the more specific anthropological sense and not in the general sense meaning aborigine.⁷⁷

The later addition of further racial categories meant that some skulls had to be recategorised, revealing the uncertain foundations of the classifications. Skeat reclassified the 'Pangan Sakai' skull that was the subject of Duckworth's 1902 article as part of the Semang 'woolly-haired' Negrito category.⁷⁸ The 'Sakai' people whose measurements were included in the same article by Duckworth were reproduced in *Pagan Races* under the heading 'E. [East] Semang (Pangan) of Kelantan' and now affiliated with Negritos. A 'Pangghan' skull studied by the prominent German anthropologist Rudolf Virchow was similarly reclassified under the general 'Semang' heading.⁷⁹ Any mention of 'Sakai' in reference to those groups was omitted in *Pagan Races*.

Physical anthropology was also the most notable theme in *Fasciculi Malayenses*. Annandale and Robinson acknowledged encouragement received from Turner who had published numerous articles on the craniology of various Indigenous peoples.⁸⁰ They boasted of the measurements taken on their expedition, 'more or less complete, of about four hundred individuals' of which 90 were of 'wild tribes'.⁸¹ The initial classification of people into civilised and wild groups, and the names attributed to the groups, were used to determine their racial affinities. For instance, Annandale studied two groups of sea people called *Orang Laut Islam* (Muslim Sea People) and *Orang Laut Kaffir* (Infidel Sea People). The former

were from the outset regarded as civilised by virtue of their religion and physical measurements collected from them were interpreted in this light. Annandale wrote in 1902 that they had ‘the shortest heads of any, and the broadest faces of any *civilized* race, that we investigated’.⁸²

In *Fasciculi Malayenses*, Annandale and Robinson were more cautious in their conclusions resulting from the physical anthropological data they collected than Skeat had been. The reviewer of the book stated that ‘it is worthy of note that the old two-fold division of aborigines into Semang and Sakai is followed, instead of Mr. Skeat’s three-fold division into Semang, Sakai, and Jakun’.⁸³ Even Semang and Sakai were difficult to tell apart, with the authors stating in 1902 that ‘it is hard to formulate any valid difference between a Sakai and a Semang’, and in 1903 that they doubted the legitimacy of the ‘Sakai’ grouping.⁸⁴

Regardless of what Annandale and Robinson derived from their findings, Duckworth reinterpreted their data so that it fitted in with the general findings in *Pagan Races*. In a review of *Fasciculi Malayenses* published in *Pagan Races*, he acknowledged the difficulty of identifying races, stating that ‘the Semang and the Sakai types are connected by transitional forms so numerous that it is only from the examination of very large numbers of individuals that the two extreme forms can be differentiated’. However, certainty in the physical anthropological method was recovered by arguing that where the ‘cephalic index fails conspicuously to differentiate the two’, the skin colour and hair characteristics instead offered the means by which the distinction between Semang and Sakai could be made.⁸⁵ The once unclear data were made to support the racial distinction between Semang and Sakai that Skeat and others proposed, with the line of argument in *Pagan Races* providing an over-arching and compelling narrative of racial categories into which the work of other scholars could be fitted.

‘Tame’ and ‘mixed’ within anthropology

Semang, Sakai and Jakun were cemented as racial divisions in metropolitan scholarly circles by anthropologists such as Martin and Skeat. However, the gradation from ‘Sakai’ to ‘Malay’ and the nuances of such gradations were as important to concepts of racial classification as the methods of physical anthropology applied in metropolitan centres. The designations

tamer/wilder were not meant to be sharp racial distinctions but instead an overlapping series of differentiations. Furthermore, the same differentiating logic was also used by field anthropologists in assigning people to races such as Semang, Sakai or Jakun. Tame and wild were relational in that they expressed a scale of civilisation or its absence assumed to be manifested in different forms of dress, living habits and physical characteristics. Similarly, the three racial types were also mapped according to a gradation of civilisation, with the ‘wooly-haired Semang’ deemed the most primitive and the ‘straight-haired Jakun’ the most civilised. Comparing the two methods reveals a general affinity between them, with the possibility of ‘tame’ being mapped onto the ‘Jakun’ or ‘Sakai’ races, and ‘wild’ being mapped onto Semang.

Skeat must have come across characterisations of Sakai as ‘tame’ during his time in the colonial service in Selangor where he was required to write reports for the government on ‘Sakai’ matters, as well as during his expedition. However, in the two volumes of *Pagan Races*, each consisting of more than 700 pages, instances of tame/wild differentiations were scarce, indicating that Skeat chose not to highlight and use this common method of differentiation. Skeat tended to use the terms tame/wild only when quoting other authorities who had written on aborigines in Malaya, such as Hrolf Vaughan Stevens, D.F.A. Hervey, Errington De la Croix and Hugh Low. Each of these men had invoked one or other form of the relations tame/tamer and wild/wilder.⁸⁶ Nonetheless, in a few instances in *Pagan Races*, the differentiation of tame and wild was allowed to remain, perhaps because it seemed to make more analytical sense than systematic racial distinctions. When discussing food habits in relation to aborigines in general, Skeat wrote that ‘the less wild tribes’ ate rice. Similarly, “‘tamer’ tribes’ used earthenware water-pots similar to those used by Malays.⁸⁷ In neither case did he specify which of the three racial divisions he was referring to. Within racial types, tame/wild distinctions were used occasionally. ‘Wilder’ Semang did not stay long in one place and the presence of cigarettes indicated that they were in contact with “‘tamer’ fellow-tribesmen’.⁸⁸

It is likely that Skeat’s placement of ‘tamer’ in inverted commas signaled his discomfort with, and disapproval of the term since he would have preferred to use racial distinctions to explain such differences in lifestyle. In most cases, this is precisely what he

did. Skeat subsumed tame/wild distinctions under his racial divisions such that there was little or no mention of that former system of classification. Attributions of tame/wild were often glossed by anthropologists as instances of racial 'mixing'. Particularly where certain items of material culture were found among groups ranked either 'higher' or 'lower' than the supposed racial origin of the item, racial mixing was invoked to account for the apparent discrepancy. Thus, according to Skeat, 'racial factors' determined the occurrence of particular forms of material culture and legends. The bow was associated with the material culture of the Semang or Negrito race, a connection made not only by Skeat but also by Haddon, and was an indication of Negritos' arrested evolutionary progress.⁸⁹ But when the bow was found to be in use amongst a group Skeat had called Sakai, he presumed an admixture of Negrito in the Sakai tribe to account for their use of the bow, thereby rendering the Sakai group more 'wild'.⁹⁰ Elsewhere in the book, when personification of gods, another purportedly Negrito racial attribute, was also found amongst the Jakun, it was explained as a result of the absorption of Semang by Jakun in the southern part of the Peninsula.⁹¹

Islam and Malays

Annandale's analysis of the racial division of Malaya was frequently at odds with Skeat's and forms an important counter to the definitiveness of the latter's analysis. Annandale was more hesitant to divide the groups he met into the standard racial categories. Instead, he held on to categories that he felt were less ambiguous such as the 'old two-fold division of aborigines into Semang and Sakai', omitting 'Jakun'. However, he was not convinced of the validity of a Sakai category as he wrote that it 'it is very doubtful at the present stage of our enquiry' that 'it is legitimate to speak of a definite Sakai *race*'.⁹² He considered some groups to be mixtures of Semang and Malays, recalling Crawford's insistence on the dual racial classification of the archipelago into 'black' and 'brown'. Furthermore, Annandale did not assume that specific material culture items such as the blow-gun or the bow belonged to any one race.⁹³

Though frequently doubting the validity of racial classification of particular groups, the one method of classification Annandale did not doubt was using religion as a race marker. In his preliminary report on his findings, 'wild tribes' were classed as 'all tribes that are

neither Mahomedan nor Buddhist'.⁹⁴ This religious distinction was then filtered through physical anthropology by trying to 'see' and 'measure' the relative wildness of groups that did not follow these two religions. For example, Annandale stated that the southern coastal Siamese state of Trang was 'occupied by two tribes, which appear to belong to distinct races'. He posited that one 'race' originated from the island of Langkawi off the west coast of Malaya but used Islam as the main discriminator between the two. Both groups called themselves 'Orang Laut', or Sea People, and were only differentiated on religious grounds as 'Islam' or 'Kappir' (from the Arabic term 'Kafir', translated by Annandale as infidel). Annandale physically distinguished the 'Orang Laut Kappir' from the other 'race' by the 'brightness of their eyes' but earlier he had hypothesised that they were related to the Sakai whom he claimed they resembled.⁹⁵

In Skeat's *Pagan Races*, religion was similarly used as a dividing line. He commented that, in distinguishing the 'Wild Tribes' or 'Wild Races of the Malay Peninsula', 'the point of religion (as between Mohammedan and non-Mohammedan) was perhaps a better dividing line, on account of its definiteness, than the vague, indefinite, and perhaps undefinable, quality of wildness'.⁹⁶ For both Annandale and Skeat, Islam was the marker of Malays and thus of civilisation. This line of thinking was prevalent in the anthropological construction of a normative view of Malay which had also been undertaken by Skeat. Before embarking on the Cambridge Expedition, Skeat published a study called *Malay Magic* (1900) which clearly delimited the Malay subject as a composite of Hindu and Islamic-Arabic influences. Skeat positioned Malay magic as part of their Hindu past that had not yet been eradicated by the newer Islamic-Arabic wave of culture and religion. Malays were conceived as having layers, an Islamic 'vener' on top of the Hindu, Buddhist and 'original Malay notions' that came before.⁹⁷ In many of these 'original Malay notions', however, Skeat noted Sakai elements. He referenced numerous Sakai components in what he considered Malay magical practices. For example, creation accounts that were told both by Malays and Sakai were considered as part of Malay culture. Some informants traced their origin to Sakai ancestors. Malays, Skeat said, took on the names of demons and vampires used by 'wild jungle tribes (Sakais)'. Other beliefs, such as the notion that the tiger was a man or demon in animal form, were shared elements which were identified as Malay for the book.⁹⁸

Regardless of this overlap, 'Malay' was anthropologically separated from 'Sakai' even as 'Jakun' and 'Sakai' groups of aborigines were supposedly able to blend into Malay. This normative account of Malay identity also operated in colonial government. Skeat and Annandale's classification of different races by religion resembled the policy adopted by the colonial state in enumerating people for the census. As Winstedt would comment in 1921 in relation to the state of Negeri Sembilan, aboriginal 'converts to Islam would always be recorded as Malay'.⁹⁹

Extinction as absorption into Malays

This final section considers the effects of colonial socialisation on concepts of aboriginal extinction within the science of race. Scholars of Malaya commonly presumed that aboriginal people were on the verge of extinction. However, the very character of that anticipated disappearance is peculiar in that extinction was understood to mean absorption into another related culture. Skeat claimed that the 'gradual disappearance' of aborigines was 'rather due to conversion and absorption' than to the progress of 'civilisation'.¹⁰⁰ He thus conflated absorption by Malays with extinction. Earlier, Miklouho-Maclay had also predicted racial extinction due to the intermarriage of Sakai women and Malay men or the production of 'cross-breed children' through the casual intercourse of Sakai women with Malays or Chinese. He explained that the '*Orang Sakai-jina*':

visit the huts and the Kampongs of the Malays (in small parties with their wives and children) and this is one important reason of the mixture of the two races, the Orang Sakai giving their daughters as wives to the Malays.... These visits are further followed by the gradual feeling of Malay wants and adoption of Malay customs by the *Orang Sakai*. I had several opportunities in the course of my journey of observing this gradual absorption of the weaker race (the Melanesian) and its gradual assimilation to the Malay population.¹⁰¹

Adopting the culture and habits of another group was not always thought of as racial extinction. David Wallace Adams has shown that parties concerned about the fate of Native Americans in the United States in the late 19th-century equated their absorption into civilisation as a way to save them from annihilation. In 1881, many American policymakers believed in 'extermination or civilisation' for 'Indians'.¹⁰² However, in anthropological

discourse on Sakai, civilisation in the form of absorption into Malay culture signaled their (anthropological) extinction. Skeat believed that they would be absorbed by ‘the Malay genius for assimilation’ and blamed British paternalism. In *Pagan Races*, he stated:

we are now confronted by the yet graver question, whether our system of protection is to become more fatal to our *proteges* than even the Malay slave-raids that we so strenuously put down, the effect of which was, after all, though individual members might be lost to the community, to keep them a race apart, whereas to-day (though there is as yet no marked decline in their numbers) they are fast tending to become assimilated and absorbed, losing their language, their customs, their purity of blood and (worst loss of all) their natural truthfulness and honesty.¹⁰³

This view of absorption as extinction was not shared by all anthropologists of Malaya’s aborigines. While Annandale and Robinson also remarked that aborigines took on various habits and customs of Malays with regard to dressing and way of life, they did not link lifestyle change with racial extinction: ‘we do not think that contact with civilisation ... shows any tendency, at present, to lessen their actual numbers’. They did, however, anticipate the loss of purity of aboriginal blood with contact with Chinese and other races and their gradual absorption ‘into the mixed racial type that is now being evolved in the Federated Malay States’.¹⁰⁴

The predicted dying out of aborigines was ascribed to the loss of their way of life, as in the correlations drawn by Skeat and Miklouho-Maclay between the loss of Indigenous language and custom, their absorption by Malays, and their supposed imminent extinction.¹⁰⁵ This social rather than somatic conception of extinction was repeated in reports in *JSBRAS* updating the scholarly community about studies on aborigines. The man responsible for many of these updates was H.N. Ridley, the Superintendent of the Singapore Botanic Gardens who developed the systematic study of botany in the Malay Peninsula.¹⁰⁶ In a review of Skeat and Blagden’s *Pagan Races*, Ridley wrote:

As the work of civilisation progresses and the forests fall before the axe of the planter, the more primitive tribes of jungle folk disappear, to be replaced by the imported and more civilised labourer from other countries; and should these old world folk themselves not

actually disappear, they amalgamate with the later arrivals, and adopting their ideas and customs, they become so changed that all that is interesting about them is lost. Many tribes of the human race have thus passed away, leaving few or no relics of their ever having existed.¹⁰⁷

The insistence on aborigines in Malaya becoming extinct by virtue of becoming more like Malays was intricately tied to the pace of development on the Peninsula which was transforming the landscape in which aborigines were placed. As noted earlier, Malays were assumed to be a coastal people, while most aboriginal races were placed by anthropologists in the jungle at various elevations. Deforestation, however, occurred at a steady pace with land cleared to make way for plantation rubber, for mining and to provide timber for railway sleepers and fuel.¹⁰⁸ Given the pace of development and deforestation, there were literally fewer areas in which the stereotypical lifeway of an aborigine could be carried on. The depletion of the forest meant that lifeways related to the forest, and thus aboriginal in the minds of anthropologists, became more difficult to sustain, prompting changes in lifeway or migration to other parts of the Peninsula where forest was still plentiful such as in the state of Pahang. This view of extinction linked to the fate of the forest was voiced by Annandale and Robinson when they wrote that the only way aborigines would decrease in number was if ‘the wholesale destruction of the jungle’ ever took place on the Peninsula.¹⁰⁹

As Michael Wilcox has noted, the insistence on indigenous disappearance entails the act of ignoring or deciding which stories to tell.¹¹⁰ Some colonial officers chose not to declare people as aborigines even if inhabitants identified themselves as such, thus rendering them invisible and/or extinct. Recall the case of Lawder, district officer of Selangor in 1886, not counting a group of self identified Sakai as such and also Winstedt’s admission that those who had converted to Islam would be categorised as Malay.¹¹¹ Aborigines were also becoming extinct for anthropologists because many scholars refused to incorporate ‘tame Sakai’ as a racial category unlike the colonial government in the censuses. Instead of adopting the category ‘tame’ and the gradations it implied, Skeat and Annandale, at least ideologically, conceived those changes in terms of assimilation or absorption by Malays and hence as racial extinction. Some aborigines were becoming too ‘tame’ to be considered aboriginal by anthropologists, a trend that continued in the 1910s and 1920s in the work of

Ivor H.N. Evans who effectively ignored aboriginal 'stories' and histories if they were too Malay by his standards.¹¹² In addition to the foregoing factors that would explain the insistence on aboriginal extinction, extinction was also a product of the changing landscape of Malaya under heavy development such that some anthropologists could no longer 'see' aborigines since they were becoming invisible to them as aboriginal lifeways became more like Malay lifeways.

The anthropological extinction of Sakai, however, did not signal their colonial extinction. Even though the censuses rendered many aborigines 'invisible', the official category of tame Sakai/settled aborigines made some allowance for the changes in the way of life of jungle dwelling people and thus allowed many into the Sakai category. The census data enumerated an increasing number of aborigines from 1901 until 1931. Thus the claims of extinction by Skeat and Ridley do not account for the 'invisible descendents' of Sakai whose numbers were continually counted in the censuses.¹¹³ Admittedly, there are many problems with relying on census data. However, I approach the overwhelming contemporary willingness to assume the inevitability of indigenous disappearance with equal caution. Aboriginal extinction was conceived of in a very narrow manner by anthropologists who based it on lifeways in the forest which the changing landscape of colonial Malaya rendered difficult to find.

Conclusion

The ways in which the science of race took into consideration situational knowledge were at times clear and at other times incoherent. Nevertheless, knowledge of the colonial situation was a major component of racial thinking in particular localities. In the case of Malaya, Skeat and Annandale played instrumental roles in the codification of racial boundaries while at the same time knowing of and having to consider another plane of differentiation and gradation. I have focused on the use of 'Sakai' as a general term within colonial government and the internal gradations of 'tame' and 'wild' Sakai. The racial classifications of Skeat and Annandale were subtly influenced by the general Sakai category and by ways of differentiation through religion or by locating Malay and Sakai on a continuum that was more

common in the government arena. It is in these terms that the socialisation of the science of race in colonial Malaya may be observed.

¹ Michael Bravo, 'Cartography, resistance and pluralism in the making of Arctic Oceania', keynote address to the international conference on 'Race, Encounters, and the Constitution of Human Difference in Oceania', College of Asia and the Pacific, The Australian National University, Canberra, 21 January 2010. My own present article was first presented to this conference, convened by Bronwen Douglas and Chris Ballard, which focussed on varied manifestations of the intersections of racial theory and local encounters with Indigenous people.

² George W. Stocking, Jr., *Victorian Anthropology* (New York 1987), 63.

³ See Henrika Kuklick, *The Savage Within: the social history of British anthropology, 1885-1945* (Cambridge 1991), ch. 5.

⁴ Charles Hirschman, 'The meaning and measurement of ethnicity in Malaysia: an analysis of census classifications'. *The Journal of Asian Studies* 46:3 (1987), 555-82.

⁵ Bernard S. Cohn, 'The Census, Social Structure and Objectification in South Asia', in Bernard S. Cohn, *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays*, (Delhi 1987), 246.

⁶ Arjun Appadurai, 'Number in the Colonial Imagination', in Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer (ed.), *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia*, (Philadelphia 1993), 316.

⁷ W.W. Skeat, 'The wild tribes of the Malay Peninsula', *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 32 (1902), 124-7.

⁸ Rudolf Martin, *Die Inlandstämme der Malayischen Halbinsel: wissenschaftliche Ergebnisse einer Reise durch die Vereinigten malayischen Staaten* (Jena 1905); Skeat, 'Wild tribes', 124, note 1.

⁹ Paul Turnbull, 'British anthropological thought in colonial practice: the appropriation of Indigenous Australian bodies, 1860-1880', in Bronwen Douglas and Chris Ballard (ed.), *Foreign Bodies: Oceania and the science of race 1750-1940*, (Canberra 2008), 212.

¹⁰ Bronwen Douglas, "'Novus orbis australis': Oceania in the science of race, 1750-1850', in Douglas and Ballard (ed.), *Foreign Bodies*, 103.

¹¹ Idem, 'Climate to crania: science and the racialization of human difference', in Douglas and Ballard (ed.), *Foreign Bodies*, 37-8.

¹² Chris Ballard, "'Oceanic Negroes": British anthropology of Papuans, 1820-1869', in Douglas and Ballard (ed.), *Foreign Bodies*, 158.

¹³ John Crawfurd, *History of the Indian Archipelago, Containing an Account of the Manners, Arts, Languages, Religions, Institutions, and Commerce of Its Inhabitants* (Edinburgh 1820), 14.

¹⁴ John Anderson, *Political and Commercial Considerations Relative to the Malayan Peninsula, and the British Settlements in the Straits of Malacca* (Prince of Wales Island [Georgetown, Penang] 1824), xxx-xxi.

¹⁵ J. Turnbull Thomson, 'A sketch of the career of the late James Richardson Logan, of Penang and Singapore', *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 7 (1881), 78.

¹⁶ Constance Mary Turnbull, *The Straits Settlements, 1826-67: Indian presidency to crown colony* (London 1972), 1-3.

¹⁷ J.R. Logan, 'The Orang Binua of Johore', *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia* 1 (1847), 242; Idem, 'Introductory remarks to a series of contributions to the ethnology of the Indian Archipelago', *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia* 1 (1847), 171-82.

¹⁸ Idem, 'Physical characteristics of the Mintira', *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia* 1 (1847), 294-5; idem, 'Table of measurements illustrative of the physical

peculiarities of the Mintira, Biduanda Kallang and Sabimba', *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia* 1 (1847), 805; idem, 'The Orang Sabimba of the extremity of the Malay Peninsula', *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia* 1 (1847), 295-8; J.R. Logan, 'The Orang Biduanda Kallang of the River Pulai in Johore', *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia* 1 (1847), 299-302.

¹⁹ Idem, 'The Orang Biduanda Kallang', 299.

²⁰ Turnbull, 'British anthropological thought in colonial practice', 212.

²¹ J.R. Logan, 'Visit of a party of Orang Mintira to Singapore', *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia* 1 (1847), 330-6.

²² J.T. Thomson, 'Remarks on the Sletar and Sabimba Tribes', *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia* 1 (1847), 350-2. See Petrus Camper, *The Works of the Late Professor Camper on the Connexion Between the Science of Anatomy and the Arts of Drawing, Painting, Statuary, &c &c....*, tr. Thomas Cogan (London 1794). Cf. James Cowles Prichard, *The Natural History of Man ...* (London 1843), 351 – the words 'than either' are not Prichard's.

²³ *Ibid.*, 341-2.

²⁴ Throughout this discussion, I shall use the spelling 'Sakai' capitalised and without inverted commas which are, however, implied.

²⁵ Anderson, 'On the Aboriginal inhabitants of the Malayan Peninsula, and particularly of the Negroes, called Semang', *Political and Commercial Considerations*, Appendix, xxvii-xxviii.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, xxxi.

²⁷ Thomson, 'Remarks on the Sletar and Sabimba Tribes', 351.

²⁸ Anon., 'The Sakais of Selangor', *Selangor Journal* 3:14 (1895), 224.

²⁹ T.J. Newbold, *Political and Statistical Account of the British Settlements in the Straits of Malacca: viz. Pinang Malacca, and Singapore, with a history of the Malayan states on the peninsula of Malacca* (London 1839), 25.

³⁰ Lim Teck Ghee, *Origins of a Colonial Economy: land and agriculture in Perak, 1874-1897* (Penang 1976), 2.

³¹ Robert Heussler, *British Rule in Malaya: the Malayan civil service and its predecessors, 1867-1942* (Oxford 1981), 13.

³² See reports in *Selangor Secretariat Files (SSF)* 13/1881, 'Reporting that Malays have been illtreating Sakeis at Ulu Selangor', *SSF* 342/85, *SSF* 2176/1895 and *SSF* 490/85. I am indebted to Paul Kratoska for sharing this information with me.

³³ See for instance 'Pahang news', *Straits Times*, 25 June 1895, 20 May 1896.

³⁴ T.N. Harper, 'The Politics of the Forest in Colonial Malaya', *Modern Asian Studies* 31:1 (1997), 8; A.B. Stephens, Forest Officer, *Selangor Secretariat Files* 1310/02 (1902), 1, emphasis added.

³⁵ R.J. Wilkinson, 'The Sakai', in A.M. Pountney, *The Census of the Federated Malay States, 1911: review of the census operations and results including tables exhibiting the population by sex, age, race, birthplace, religion, and occupation* (London 1911), 68-74.

³⁶ R.J. Wilkinson, 'Wild tribes of Malaya', *Straits Times*, 23 November 1911; idem, *Papers on Malay Subjects: Supplement: the Aboriginal tribes* (Kuala Lumpur 1910), 4.

³⁷ The standard English rendering of the name of this author is used in the body of the text. N. von Mikluho-Maclay, 'Ethnological excursions in the Malay Peninsula - November 1874 to October 1875 (preliminary communication)', *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1 (1878), 211, 218.

³⁸ Heussler, *British Rule in Malaya*, 69, 97; W.E. Maxwell, 'The Aboriginal tribes of Perak', *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 4 (1879), 47.

³⁹ John Crawfurd, *A Grammar and Dictionary of the Malay Language with a Preliminary Dissertation*, vol. 2, *Malay and English, and English and Malay Dictionaries* (London 1852), 61; William Marsden, *A Dictionary of the Malayan Language, in Two Parts, Malayan and English and English and Malayan* (London 1812), 109, 312; Frank Athelstane Swettenham,

Vocabulary of the English and Malay Languages, with Notes, vol. 2, *Malay-English* (Singapore 1881, 1901), 97.

⁴⁰ Mikluho-Maclay, 'Ethnological excursions in the Malay Peninsula', 211, note 1, 212.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 211-12.

⁴² D.F.A. Hervey, 'The Endau and its tributaries', *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 8 (1881), 101, my emphasis.

⁴³ Anon., 'The Sakais of Selangor', 224.

⁴⁴ *Perak Government Gazette*, CO 467/2, 273; *Selangor Government Gazette*, CO 467/1, 11 Dec. 1891.

⁴⁵ Federated Malay States, *Census of the Population, 1901* (Kuala Lumpur 1902), 30, 36.

⁴⁶ Pountney, *Census of the Federated Malay States, 1911*, 40; J.E. Nathan, *The Census of British Malaya, 1921* (London 1922), 71.

⁴⁷ *Perak Government Gazette*, CO 467/2, 273, 447; *Selangor Government Gazette*, CO 467/1, 956.

⁴⁸ Wilkinson, 'The Sakai', 68, 69, 72-4.

⁴⁹ Pountney, *Census of the Federated Malay States, 1911*.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 172.

⁵¹ Wilkinson, 'The Sakai', 72.

⁵² R.O. Winstedt, 'The Aboriginal races', in Nathan, *Census of British Malaya, 1921*, 125, 131.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 125.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 125, 131.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁵⁷ See for instance the change in the definition of Malay from the 1901 to the 1911 census. Federated Malay States, *Census of the Population, 1901*, 30; Pountney, *Census of the Federated Malay States, 1911*, 39.

⁵⁸ Pountney, *Census of the Federated Malay States, 1911*, 172.

⁵⁹ E.S. Hartland, 'The Cambridge expedition to Torres Straits', *Man* 2 (1902), 61.

⁶⁰ Nelson Annandale and Herbert C. Robinson, 'Prefatory note', in *Fasciculi Malayenses, Anthropological and Zoological Results of an Expedition to Perak and the Siamese Malay States, 1901-1902* (London 1903-6), vol. 1, *Anthropology*.

⁶¹ C.A. Gibson-Hill, 'Introduction', *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 26:4 (1953), 5-8; W.W. Skeat and C.O. Blagden, *Pagan Races of the Malay Peninsula*, 2 vols (London 1906), vol. 1, xxx, xxxviii.

⁶² Skeat, 'The wild tribes', 124, note 1.

⁶³ Annandale and Robinson, *Fasciculi Malayenses*.

⁶⁴ Stanley Kemp, 'Nelson Annandale 1876-1924', *Records of the Indian Museum* 27 (1925), 1-28.

⁶⁵ C.B.K., 'Herbert Christopher Robinson', *Journal of the Federated Malay States Museums* 6 (1931), 1-12.

⁶⁶ Skeat, 'Wild tribes', 125.

⁶⁷ W.W. Skeat, 'Notes on the ethnography of the Malay Peninsula', *Man* 1 (1901), 77.

⁶⁸ W.L.H. Duckworth, *Morphology and Anthropology: a handbook for students* (Cambridge 1915). Today, the collection of human and nonhuman primate remains held at the Leverhulme Centre for Human Evolutionary Studies at Cambridge is known as the Duckworth Collection. For information on the Leverhulme Centre for Human Evolutionary Studies at Cambridge, see <http://www.human-evol.cam.ac.uk/Duckworth/history.htm>. Accessed 25 Feb. 2010.

⁶⁹ Skeat, 'Wild tribes', 124, 126.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 127.

⁷¹ W.L.H. Duckworth, 'Some anthropological results of the Skeat expedition to the Malay Peninsula', *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 32 (1902), 144.

⁷² Ibid., 144-5.

⁷³ Ibid., facing 148.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 149-50.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 143.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 146.

⁷⁷ W.L.H. Duckworth, 'Note on a skull labelled "Soemang-Schadel [male]," "Bukit-Sapi," Upper Perak, 1902; now in the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons', *Man* 3 (1903), 37.

⁷⁸ Skeat and Blagden, *Pagan Races*, vol. 1, 12

⁷⁹ Ibid., facing 577, 581.

⁸⁰ Annandale and Robinson, 'Prefatory note'; A. Keith, 'Obituary: Sir William Turner', *Man* 16 (1916), 65-71

⁸¹ Nelson Annandale and H.C. Robinson, 'Some preliminary results of an expedition to the Malay Peninsula', *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 32 (1902), 407.

⁸² Annandale and Robinson, 'Some preliminary results', 411, original emphasis.

⁸³ T.A.J., 'Review of Fasciculi Malayenses', *Man* 3 (1903), 153.

⁸⁴ Annandale and Robinson, 'Some preliminary results', 413.

⁸⁵ Skeat and Blagden, *Pagan Races*, vol. 1, 97.

- ⁸⁶ Skeat and Blagden, *Pagan Races*, vol. 1, 71, 82, 229; vol. 2, 42.
- ⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 109-10.
- ⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 174.
- ⁸⁹ A.C. Haddon, 'The pygmy question', in A.F.R. Wollaston, *Pygmies and Papuans: the stone age to-day in Dutch New Guinea* (London 1912), Appendix B, 317; Chris Ballard, 'Strange alliance: Pygmies in the colonial imaginary', *World Archaeology* 38:1 (2006), 141.
- ⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 297.
- ⁹¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 184.
- ⁹² Annandale and Robinson, *Fasciculi Malayenses*, vol. 1, 22.
- ⁹³ T.A.J., 'Review of Fasciculi Malayenses', 153-4; Annandale and Robinson, *Fasciculi Malayenses*, vol. 1, 22.
- ⁹⁴ *Idem*, 'Some preliminary results', 407.
- ⁹⁵ *Idem*, *Fasciculi Malayenses*, vol. 1, 53, 62, 65; *idem*, 'Some preliminary results', 412.
- ⁹⁶ Skeat and Blagden, *Pagan Races*, vol. 1, xii.
- ⁹⁷ W.W. Skeat, *Malay Magic: being an introduction to the folklore and popular religion of the Malay Peninsula* (Kuala Lumpur 2005), xii-xiii; Annandale and Robinson, *Fasciculi Malayenses*, vol. 1, 89.
- ⁹⁸ Skeat, *Malay Magic*, 5, 17-18, 54, 100, 57.
- ⁹⁹ Winstedt, 'The Aboriginal races', 124
- ¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 42, 81.
- ¹⁰¹ Mikluho-Maclay, 'Ethnological excursions', 212, 218, 221.
- ¹⁰² David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the boarding-school experience, 1875-1928* (Lawrence 1995), 15-16.
- ¹⁰³ Skeat and Blagden, *Pagan Races*, vol. 1, 15-16, 524.

¹⁰⁴ Annandale and Robinson, *Fasciculi Malayenses*, vol. 1, 29-30.

¹⁰⁵ Skeat and Blagden, *Pagan Races*, vol. 1, 16.

¹⁰⁶ J. Kathirithamby-Wells, *Nature and Nation: forests and development in Peninsular Malaysia* (Singapore 2005), 76.

¹⁰⁷ H.N. Ridley, 'The Pagan races of the Malay Peninsula (a review)', *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 49 (1907), 1.

¹⁰⁸ Kathirithamby-Wells, *Nature and Nation*, 91, 149.

¹⁰⁹ Annandale and Robinson, *Fasciculi Malayenses*, vol. 1, 30.

¹¹⁰ Michael Wilcox, 'Marketing conquest and the vanishing Indian: an Indigenous response to Jared Diamond's archeology of the American southwest', in Patricia Ann McAnany and Norman Yoffee (ed.), *Questioning Collapse: human resilience, ecological vulnerability and the aftermath of empire* (Cambridge 2009), 117.

¹¹¹ This historical critique is not meant to doubt the veracity of present day reports surrounding Orang Asli life expectancy and health statistics in Malaysia which, for reasons of government mismanagement and socio-economic factors, are appallingly poor. See for example, Rusalina Idrus, 'Basic human rights for the Orang Asli', *Malaysian Insider*, 5 March 2010.

¹¹² See for instance, Ivor H.N. Evans, 'Notes on the Sakai of the Korbu River and of the Ulu Kinta', *Journal of the Federated Malay States Museums* 7 (1916), 75-89.

¹¹³ Wilcox, 'Marketing conquest and the vanishing Indian', 124.