

Certification of Examination of Thesis

We, the following members of the Thesis Examination Panel, appointed by the Senate to examine the thesis entitled:-

"Carving In A Jah Hut Community: Tradition In Tension"

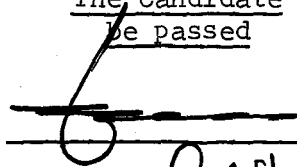

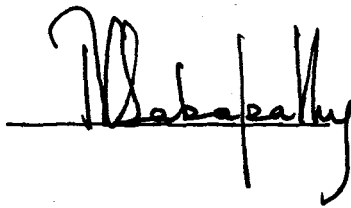
submitted by Miss Marie-Andree Couillard in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Social Science, hereby confirm that:-

- (i) We met on 12 April 1979 and submitted the candidate, Cik Marie-Andree Couillard, to an oral examination in accordance with the requirements of the Higher Degree Act and Regulations Clause 8.2.2:-


"Unless exempted by Senate, a candidate will have to appear for an oral examination"

and

- (ii) that we make the following individual recommendations:-

<u>Thesis Examination Panel</u>	<u>The Candidate</u> <u>be passed</u>	<u>The Candidate be</u> <u>not passed</u>
1. Encik Musa bin Mohamad (Chairman)		
2. Dr. Kamal Salih Dean School of Comparative Social Sciences		
3. Encik Khoo Khay Jin Internal Examiner/ Main Supervisor	(Absent - see certification overleaf)	
4. Encik T.K. Sabapathy Internal Examiner/ Co-Supervisor		

I, Noel Alfred Ogle, in my capacity as Secretary to the said Thesis Examination Panel, do hereby confirm that the Panel after full consideration of the recommendations of the external examiner and of the individual recommendations of its members, has agreed to recommend to Senate that the candidate, Cik Marie-Andree Couillard, be awarded the degree of Master of Social Science.


(N.A. Ogle)
Secretary

Date: 12/4/79.

I, Khoo Khay Jin, hereby confirm that although I was unable to be present at the meeting of the Thesis Examination Panel held on 12 April 1979, I fully concur with the recommendation of the other members of the Panel that Cik Marie-Andree Couillard be awarded the degree of Master of Social Science.

13 April 1979
(Date)



~~(Khoo Khay Jin)~~

CARVING IN A JAH HUT COMMUNITY

Tradition in Tension

by

Marie-Andrée Couillard

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Social Science

December 1978

The reality of society is the living organisation of men, women and children, in many ways materialised, in many ways constantly changing.

Williams 1973:120

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ORTHOGRAPHY

Malay

Throughout this thesis I have followed the new unified system of spelling adopted by the Malaysian government in 1973.

Jah Hut

For the transcription of Jah Hut words I have used the conventions established by Dr. Gerard Diffloth for Werner 1975.

They are as follows:

- i = similar to the vowel sound in "beat"
- é = similar to the vowel sound in "say"
- è = similar to the vowel sound in "bet"
- a = similar to the vowel sound in "car"
- ò = similar to the vowel sound in "got"
- ó = similar to the vowel sound in "coat"
- u = similar to the vowel sound in "cool"
- ě = similar to the vowel sound in "but"

The sign ~ above a vowel indicates a nasal quality as in "can't" which would be written "kắt".

The sound "k" at the end of a word is pronounced.

There is one exception to the above rules in this thesis and it is the word "Hut" as in Jah Hut which should be written "Hě́t" as it is pronounced. I have, however, opted for the more common spelling "Hut", usually found in the literature.

Ringkasan Tesis

Tesis ini menitikberatkan soal perubahan komuniti Kampung Kol, sebuah Kampung kaum Jah Hut di Pahang, Malaysia Barat. Data-data diatur demi merujuk khusus kepada ukiran, satu aktiviti diperkenalkan dua puluh tahun yang lalu sebagai mata pencarian hidup. Ukiran dipilih sebagai pusat kajian kerana ianya mengandungi ciri-ciri perubahan yang berlaku dalam komuniti itu. Sebahagian dari perubahan ini dikupaskan berhubung dengan keadaan ideologi dan sosio-ekonomi. Tesis ini punya pengenalan, dua bahagian dan penutup. Dalam pengenalan ada dua bab sementara kedua-dua bahagian tadi punya dua bab setiap satu.

Bab satu ialah percubaan menempatkan kaum Jah Hut dalam suasana sejarah-budayanya. Ini dibuat dengan mempersembahkan persamaan-persamaan linguistik dan budayanya dan juga sejarah kampung yang baru berlaku. Bab dua memperkatakan tentang kemahiran mengukir, termasuk dasar-dasar teknik latihan, proses mengukir, alat-alat dan kayu-kayu yang digunakan.

Bab tiga bertujuan memberi latarbelakang ugama demi memahami apakah yang dimaksudkan dengan bēs atau makhluk penyebab penyakit sebab sebahagian besar bilangan ukiran dewasa ini dilaporkan sebagai mewakili makhluk-makhluk tersebut.

Bab empat pula memberi kajian pendek tentang pengubatan dengan gambaran bēnisoy gelap, satu upacara penyembuhan yang

menggunakan sepili atau lembaga bès yang kecil dan kasar. Mereka digunakan demi menghalau hantu dari jasad pesakit.

Bab lima cuba memastikan sejauh manakah perhubungan antara sepili dengan ukiran-ukiran moden. Bab ini juga menunjukkan bahawa dalam proses mengukir dan dalam proses menentukan sifat figura-figura itu ada berlaku penyelewengan tradisi lisan yang menyebabkan terwujudnya ketegangan antara dua macam para pengukir. Yang pertama dinamakan pengukir ortodoks sebab mereka mematuhi dengan rapat petua-petua para pengukir yang lebih awal sedangkan yang kedua pula dipanggil tidak ortodoks sebab mereka secara bebas mencipta makhluk-makhluk dan cerita-cerita baru. Namun ketegangan ini merupakan pertanda dari perubahan-perubahan lebih mendalam yang menulari komuniti itu. Perubahan-perubahan ini diterangkan dalam Bahagian Kedua dalam konteks betapa pentingnya ukiran dari segi sosio-ekonomi.

Bab enam menggariskasarkan latar belakang kepada perubahan-perubahan ekonomi yang sedang berlaku. Bab ini menumpukan soal perhubungan kaum Jah Hut dengan sumber-sumber alam yang dasar buat mereka. Disarankan di sini bahawa biasanya ada wujud ketegangan antara pemilikan komuniti keatas sumber-sumber alam dengan penggondolan individu ke atas hasil tanaman. Ketegangan diperhebatkan dewasa ini oleh halangan-halangan ekologi yang ketat dan juga oleh masuknya ekonomi berbentuk wang. Ukiran hanya merupakan salah satu dari beberapa kegiatan yang mencantumi

komuniti ini dengan satu sistem ekonomi yang lebih luas. Namun ukiranlah menjadi satu-satunya dari kegiatan-kegiatan tersebut yang membenarkan penyelewengan tradisi lisan.

Bab tujuh pula menghuraikan keadaan kemasyarakatan yang mengalami perubahan-perubahan yang serba pesat. Biasanya masing-masing kelamin tidak berupaya menampung dan memperluas kehidupan mereka tanpa adanya komuniti Jah Hut yang lebih besar. Istilah-istilah kekeluargaan yang kompleks menunjukkan perhubungan kekeluargaan yang luas, peraturan-peraturan perkahwinan dan upacara bersunat sehingga membuktikan betapa rapatnya perhubungan antara tiap-tiap kelamin dan komuniti seluruhnya. Dewasa ini tiap-tiap kelamin boleh menampung diri mereka menerusi saluran pasar luar sehingga mereka tidak begitu lagi bergantung pada sukubangsa Jah Hut. Dalam kelamin inilah berlakunya perubahan-perubahan. Perubahan-perubahan ini bukan disebabkan oleh proses pengeluaran kerana perhubungan sederajat terhadap sumber-sumber alam beralih sudah kepada bahan dagangan baru ini (iaitu ukiran). Perhubungan-perhubungan yang dipastikan dari segi penukaran inilah yang menjadi tenaga-gerak kepada perubahan-perubahan di Kampung Kol.

Dalam bab lapan saya bincangkan saluran-saluran pasar yang digunakan oleh para pengukir Jah Hut dan kesan pengaruh setiap satu saluran itu terhadap penduduk Kampung Kol.

Bab sembilan pula merumus kajian ini. Pendeknya, para pengukir Jah Hut mencipta figura-figura berdasarkan tema tradisional digelar bès yang dijual untuk mendapat wang. Wang pula memberi mereka peluang demi mendekati dunia luar yang sebaliknya menjadi tenaga gerak untuk terjadinya perubahan-perubahan. Ukiran bukan saja mempercepatkan malah mencerminkan perubahan-perubahan itu.

Thesis Abstract

This thesis concerns itself with the changing community of Kampung Kol, a Jah Hut village in Pahang, West Malaysia. The data have been organised with specific reference to carving, an activity which was introduced as a means of subsistence twenty years ago. Carving was chosen as a focus because it embodies the transformations occurring in the community. Some of these changes are analysed in relation to the ideological and socio-economic context. The thesis consists of an introduction, two parts and a conclusion. The introduction has two chapters while the two sections have three chapters each.

Chapter one is an attempt at locating the Jah Hut in their historical-cultural context. It is done by presenting their linguistic and cultural affiliations, as well as the recent history of the village. Chapter two deals with the craft of carving. It includes the technicalities of apprenticeship, the process of carving, the tools and the woods used.

Chapter three aims at providing the religious background so as to understand what is meant by a bès or illness-causing spirit, since the majority of the carvings today reportedly represent such beings. Chapter four offers a brief review of the art of curing, with a description of the bénisoy gelap, the curing ceremony in which the sepili, or rough little effigies

of the bès are used. These serve to exorcise the illness-causing spirits from the body of the sick person. Chapter five attempts to establish the extent to which there is a relationship between the sepili and the modern carvings. It also points out that both in the process of carving and in the process of identifying the figures, there is a manipulation of the oral tradition which brings about a tension between two kinds of carvers. The first have been named orthodox carvers, because they adhere more closely to the prescriptions of earlier carvers, and the second are the unorthodox ones, who freely create new spirits and new stories. The tension, however, is symptomatic of changes occurring at a deeper level in the community. These changes are described in Part Two, in the context of the socio-economic significance of carving.

Chapter six outlines the background against which economic change is occurring. It focusses on the relationship of the Jah Hut to their natural resource base. It is suggested here that traditionally there is a tension between the community's ownership of natural resources and the individual appropriation of the harvest. This tension is aggravated today by severe ecological constraints and by the introduction of a cash economy. Carving is only one among other activities, that links the community with a wider economic system. However, it is the only one among such activities which allows for the manipulation of

the oral tradition.

Chapter seven presents the societal context in which far-reaching transformations are occurring. Traditionally speaking the different domestic groups cannot maintain and reproduce themselves without the Jah Hut community. The complex kinship terminology which implies extended kinship ties, the marriage rules, and the circumcision ceremony, indicate a close interrelatedness between the domestic groups and the community as a whole. Today these domestic groups can maintain themselves through links with the outside market and they can therefore be more independent of the wider Jah Hut tribe. It is the domestic group which is the seat of these transformations. These are not brought about by the production process since the old egalitarian relationship to resources is carried over to this new trade. It is the relationships established in the exchange sphere that are an impetus for change in Kampung Kol.

In chapter eight I discuss the different market outlets which are available to the Jah Hut carvers and the influence each of them has on the inhabitants of Kampung Kol. Chapter nine summarizes the study. In brief, the Jah Hut carvers create figures on a traditional theme called the bès, which are then sold for money. Money offers them an access to the outside world which in turn becomes an impetus for change. Carving, therefore, not only accelerates the changes that are going on in Kampung Kol, but it also illustrates them.

I - INTRODUCTION

Carving among the Jah Hut of West Malaysia just as rubber tapping among the Mundurucu of Brazil (Murphy 1960), can be considered a carrier of change. The Indians straddle two worlds and are struggling to cope with change and so are the Jah Hut. The new economic activity, namely carving, has come to be an alternative to the shortage of land and natural resources suffered by the inhabitants of Kampung Kol, a Jah Hut community. Insufficiency of land is one of the most severe threats the aborigines of Malaya can experience, since their economy is based on the exploitation of large areas of forest. This has recently been brought up by a number of scholars (Benjamin 1968; Endicott 1974, 1977; Sharpe 1976), but the consequences have to a large extent not been assessed in a field situation¹.

Shortage of land is associated with modernisation of adjacent regions. Land settlement schemes such as FELDA², the construction

¹The recent works of Baharum (1973, 1976) on the Temuan and Hong (1977) on the Kenyah of Sarawak are examples of studies oriented towards problems of change in a traditional setting.

²FELDA is the acronym from Federal Land Development Authority.

of roads cutting across the forest like the east-west highway (Endicott 1977), the building of dams as in Perak, mining and/or logging, all infringe upon the territory of the aborigines. In Malaysia, development is closely associated with integration into the national economy, and the reduction of aboriginal land appears to be a means of "encouraging" them towards such participation. The nomadic jungle dwellers are now asked to settle for agriculture and those already practicing swidden cultivation, like the Jah Hut, are being motivated to grow cash crops like rubber or oil palm, wherever the soil is not favourable for irrigated rice. This kind of economic transformation brings in its wake tensions and deep seated transformations which slowly change the face of the communities concerned. Planned change has almost always been in the field of agriculture (Endicott 1977:27); Kampung Kol however is an exception. In fact, since the idea of carving for sale was introduced in the community some twenty years ago, hardly any assistance has been given to them in the domain of agriculture. In this thesis therefore, I have tried to identify and analyse some of the changes this new way of life has brought about through focussing on their wood carving activities as practiced in this village.

It is not clear how carving for sale was introduced to the Kampung Kol community, because different sources offer different explanations. The Jah Hut themselves say that "datok Bais"

(probably H.F. Biles) was responsible for triggering the process. He is said to have inadvertently discovered some of the roughly carved little figures, which the Jah Hut called sepili, representing illness-causing spirits and used for curing purposes. The informants added that following this discovery he asked them to carve the same creatures, but bigger in size. He reportedly provided them with tools and helped them to sell the carvings. However, Mr. Biles, then Protector of Aborigines for Pahang, says that he first noticed the Jah Hut skill at carving when he visited the village around 1953-54. At that time, as far as he can remember, the carvings were "nearly all animal representations including tiger masks" (personal communication). Mr. Biles reiterates that he never tried to influence their choice of subject matter, but left the latter entirely to their imagination. He did, however, provide them with chisels and he, together with his staff, sold the carvings to tourists and local residents of Pahang. Mr. Ratos, who was Assistant Protector of Aborigines at the Headquarters in Kuala Lumpur in 1959, and who succeeded Mr. Biles as sponsor of Jah Hut art, offers another explanation as to how the Jah Hut started to make wood carvings for the market. In an article published in the Malay Mail (27 October, 1 November 1972), Mr. Ratos traces the origin of the art to an incident involving the batin³ of the village. Mr. Ratos says that Batin Hitam one day

³Batin is the highest rank in the Jah Hut political hierarchy.

carved a wooden doll to replace the plastic doll he had bought for his daughter and which had broken. From this incident Mr. Ratos says that, "one thing naturally led to another and soon he had a host of Orang Asli artists who successfully exhibited their works at the National Art Gallery" (Ratos 1972, October 27). At face value these explanations seem inconsistent, but I will show later how each of them justifies a different aspect of carving. The common denominator however, is that the process was triggered through outside forces. The rationale given for this move was to provide the Jah Hut of Kampung Kol with an alternative source of income. This new trade was also to link them economically to the wider Malaysian society.

The Jah Hut

Until the fifties the name Jah Hut could not even be found in the literature. Skeat and Bladgen (1906) do not mention this group, while Wilkinson (1926) refers to a group of aborigines called the "Krau Sakai"⁴. He was probably referring to the Jah Hut, since they also call themselves orang Krau

⁴Sakai means "dependents, retainers, subjects; the name was used for the aboriginal tribes by Malays and the term is derogatory (Wilkinson 1959:1002).

or people from the Krau valley. Williams-Hunt (1952) was the first to use the name Jah Hut, and he classified them as Southern Senoi. Dentan (1964) collected information on the Jah Hut language and Benjamin (1973) worked out a classification of Aslian languages in which the Jah Hut language is clearly Senoic. This has since been confirmed by Diffloth's study of Jah Hut grammar (1976). Carey (1976) has stressed that very little is known about the Jah Hut. In fact there is to date no in-depth ethnography of the people. Werner's book (1975) is primarily concerned with Jah Hut wood carvings and it offers an interesting collection of photographs. Polunin gathered a mass of information while working with the Jah Hut as a medical officer in the fifties, but has published only a short article on their medical belief system (Polunin 1969). Baistrocchi and Ratos, as well as quite a few others, have written articles on the wood carvings in magazines and newspapers. However, except for Dentan, Benjamin, and Carey who were concerned only peripherally with the Jah Hut, the others who have written about the Jah Hut are mostly non-anthropologists⁵.

⁵Werner, Ratos and Baistrocchi have taken an art-historical approach in their study of Jah Hut carvings. This is completely different from my approach which emphasizes the socio-cultural as well as economic context, within which these are produced.

The ethnonym Jah Hut⁶ is puzzling. In Jah Hut language jah means "people" and hut means "no"⁷. However, the Jah Hut deny that the hut in the name Jah Hut is the same as the hut meaning "no". Nevertheless, they are unable to explain the meaning of the combined words. The term jah, "people", is said to be correctly used for only five groups of people: the Jah Hut themselves, the Jah Hě (Semoq Beri), the Jah Klět (Che Wong), the Jah Nyap (Temuan) and the Jah Wa (Javanese). The Malays are not referred to as Jah Melayu, but by the word gob⁸. When referring to Chinese, the Jah Hut use the Malay words orang China (people, Chinese); when referring to Indians, Keling and when referring to Caucasians, orang putih (people, white). It is strange that the Jah Hut do not have a special term for the Semelai, their southern neighbours. They refer to them as the people from the Bera area, orang Bera⁹. The Jah Hut also refer to themselves as orang Krau or the "Krau people", Krau being the river valley where the bulk of the

⁶I will adopt the spelling hut as used in the literature, even though the actual pronunciation is hět.

⁷Hut means "no" and not "jungle" as suggested by Carey 1976:132). The Jah Hut word for "jungle" is berèk.

⁸Gob is used among the Semelai (Hood 1975:2) for "outsider" and among the Temiar (Benjamin 1966:5) for "stranger" (non aborigines or Malay). In Malay it means "cage-gaol" and is equivalent to penjara meaning "jail". When the word is used with "enter" as in masuk gob it means to be "put in prison" (Wilkinson 1959:370).

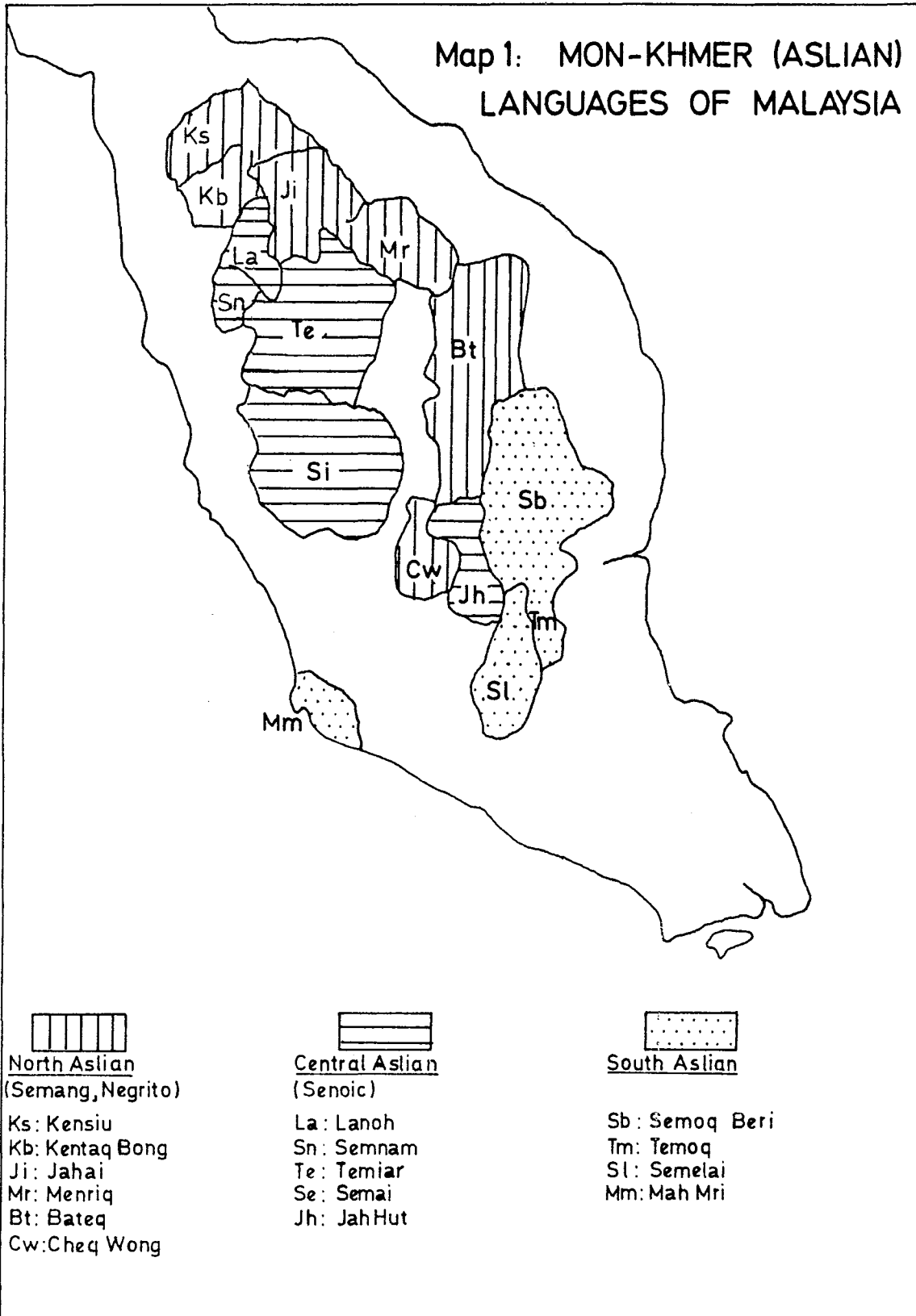
⁹Bera is the name of a shallow lake around which there is an important Semelai settlement.

Jah Hut population now lives. It is in fact common for aborigines to take the area they inhabit as a point of reference when identifying themselves.

The Jah Hut language is affiliated to the Mon-Khmer branch of the Austroasiatic family. It has assimilated a great number of Malay words (Diffloth 1976:78); Benjamin (1973) showed however that the basic lexicon of the Jah Hut remains Senoic and therefore Mon-Khmer. According to Benjamin (1976) Jah Hut is distantly related to the languages of the Temiar, Semai, Lanoh and Semnan (Map 1). He terms all these languages "Central Aslian". Even though the Jah Hut are linguistically related to the Senoi-speaking people (Benjamin's "Central Aslian") to the north of them, they are culturally linked with groups living to the south, particularly the Semelai (whose language Benjamin classifies as "South Aslian"). As we will notice (see page 13) the Jah Hut and the Semelai (Carey 1976:263) are the only non-Muslim aboriginal groups in the Peninsula that practice circumcision.

The cultural history of the Jah Hut is difficult to trace due to lack of evidence. Historians and archeologists have speculated on the origins of the different populations of South East Asia, but the controversy remains unresolved (Heine-Geldern 1932, Solheim 1976). It has generally been agreed that successive waves of migrants entered the Malay Peninsula. By the first millenium B.C., agriculture

Map 1: MON-KHMER (ASLIAN)
LANGUAGES OF MALAYSIA



After Benjamin 1976

was practised and pottery was produced (Cant 1973:16). Later, those participating in mining and trading brought in bronzes related to the Dong-s'on complex of Northern Indochina. They came to the Peninsula at the beginning of the Christian era (Cant 1973:16). Cant speculated that these different waves of migrants were the forebears of the different groups of aborigines. In this scheme the second major wave was composed of Mon-Khmer speaking people, but it is now agreed that the relationship between linguistic and cultural groups is hard to establish for such a remote past.

Migration to the Peninsula did not stop with the beginning of the Christian era. Over the years different people have come to settle or to trade, such as the Achenese, the Minangkabau, the Javanese, the Bugis, the Thais, the Chinese. The latter were trading in the Peninsula as early as the fifth century (Dunn 1975: 111). The Indians brought Hinduism and later helped propagate the Islamic faith¹⁰. Arab traders who settled in the ports were also among the early settlers. Little has been written on the extent to which the Jah Hut or their ancestors came into contact with these different groups. From the Jah Hut point of view, their contacts with outsiders are symbolized in their myth of creation.

¹⁰Ryan (1962) has suggested that Islam was introduced from India in the fifteenth century, since Islam in Malaya was a modified form, not resembling the orthodoxy of the Arab world. But the controversy surrounding the spread of Islam to the Malay Peninsula remains unresolved.

As the myth goes¹¹, man originally inhabited an unnamed primeval land. Soon, however, the land became overcrowded, compelling some to leave. Those who were chosen to depart built a huge multi-storied ship. Half the population embarked, along with a couple of each species of animal and enough food for the journey¹². They left without really knowing where they were heading. The wind rose and the ship set sail. After they had travelled for some time, turbulent waters caused the ship to break on a coral reef. In the confusion those who happened to be at the top of the ship managed to cling to a few planks and to their blowpipes. Those inside the ship held on to tools, padi, iron and cloth and drifted away to the island known as Jawa¹³. The first survivors reached Pulau Tempurong, or "Coconut Shell Island". Next to Pulau Tempurong were Pulau Minangkabau¹⁴, Pulau Jawa, Pulau Achin¹⁵, Pulau Kampar¹⁶,

¹¹This short resume of the Jah Hut myth of creation is from a transcript collected and translated by Dr. Polunin.

¹²This is strikingly similar to the story of Noahs' Ark.

¹³Jawa = Java, the most populous island in the Indonesian archipelago.

¹⁴There is no island of this name but the Minangkabau people are from the Padang Highlands of Sumatra.

¹⁵Again there is no such island, but Aceh, Acheen or Atjeh was formerly a politically turbulent sultanate that played a great part in Malay History between A.D. 1570 and 1670 (Wilkinson 1959:4).

¹⁶Kampar is not an island but a Sumatran river and state (Wilkinson 1959:502).

Pulau Melilin¹⁷, Pulau Jambi¹⁸. Far away were Pulau Benua¹⁹, Pulau Room²⁰ and Pulau Songsang²¹.

Having little in the way of food, the survivors on Pulau Tempurong subsisted miserably. Because of the initial advantage of technology (padi, iron, cloth, etc.) the survivors on Jawa were better off. One day, while fishing, the Javanese (as they are now called) reached Pulau Tempurong and discovered that their brothers were living in misery. They hastened to help them by bringing food, tools, and seeds. They are said to have taught the survivors agriculture, and later how to cook rice.

The population soon increased and little land was left for cultivation. It was then that the Jah Hut decided to migrate to Pulau Besar, or the "Big Island", covered with virgin forest.

¹⁷Melilin could not be found on a map, but it is the name of both a bird and a plant (Wilkinson 1959:770).

¹⁸Jambi is not an island either but an ancient and important Sumatran river state, believed by some to be the Malayu or Malayur from which Malaya gets its name (Wilkinson 1959:441).

¹⁹Benua is the Malay word for a large expanse of land, an empire or a continent. To the old Malays even a large island like Java was a benua (Wilkinson 1959:122).

²⁰Room could not be located as an island but it is the Malay word for Rome. It refers to the Byzantine or Eastern Roman Empire and its successor the Ottoman Empire, and any countries therein included (Wilkinson 1959:987).

²¹Songsang is said to be the Jah Hut word for China.

Pulau Besar is said to be Peninsular Malaya. These migrants, the mythological forebears of the Jah Hut, reached the Peninsula and settled around the Johore River²². These early inhabitants began to prosper.

One day the Minangkabau of Sumatra arrived to seek help from the batin in the difficult task of choosing their raja. The batin had three sons: the first was entitled to inherit his headmanship upon his death and the third son was believed to be a bringer of doom. After a strenuous debate the batin allowed his second son to return with the Minangkabau to their homeland and be crowned as a raja. After the batin's death the third son was asked to leave the southern settlement. He wandered and arrived at an estuary he deemed suitable for cultivation. The Jah Hut of Pahang believe they are his descendents. The present day Jah Hut also believe they are linked with the Minangkabau as was noted by Linehan (1973:4): "the Krau people, fugitives from the Semantan during the Rawa rebellion of 1862, claimed descent from the Minangkabau of Pagar Ruyong...".

The second son of the batin who became the raja of the Minangkabau in Sumatra sired seven children. One of them decided to return to the

²²Johore is at the southern tip of the Peninsula. The river Johore is said to have taken its name from the tree johore (*Pellacalyx sasaccardianus*, *Cassia siamea*) made into a bridge to cross the river -- titi kayu johore --. From this point on, I am relying on my own transcript of the myth as narrated to me by Yaman Hijau.

Peninsula to live among his father's people. Even though a prince, he lived a simple life, married a Jah Hut woman and had many children. Though he became well adjusted to the local customs, he insisted on continuing with one Sumatran practice, namely that he wanted his sons to be circumcised. Today the Jah Hut practise circumcision although they are not Moslems²³.

The bulk (46.74%) of the Jah Hut population lives at present in the Krau valley where Penderas, Pasu, Pian, Mendoi, and Seboi are located. The people of Kampung Kol also say that Krau is their land of origin. The valley has been declared a game forest reserve and it has rich hill soil. Informants add that in the past they used to inhabit both banks of the Pahang River, from source to mouth. They claim that they were pushed to their present location because of the gradual settlement of the area by non-Jah Hut. As observed earlier, Linehan traced the origin of the Jah Hut to the Semantan River, south of their present location. Since they fled the Rawa rebellion in 1862, the Jah Hut must have been in the Krau area for more than one hundred years. Cant (1973:31) mentioned that by 1888 both banks of the Pahang River, as well as the Tembeling River, were inhabited by Malays. Therefore, if the Jah Hut ever peopled both banks of the Pahang River, it must have been before that time. In

²³Therefore the Semelai are not the only tribe practising circumcision, as claimed by Carey (1976:258).

surveying their history as a people the observation could be made that there has been a gradual decline in their territory and economic status.

In 1975 the Jah Hut population was recorded as 3,588²⁴. This population is distributed over eleven villages, stretching along the west bank of the Pahang river, from Jerantut south to Temerloh. In 1970 the population of the different villages was as follows: Pian 361, Penderas 296, Paya Pelong 251, Lakum 250, Kiol 237, Pasu 202, Paya Keladan 201, Mai 170, Mendoi 134, Kol 92, Sebei 61.

Kampung Kol

Kampung Kol is one of the smallest Jah Hut settlements. At the time of my research²⁵, I estimated the number of inhabitants to be one hundred. This is an approximation since the Jah Hut travel

²⁴This figure is from the Kuantan office of the Department for Aboriginal Affairs. The figures for the distribution of the population in the different villages fluctuate because of constant temporary migration from one settlement to the other. Also census data have been hard to collect with any accuracy. For instance, the Jah Hut were recorded as numbering 1,893 in 1965 (Werner 1975:5); 2,255 in 1970; 2,280 in 1974; and 3,588 in 1975. According to these figures the Jah Hut population has increased by 90% in 10 years....

²⁵The field work was carried out in three parts. The first involved a preliminary trip to Kampung Kol in 1976. The second covered the major research period and lasted six and a half months between April and October 1977; the third part was a one week visit in February 1977. Not having scholarship funds, I could not afford an assistant and collected all the information myself.

back and forth from their respective villages to Kampung Kol, making it difficult to determine whether they did or did not belong to Kampung Kol. If I were to include only those who plant rice in Kampung Kol, a criterion the Jah Hut use to determine belonging, then I would have had to exclude three carvers and their families. As this thesis is organised around carving I decided to include them in my sample along with those who were in the village long enough for me to collect a significant amount of data on them. I therefore included those who did not fell jungle and planted rice, but who stayed for three months or so to earn a living from carving and occasionally from tapping rubber. I excluded those who stayed less than three months, even though they might have carved a few figures and sold them there. Moreover, some young men work and live outside the village with their wives. They are said to belong to Kampung Kol; during my seven month stay there however I failed to meet them, and they were therefore omitted. The parents of the wives are living in Kampung Kol and this is a sufficient criterion to regard them as part of the Kampung Kol population according to the Jah Hut. My sample, therefore, does not correspond to what the Jah Hut consider the Kampung Kol population.

Visitors who stay for a short period of time, that is from a day to a few weeks, are usually relatives of Kampung Kol people. They bring news from their respective villages as well as goods to be sold to tourists, e.g. rattan bracelets, pandanus bags and even carvin

Unmarried people of either sex travel in search of prospective spouses. However, these visitors do not cultivate the soil and are taken care of by the head of the household they visit.

The one hundred inhabitants of Kampung Kol are distributed almost equally between males and females. Among those above the age of fifteen, there are twenty-five males and twenty-eight females. The missing males in the age group of twenty to twenty-four (plate 40) are outside the village working for wages. There are five of them, two of whom are married; all of them live at their work site.

Kampung Kol is a very poor but well kept village. The houses, standing on stilts in the Malay style (plate 1), are often made of low quality material and do not compare with Jah Hut houses in more remote villages where bark and leaves are easily available. Following the general settlement pattern of swidden agriculturists, the ten Jah Hut houses stretch along a one mile path, in small clusters of two or three. A building with plank walls at the entrance of the village was built by the Department for Aboriginal Affairs, intended to be a workshop for the carvers. However, poor planning resulted in the building having a zinc roof and a cement floor thus making it unbearably hot in the middle of the day. It has been left unused. The construction of a longhouse was subsidized by the Department for Aboriginal Affairs (plate 2). It was intended to be a resthouse for tourists wishing to spend a night in the village.

Lack of information has meant that no tourist knows of its existence, so it stands unoccupied throughout the year. The cluster of houses is bordered with a few fruit trees struggling to survive in a poor clay soil. The rubber smallholdings of the village are untidily planted and often the coagulated latex is left stacked, waiting to be collected (plate 4). The small plots of wet rice fields in the valleys (plate 3) are a testimony to a new means of earning a living, not always suitable and frequently insufficient. The nearby hills, infested with the tall grass called lalang (*Imperata cylindrica*), the young forest, as well as the newly opened logging roads (plate 35) all indicate that the environment has been severely disrupted. The children with bulging bellies (plate 6) and thin limbs suggest the effects of an unbalanced diet²⁶.

Kampung Kol is one of the most recently settled Jah Hut villages. As was mentioned earlier the Jah Hut were living in the Krau valley before moving to Kampung Kol. The Emergency²⁷ unsettled their lives completely since they, like other aborigines who live on the jungle fringe, found themselves caught between the

²⁶This was supported by a remark of a medical doctor who visited the village during the field work period.

²⁷The Emergency refers to the counter-insurgency war in Malaya which lasted for twelve years between 1948 and 1960.

communist guerillas and the government troupes (Carey 1976:315). As conveyed to me by some of the villagers those who were not already resettled or under government control fled wherever they could. Many of their villages, together with their livestock and harvest were burned²⁸. Some Jah Hut said they were sent to stay in Malay villages and some of their children were placed in Malay houses. According to those informants who lived through the Emergency the experience was a very tearful one.

Batin Hitam, the founder of Kampung Kol, and his relatives were among those wandering about in search of small jobs, trying to escape the military tension in the Krau valley. Officials of the Department for Aboriginal Affairs asked them to settle in the Kampung Kol area, while waiting for the Krau valley to be "cleaned" of communist elements. Batin Hitam accepted the idea and with his relatives, proceeded to Kampung Kol. The first available document mentioning the existence of a group of Jah Hut under the leadership of Batin Hitam is a letter dated 1956. This letter is a request from Mr. Biles, who was then Protector of Aborigines, to the Assistant District Officer, to transform the Ulu Cheka area into an Aboriginal Occupied Area. There were 124 people at that

²⁸To the Jah Hut the burning of padi means the destruction of the soul of the rice, resulting in economic deprivation. Even till this day they justify their poor harvest because of the breaking of the taboo by the soldiers, during the Emergency.

time who exercised no right to the land on which they were settled. They were not allowed to plant rubber or fruit trees, since this might have established such a claim. In 1959 a letter dictated by Batin Hitam to a field assistant was sent to the Protector of Aborigines. The letter requested protection against invading neighbours, bent on hindering the opening of land for planting rice. The Batin claimed that the land was part of Jah Hut territory and had been so for generations, so called tanah pusaka. This was the beginning of a long struggle of the Kampung Kol inhabitants to protect their land from invasion by new settlers, mostly Malays.

The exact area reserved for the Jah Hut is hard to establish. The present headman told me that in 1957 the Sultan of Pahang gave the Jah Hut six hundred acres of land on which to settle permanently. At that time they planted fruit and rubber trees. The land on which the Kampung Kol people live has still not been gazetted. However, by 1972 the area submitted for gazetting had been reduced to 420 acres²⁹. The headman told me that the Department for Aboriginal Affairs intended to give them only fifteen acres per family which is exactly the amount of land the Aboriginal Act entitles them to. This would total only three hundred acres. As

²⁹As attested by a letter written to the Pengarah Hal Ehwal Orang Asli Pahang dan Trengganu, in September 1972.

suggested by Sharpe (1976:86,87), the aborigines in actual fact do not necessarily get this much. In 1969 the Jah Hut of Kampung Kol were reportedly given the opportunity to move to one of the resettlement schemes across the Pahang river. Each family would have been given six acres of land planted with oil palm. They however unanimously refused the offer, saying that they could not live without planting rice.

Kampung Kol is located west of Jerantut, roughly four miles south of Damak on the road to Ulu Cheka (Map 2). The population of Ulu Cheka, a Malay village founded at the turn of the century, was about 1,500 at the time of my research³⁰. Damak is a rubber trading town. The Jah Hut sell their chickens at the Damak Sunday market where they buy goods, either food or clothes (plate 8), wherever they have some money. Jerantut is the administrative centre of the district. It has an office of the Department for Aboriginal Affairs, where a dresser is posted to look after the health of the aborigines in the neighbouring areas. There is a large police station, an agricultural department, a health centre, and two movie theatres where people from Kampung Kol enjoy watching films. The population of Jerantut in the 1970 census was 4,449.

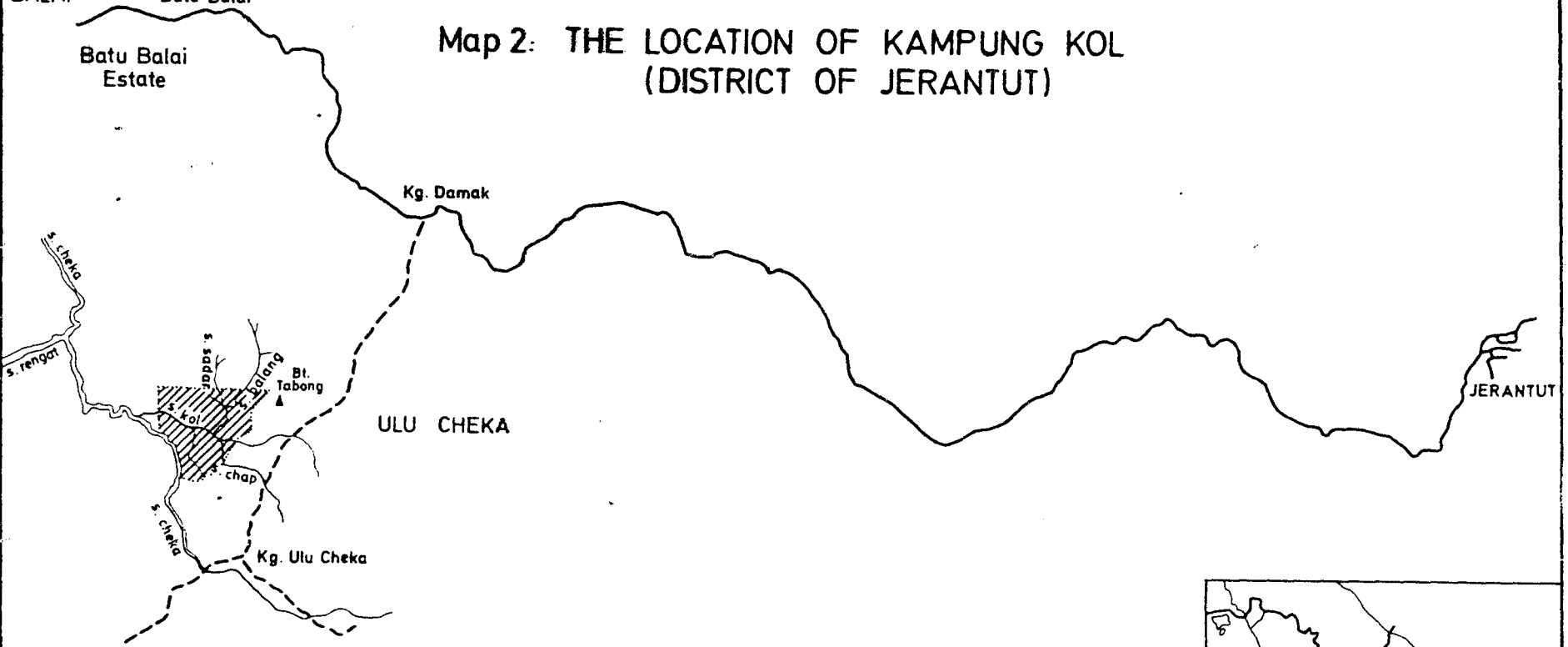
³⁰Personal communication, Penghulu of Ulu Cheka.

BATU
BALAI

Batu Balai

Batu Balai
Estate

Map 2: THE LOCATION OF KAMPUNG KOL (DISTRICT OF JERANTUT)



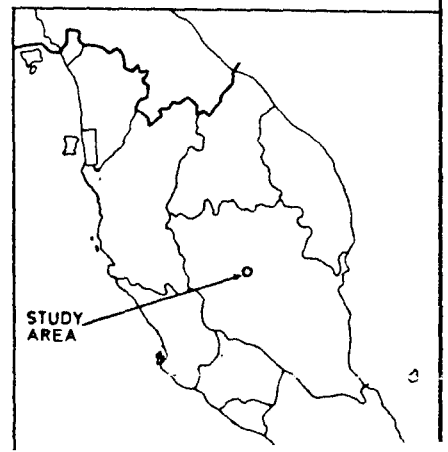
JERANTUT

ULU CHEKA

Kg. Ulu Cheka

Scale: 1 Inch To 1.5 Miles
 1 3/4 1/2 1/4 0

- KEY:
- Main Road
 - - - - - Secondary Road
 - ~~~~~ River
 - ▲ Hill
 - ▨ Hill



From the point of view of the aborigines, however, these towns and villages are not the most significant landmarks. Kampung Kol in their terms, is situated upstream along the river Cheka. The village is dissected by the Kol river and its tributaries the Balang and Chap and their tributaries the Sadar and Tabung (Map 2). Their mental map consists of Bukit Tabung to the east, a Chinese rubber estate called Batu Balai Estate to the north, the Kol estuary to the west and the river Cheka and a logger's road joining the main road to Ulu Cheka to the south.

The Problem in its Ramifications

Kampung Kol is not unique in its economic deprivation amidst changing ecological conditions. In fact it is one among many villages struggling to survive within a newly defined setting (Sharpe 1976; Baharun 1973). But Kampung Kol is unique³¹ in that the new way of earning a living, that is carving,

³¹The Jah Hut are with the Mah Meri of Selangor the only aborigines in the Malay Peninsula to carve figures for sale. It would be most interesting to compare the two communities, particularly since the recent doctoral thesis of Dr. Wazir Jahan Abdul Karim on the religion of the Mah Meri, whom she refers to as Mak Betisek, leads to such a comparison. Unfortunately her study was not available, while I was writing this exercise (Wazir Jahan Abdul Karim 1977).

is an extension of the traditional ideological framework. By this is meant that carving does not simply have an economic connotation like tapping rubber or selling logs, but is translated in religious terms, which set the parameters for important spheres of Jah Hut social life. While Salisbury's Siana (Salisbury 1963) assimilated the new steel axes into their indigenous barter system, the Jah Hut have at least partially absorbed their carvings into their religious categories, even though their monetary value is determined by the external market. The wood carvings have no exchange value within the Jah Hut community and their exchange value outside the community depends on their having been stamped as Jah Hut.

The meaning of most modern carvings is established with reference to the Jah Hut religious beliefs. The bulk of today's carvings is said to represent illness-causing spirits traditionally part of the Jah Hut conception of the world. Some of these spirits or bès are made into effigies in the context of curing ceremonies to exorcise the disease-causing bès, believed to have entered the body of the sick person. These effigies, called sepili in Jah Hut, are said to be the original source of inspiration for their modern wood carvings. Some carvers claim to adhere more closely to the rules of iconography based on these traditional figures, while others are said to create freely using the bès as a theme only. The first carvers

I call orthodox, while the latter who manipulate the oral tradition I refer to as unorthodox³².

In this thesis, an attempt is made to analyse the interplay of traditional and new elements in the process of carving and the interlinking of this activity with consonant changes in the cultural and structural aspects of the community. In doing so, I have taken carving to be a representation as well as an embodiment of the changes occurring in the fabric of Jah Hut life. Thus, carving while deriving its inspiration from the religious categories of the Jah Hut, is analysed for its observable effects on the restructuring of Jah Hut economic relationships and the norms expressing such relationships. In addition, carving is also analysed as a carrier of the emergent new relationships between the Jah Hut and the larger social

³²It is difficult to find an appropriate word to qualify these two groups of carvers. Traditional versus non-traditional or conventional versus non-conventional could have been used as well. However, traditional has the connotation of having been handed down for generations and is more appropriately used for other aspects of Jah Hut culture. Conventional on the other hand suggests artificiality and lack of spontaneity. Orthodox is taken here in its widest sense, namely that of holding onto a currently accepted opinion, generally taken as right or true. The added connotations of conforming to established religious doctrine does not come into conflict with the usage in the context of this thesis. For the Jah Hut carvers what is at stake is a conception of the invisible world as defined in Jah Hut religion, even though the conventions for representing it were set by the early carvers.