FRACTURED REFLECTIONS: RAINFORESTS, PLANTATIONS AND THE MALAYSIAN NATION-STATE

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Department of Geography)

We accept this thesis as conforming to the required standard.

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

April 2000

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Date 26 April 2000
ABSTRACT

This study examines how deforestation in Malaysia is framed as an economic issue fought out in the political arena using cultural codes as an entry point to examining the political tensions of contemporary Malaysia. Three themes recur throughout this work. The first theme concerns the centrality of resources in Malaysia's colonial and post-colonial political economy. The second theme concerns the displacement of the anxieties of national and cultural survival onto the contests over economic rights. And the third theme is the way collective memories 'flesh out' contemporary contests between the state and civil society. In the sense that the three themes are inter-related, this study traces the twinned construction, and opposition, of the two central ideas: of 'nature' in the form of the rainforest and 'race' in the guise of nation.

In keeping with the role of memory in present-day social and political engagements, this study weaves both archival and contemporary material to trace the construction of the history, imagery and vocabulary that have been mapped onto the physical space of the rainforest. I explore the production of the cultural codes through this mapping process that are then used to articulate the contests over the rainforest. These codes are the consequence of negotiations that reflect the unstable alliances and inconsistent identities of contemporary Malaysia, and they are the legacies, albeit translated, of colonialism. In retracing the contests over and about the forests, I hope to shed some light on why Malaysians made, and continue to make, decisions that appear to work against them.

The decisions affecting the fate of the rainforest reflects choices made about the kind of society Malaysians live with. Hence, the three core chapters of this study examine military, political/cultural and economic contests and negotiations surrounding the birth of the Malayan/Malaysian nation-state through their impacts on the rainforest. By acknowledging how much of Malaysia's contemporary politics is its colonial legacy, I hope to highlight the trade-off we have made between limited political engagement and development. To accept that we cannot protect basic rights as the price of economic success is to continue to live within the racist framework of colonialism that human rights are only for some humans.
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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I wish to thank my supervisor Trevor Barnes for his patience and encouragement over the years. The sociologist Barry Barnes once said that in a world of experts, we needed experts in human decency – I wish he could meet Trevor. Derek Gregory had faith in this project when I arrived in the department, a physical geographer, without the requisite vocabulary in social theory to articulate myself. His encouragement, insightful comments and humour have sustained me during my stay at UBC. Gerry Pratt and Peter Boothroyd made themselves available for consultations despite their busy schedules. The financial support for this research came from a Canada-ASEAN Fellowship and a University of British Columbia Graduate Fellowship.

Surviving the graduate experience has always struck me as a social and political experience as much as an academic one. My guides through this hazardous maze have been You-tien Hsing, Jennifer Hyndman, Pamela Moss and Nadine Schuurman. The late Amanda Ocran helped remind me of my ethical commitments when I got discouraged and tempted to abandon my project for the safe and neutral haven of a laboratory. Terry Barringer, librarian at the Commonwealth Archives at the University of Cambridge, not only helped me navigate my way through the documents but also has continued to respond to frantic e-mails to check reference sources. The helpful staff at the Public Record Office in Kew also deserve thanks. Ann Jarrett, Janet Parr, Goh Pek Kee and Goh Pek Choo welcomed me into their respective homes in England and Malaysia.

Finally, my husband John has put up with last minute cancellations of vacation plans and my frustrated tears when hardware and software refused to cooperate. His help with the graphics was invaluable. More importantly, his sensible perspective on arcane theoretical issues helped remind me of the political impetus behind undertaking this research. This thesis is as much his project as it is mine.
No human difference matters much until it becomes a privilege, until it becomes a basis for oppression. Power is the vector that turns minor into major.

Michael Ignatieff, *Warrior's Honour*

Can one divide human reality ... and survive the consequences humanly?

Edward Said, *Orientalism*
CHAPTER ONE
MIRRORS AND MEMORIES

1.0 CONTEXT

When Malaysia features in the Western media these days, it is usually cast in the role of the villain. In the early nineties Malaysia began featuring as the villain in the contemporary global morality play of rainforest conservation because of its record in destroying its rainforests.\(^1\) (Malaysia refers to the post-colonial nation state comprising Peninsular Malaysia and East Malaysia; see Figure 1.1.) In the last two or three years Malaysian corporations such as the Berjaya Group Berhad, Samling, WTK and Rimbunan Hijau have figured as environmental villains abroad as they move to cut down the rainforests in Surinam, Guyana and Brazil for timber. Other Malaysian multinationals are negotiating in Vietnam, New Guinea, Indonesia and the Philippines to obtain land for plantations.\(^2\) Even Malaysia’s outrage at the smog blanketing its skies in late 1997 caused by logging and plantation companies burning surplus vegetation in neighbouring Kalimantan, Indonesia, was blunted by its knowledge that more than 40 of those companies have Malaysian partners (Guardian Weekly, 28 September 1997). Malaysia’s Prime Minister, Dr. Mahathir Mohammad has defended his country’s record thus:

In Malaysia, our tropical forests cover about 20 million hectares, out of a total land area of 33 million hectares, or about 61 percent.... Considering that nearly 100 years have passed since we first started clearing our jungles to make way for plantation agriculture, you will appreciate that far from indiscriminately clearing our forests as alleged, much care and planning have gone into managing our forests. Long before it became fashionable for those in the West to espouse the cause of rainforests, we in Malaysia were already actively engaged in managing our forest resources and in preserving our wildlife and biological diversity. (Dr. Mahathir Mohammad, Opening Speech of the Eighth ASEAN-EC meeting in Kuching, Sarawak, 16 February 1990)

Currently, the Malaysian Government is once again in the media spotlight as a villain of human rights abuses because of its arrest and ill-treatment of its former Deputy Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim. The arrest of Anwar prompted the following remarks from US Vice-President Albert Gore:

[D]emocracies have done better at coping with economic crises than nations where freedom is suppressed.... and so among nations suffering from economic crises, we continue to hear calls for democracy and reform in many languages. People’s power, doi moi, reformasi. We hear them today -- right here, right now -- among the brave people of Malaysia. (US Vice-President Albert Gore, Speech at the APEC Summit in Kuala Lumpur, 22 November 1998)
Unfortunately, Gore's thinly-veiled criticism of Prime Minister Mahathir was perceived as coded support for the neo-liberal fiscal policies of Anwar, rather than human rights themselves, against the fiscally regulationist Mahathir. After all, the Americans have not generally been censorious of Malaysia's repressive behaviour towards labour and human rights activists in the past.  

Malaysia has refuted both the charge of environmental villainy and human rights abuse on the grounds that such criticism constitutes neo-colonial interference in its sovereignty, a standpoint with a great deal of sympathy among Malaysians as well as in other developing countries, at least until the recent political crisis. In addition, Malaysia has justified its policies in the context of the need for social management to create the conditions for economic development. As the most recent NIC (newly industrializing country), the Malaysian argument that cutting down the rainforest is a necessary step towards economic development is taken seriously by other developing countries as proof that deforestation is unavoidable and desirable in terms of timber revenue and opening up land for agriculture.  

Furthermore, the Malaysian argument equates economic development with racial survival: to forget this equation is to forget past racial subjugation. Criticizing the fiscal policies that the International Monetary Fund was asking developing countries to adopt, Mahathir (Guardian Weekly, 12 July 1998) stated, "We are pushed to become a backward, weak race that is recolonized and having to serve others."  

The significance of the deforestation issue in Malaysia lies in the way it is defined as an economic issue fought out in the political arena using cultural touchstones. Three themes run through this research. The first is about the role of resources in Malaysia's colonial and post-colonial political economy. The second concerns the construction of economic growth as the primary factor in racial survival and, subsequently, national sovereignty to the extent that any attack on Malaysia's economic policies takes on cultural significance. And the third is the story of the politics of memory to frame and negotiate the contests over rights and resources between the state and civil society. In the sense that this study traces the related construction, and opposition, of the two central ideas, of 'nature' in the form of the rainforest and 'race' in the guise of nation, my narrative can be seen as twinned biographies. And like most biographies, this is not to say that there was no material reality of the forest or shared practices that cause people to identify themselves as a nation, but rather, my analysis concentrates on how certain ideas about nature or nation take root and evolve an ontological status. Needless to say, like other biographers, my view is not only partial, it is also conditioned by my own memories and present situatedness with respect to the subjects of my study.
1.1 CULTURAL CODES AND SLIPPERY SIGNS

Different generations have different experiences that shade our responses to the present. It is 1996 and I am returning from visiting my mother's grave in the hillside cemetery outside Meru village in the southern part of the state of Selangor. Less than ten miles from the busy and prosperous town of Kelang, the village boasts a dead population in the neighbouring hills greater than the live one in the village. As we drive back into town, we observe that the stretch of land between Kelang and Meru is now an extended stretch of bare red earth -- oxisols as the soil scientists would refer to it. The forests have been cut down to make way for the freeway to connect the industrial hinterland with the main port in the country, Port Kelang. I watch these pre-conditions for erosion with silent disapproval. I remember working in flooded oxisols during monsoon storms; my field clothes were stained rust red from the mud. In contrast, my father observes out loud approvingly that finally Meru will be developed. His memories are stained a red of a darker hue. The reason the land between Kelang and Meru has taken so long to be developed is that during the 50's through to the 70's, any attempts to build roads, lay water mains, or develop plantations were sabotaged by insurgents against the government who would then conveniently disappear into the forest. In retaliation, during the worst years of the fighting in the fifties, government forces paraded the corpses of prominent insurgents around the villages in southern Selangor. The deforestation represents erosion and environmental degradation to me; it represents political peace and economic progress to my father. Different memories, different conclusions.

Most of the forest in Peninsular Malaysia was cut down to make room for cash crop plantations, mainly rubber and oil palm, introduced over a hundred years ago by the British colonial rulers. Like other environmental problems today, deforestation in Malaysia over the past century reflected how nature was valued, or devalued in the narratives of progress materially manifested in plantation agriculture. The basic premise of this study is how one sort of space, the forest, becomes devalued because of another space -- the plantation, which was the main cause of deforestation. The destruction of old growth rainforest in Malaysia, while less well-known than the Amazonian case, is nevertheless interesting and important. First, because there has been almost no local public dissent over the fate of the forests. Of the various environmental causes that have emerged, saving the tropical rainforest must rank among the most prominent, at least in the West. A whole retail industry has cashed in on this interest. A quick visit to a supermarket or drugstore, never mind health food
stores, will reveal drinks, chocolates, candy, ice cream, shampoos, bubble bath and even cat litter marketed with a rainforest theme. This coding of the marketing message may be overt, incorporating the word 'rainforest', or it may be more subtle, inferring some relationship to Eden through images of the forest flora and fauna on the packaging. Perhaps to Westerners, tropical rainforests recall a displaced temporal innocence, a glimpse of Eden before the Fall of industrial society. However, in Malaysia, even current scientific interests in combing forest products for pharmaceuticals and agricultural strains have not moved the middle-class, backbone of conservation movements elsewhere, to much enthusiasm. While eco-tourism has been promoted to Western tourists, it has not proven a strong enough lobby to spur further conservation efforts or even to influence the direction of development in the parks. Instead, the Malaysian government has opted to build a runway to accommodate small aeroplanes in its largest park, Taman Negara, and to expand the resort facilities currently existing.

Yet in a country where there are few avenues for public criticism of state policies, environmental criticism, with the exception of deforestation, forms a rare acceptable channel of dissent. Environmental criticism in Malaysia focuses on air pollution to improper sewage disposal. Admittedly, the slant on the coverage is technical with a great deal of faith in impact statements, risk analysis and the wisdom of scientists; in this sense, Malaysians and their Western critics have much in common. While I was doing my fieldwork in Malaysia, three comments from two environmentalists illustrate the cultural codes called into play whenever montaine deforestation is discussed, and more generally, the way environmental issues are framed there. Two comments came from Isabelle Louis, then Director of the local chapter of the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF). She distinguished the work of WWF from the less scientific environmental groups such as Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM), which has championed a socio-economic analysis of environmental problems, thus incurring the hostility of the state. When told that I was intending to examine the cultural parameters of deforestation, Dr. Louis suggested replacing the term 'cultural' with 'historical'. The point she made was that 'culture' in Malaysia is the code for race, whereas historical, would have implied colonialism, and therefore, the evils of a bygone period. As we shall see later in this section, this is very much in keeping with the Prime Minister's appeal to the past to fight present-day battles. The third comment came from a researcher at a unit dedicated to conserving mangrove forests. When asked if their mandate extended to montaine forests, she replied that the latter was a political issue as opposed to the first, which was an environmental issue. In fact, with shrimp farming in the
mangroves, mangrove destruction has become a contentious issue, but there is still no taboo on discussing it, and major newspapers have carried stories on mangrove conservation efforts. Thus, environmental issues can be framed acceptably in one of two ways: consigned to the past as the fault of the colonialists; or as technical issues requiring inputs of technology and divorced from their social and economic environment. So after all, both Westerners and Malaysians use the rainforests as cultural codes for other concerns: in the West as the antonym to the ills of an industrial society, and in Malaysia, as a symbol of local control over its economic trajectory and hence, sovereignty. The remarks of the two environmentalists highlight the assumption of an intrinsic mutual understanding between discussants of the complex cultural codes called into play whenever deforestation is mentioned in Malaysia. This assumption is rarely justified in the case of foreign commentators who focus only on the conservation or economic aspects.

But whether viewed through the lens of environmental villainy or as an issue of Third World control over its sovereignty, deforestation in Malaysia is very much tied to the issue of economic growth. Until the current economic travails, Malaysia's economic growth has averaged about seven percent annually in the past decade, and in 1996, the last year before the economic crisis, growth was eight percent (www.jaring.my/star/archives/7mplan.1). Per capita income had risen to RM 9,786 in 1995. The United States revoked Malaysia's 'most favoured nation' status in 1995 as a response to its increasing GDP. As the most recent newly industrializing country (NIC), the Malaysian argument that cutting down the rainforest is a necessary step towards economic development is taken seriously by other developing countries as proof that deforestation is unavoidable and desirable in terms of timber revenue and opening up land for agriculture. Malaysia, to date, is one of the few successful examples of a developing country using agricultural dollars to finance industrial transition; as such, it is a model for the many Third World countries with agrarian economies. The first-tier NICs, Taiwan, Hongkong, Singapore and Korea developed through concentrating on industrialization; the first three focussed state policies on light industry and the last on heavy industry (Castells, 1992). The Malaysian model of agricultural development is capitalist, scientifically rational, centrally controlled, large-scale and both private and publicly owned. The interest in this model of agricultural development lies in the role of the state as the facilitator of development. Malaysia, like the other NICS, is admired for its pro-capital, pro-West state interference unlike the Latin American economies of the seventies which tried to divest themselves of their dependence on Western technology (Castells, 1992). Moreover, as recently as 1997, even the World Bank in The State of the Changing World: The World Development
Report, 1997 called for a "reinvigoration of public institutions" to make possible more emulation of the "dazzling growth" of East Asia. The Financial Post (26 August 1995) described the Malaysian model of privatization as one of the most successful in the world. However, Malaysia's role as spokesperson for the Third World, defending development at the expense of environmental concerns, must largely be attributed to its combative Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohammad. As the Guardian Weekly (7 September 1997) described him, "Nobody has symbolized East Asia's confidence in itself and its ability to take on the world single-handedly more than the Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohammad." At the 1990 ASEAN-EC meeting, Mahathir described the current Western preoccupation with conservation at the expense of development as "a vote-catching issue for some, for us in the developing countries, it is a matter of economic survival." And Mahathir has repeatedly linked economic survival to racial. He has described an IMF bailout as tantamount to "losing our [Malaysia's] independence" (Far Eastern Economic Review, 4 December 1997).

The link between economic success and racial pride has allowed Dr. Mahathir to turn Western criticism of forest mismanagement into an issue of neo-colonial interference in national sovereignty; a standpoint with a great deal of sympathy among Malaysians as well as in other developing countries. While Mahathir has been criticized in the Western media for playing the nationalist card to deflect criticism of his government's policies, his combination of hyperbolic rhetoric and shrewd observations have garnered support, albeit not always whole-hearted or willing. And in an interview with the New Straits Times (27 June 1995), Datuk Ting Wen Liang, Malaysian Permanent Representative to UNEP said:

In recent years, it [Western imperialism] has taken on the form of 'green hegemony' -- the North's domination in defining global environmental protection, which puts the South at an economic disadvantage. Western reframing of resource issues as nature conservation issues appears to many Malaysians as a trick to change the rules of economic competition just as a few Third World countries are beginning to gain economic ground. I stated at the beginning of this chapter that deforestation today is associated with the repression of the civil rights of forest-dwelling indigenous groups. But the Malaysian government sees the forests as an issue of sovereignty over resources. As such, the representation of the control of the forests raises questions of the state-civil society relationship. Moreover, despite Malaysia's counter-criticism of Western environmentalists as neo-colonialist, Malaysian companies have engaged in what appears as colonial behaviour in dealing with indigenous groups. In response to foreign criticism of Malaysia's record of treatment of indigenous peoples in
pursuit of economic development projects, Mahathir (ASEAN-EC meeting, 16 February 1990) said, “There is nothing romantic about these helpless, half-starved and disease-ridden people and we will make no apologies for endeavouring to uplift their living conditions.” Malaysia's status as a model of economic development makes the lack of local dissent and its implications for state-civil society relationships an issue of wider concern than to Malaysians alone. During my fieldwork in Malaysia, South African officials were frequent visitors observing and learning from Malaysia's model of development and race 'management'.

Yet another dimension of the cultural codes that connect conservation issues to economic development in the Third World is the role of technology-sharing. The Malaysian newspaper, the New Straits Times (14 March 1995) observing that climate change was really about Western unwillingness to share technology shrewdly touched on a sensitive topic among the NICs, raising as it did the spectre of neo-colonialism. During debriefing sessions leading up to the Rio Summit in 1992, I sat in on interdepartmental meetings in which Canadian officials complained of having to dodge the issue of sharing technology which polluted Asian countries would otherwise have to pay for while keeping the discussion focussed on conservation instead. Technology transfer has become an increasingly contentious issue as NICs claim a larger share of the global market, and developed countries withhold technology as a means of dampening competition (Jenkins, 1987, Chapter Four; Ernst and O'Connor, 1990; Ernst, 1994). Yet Malaysian criticism of Western reluctance to share 'clean' technologies is also an acknowledgement that the West controls the technology that Malaysians deem essential to the creation of a country and society they wish for. Almost any comment on Malaysia's development trajectory is described along the following lines:

Three decades ago the country was a sleepy land of tin mines and rubber plantations; its per capita income about the same as Guatemala's. By the mid-1990s it had become an economic powerhouse, with GDP growth averaging 9% a year .... It had become one of the world's largest producers of semiconductors and a major maker of cellular phones and stereos as well. Its roads were clogged with made-in-Malaysia cars. (Fortune, 11 May 1998).

Technology signifies the space between our subjugated past and autonomous present. Moreover, Malaysia's industrialization through its agricultural dollars has allowed it to disassociate itself from forms of labour linked to its colonial past. However, there is a certain irony in the fact that Malaysian plantations are now mainly worked by immigrant labour subjected to the same treatment European plantation owners once meted out to colonial Malayan labour (Fortune, 4 August 1997). Not surprisingly when Mahathir first voiced his intention to regulate currency trading, the US Ambassador, John Malott, retaliated by focussing public attention on Malaysia's dependency on
external sources of technology. He said, "We've [Americans] transferred more technology and educated more Malaysian children than any other nation.... Let us remember also how important partnership between our two countries will be in the Multimedia Super Corridor [MSC] .... This is what we have at stake." (Far Eastern Economic Review, 27 November 1997).

The MSC is basically a digital fibre-optic network that will link the new Malaysian capital Putrajaya to the rest of the world, in the process, computerizing many of the day-to-day tasks carried out by the civil service (Guardian Weekly, 6 June 1997). Putrajaya is to be Mahathir's legacy, the material enactment that irreversibly distances Malaysia's from its colonial agrarian past and inaugurates the future high tech nation-state.

Mahathir's rhetorical defiance, once tolerable because of Malaysia's economic success, now provides a focus for Western criticism in the light of its economic troubles. He has argued that currency markets need regulation, a stand that has alarmed foreign investors (Far Eastern Economic Review, 20 November 1997). But his argument can hardly be considered outlandish. After all, the same argument has been echoed by the financier George Soros (1998). And Mahathir's defiance of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has wide support locally where people have seen the impositions the IMF has made on Korea and Indonesia (Far Eastern Economic Review, 4 December 1997). To the West, Mahathir, is the 'bad native' who agitates; good natives overlook the 'difficulties' of foreign domination. I should make it clear that I do not endorse Mahathir's repression of dissent or abuse of human rights. But I feel that it is important to understand the social and political dynamics underlying the Malaysian-Western conflict over deforestation, and more generally, over civil rights. In fact, Mahathir's connection of economic success with racial pride is echoed in the focus of Western criticism on the concept of 'Asian values' by commentators such as Michael Vatikiotis (1996) and Jim Hoagland (Guardian Weekly, 19 October 1997). This is the concept championed by the NICs that attempted to root their economic success in cultural values upheld by Asians, including quite controversially for their Western critics, the idea that collective rights are more important than individual rights; at least, the rights of certain collectives. The concept appears to have drawn more criticism and resentment than Malaysia's record of human rights abuses. For example, in the face of the Asian economic meltdown, Jim Hoagland of the Washington Post (Guardian Weekly, 19 October 1997) claims; "Just as sharply devalued are the political hubris and racial conceit [my emphasis] known under the catch phrase 'Asian values'". Hoagland went on to describe the Asian crises as "self-inflicted" (which is one way of describing capitalism), Thailand as
being "brash and nouveau riche", the Indonesians as "witless" and Mahathir as a "blackmailer". In response to such culturally and racially evaluative judgements, Malaysian politicians have defended their controversial policies using coded terms such as 'imperialism', 'hegemony', 'recolonized', 'backward race', 'survival' and 'serve' calculated to conjure up associations with colonialism.

Until now, I have been trying to make two points. The first is that conflicts over deforestation, resource control, economic growth and technology all slip in and out of each other's narratives. The second point is that at the same time, all these rhetorical contests described have referred in some way to the code of 'nation' which itself appears to be a translation of the older colonial code of race. I suggest that many Malaysians see their contemporary conflicts with the West as continuations of their struggles against foreign subjugation. More subtly, I suggest that the various verbal permutations of the conflict reflect the underlying anxiety of complicity with, and dependence upon, the First World. Mahathir's defiance reflects a complex, unstable, alternating confidence and insecurity of the relationship between the post-colonial world and their former colonizers.

This brief description of Malaysia's contention with Western notions of both nature conservation and economic progress with respect to its rainforest is as interesting for what it tells us as for what it leaves out. Why do Malaysians choose certain options to utilize the rainforest as a resource? How does Western advice become acceptable in some situations and not in others? And what is perceived as being at stake in these conflicts, and by whom? I suggest that what we are seeing here is the prioritization of economic growth over civil rights through a reframing of economic growth as the imperative to national sovereignty. Sovereignty, in turn, is the postcolonial code for racial survival. Understanding the context of this framing and the coded displacement of meanings requires delving into Malaysia's colonial history. As Ashis Nandy (1983, p.xi) has written, understanding colonial history is urgent because it is about understanding contemporary politics. Further, Shahid Amin (1995) argues that the materiality of place 'fixes' events and memories to the meanings associated with them, and that these come together in certain ways of telling, albeit, meanings that undergo numerous mutations over time. My story of the Malaysian rainforest is a story of both a place and an idea whose boundaries are physical and at the same time delineated by codes that are signposts to other spaces of meaning; the outdoor factory of the plantation, the battlefield, and the state. Thus, while this is a history of the fate of the Malaysian rainforest, the forest itself slips in and out of focus in my narrative as the different coded meanings slide under and around the sign of the forest, sometimes temporarily crowding it out of the narrative picture. These continuities,
albeit translated, deny the simplistic assumption of a clean break between colonialism and postcolonialism and argue for a revisitation of the colonial spaces in Malaysia because it is about understanding the parameters that define contemporary struggles.

1.2 RESEARCH PURPOSE
My research task is to reconstruct a 'small' history of the Malaysian rainforest; small in the sense that it will not be a comprehensive reconstruction of all the events that affected the forest. I focus on how contesting claims over rights and resources were framed during the colonial and postcolonial periods. I then go on to ask how these contests bear upon contemporary struggles between the state and civil society in Malaysia. I look at the period from the turn of the century to the 1970s, during which the introduction of plantation agriculture in Peninsular Malaysia under colonial rule and its continued expansion after political independence resulted in widespread deforestation. The Malaysian montaine forest is not just there (or not there). It is, to paraphrase Edward Said (1978, p.5), also an idea that has a history, imagery and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence for society.

The following chapters attempt to fulfil the research purposes of this study in two ways. First, I trace the construction of this history, imagery and vocabulary that have been mapped onto the physical space of the rainforest. Through this mapping process, I ask what the rainforest came to stand for. Certain cultural codes are produced through this mapping process that are used to articulate the contests over the rainforest. These codes are the consequence of negotiations, sometimes violent, which produce the unstable alliances and inconsistent identities of contemporary Malaysia. They derive their political power from their place in prevailing hierarchies that assign values to things and ultimately human beings. So this is also a story of cultural codes produced by, and in turn producing the hierarchies of capital, empire and science, and the dense intersecting networks of alliances woven to sustain these hierarchies. And these codes survive, albeit translated, manifested in the social continuities across the temporal divide of political independence. The politics of memory is the common thread throughout the chapters. By this I mean the appeal to collective memory to negotiate and set boundaries to social relations.

In retracing the contests over and about the forests, I hope to shed some light on why Malaysians made, and continue to make, decisions that appear to work against them by examining the contexts within which these decisions were made. In this sense, the most passionate postcolonial writing has tried to come to terms with variations of the question of why subalterns abet the program.
to keep them subalterns in different ways, Edward Said (1978; 1988; 1993) Ranajit Guha (1988), Amitav Ghosh (1997), Partha Chatterjee (1993), Marnia Lazreg (1994) and Leela Gandhi (1998) have all posed this question in linking their historiographies to contemporary political issues. Moreover, this central question of postcolonial scholarship is significant for more than just a post-colonial society because it has resonance for disempowered groups everywhere. Central to this question is the issue of how we represent and negotiate our present claims to rights based on our memories of collective identity. In this project, the past, after all, is not a distant country.

1.3 SCOPE

Driving through the Malaysian countryside in the later half of a morning, one sees latex dripping into cups from rubber trees that had been tapped before sunrise. Latex, lifeblood of Malaya for over a hundred years, paid for in the blood of hundreds of thousands of labourers who died early from overwork, ill treatment and lack of food. Paid for in the blood shed by men and women who fought the colonial authorities and their allies in the forests over control of rubber, and hence, Malaya. In this study, I use the terms colonial and imperial interchangeably, and I focus on the period from the late 19th to mid 20th century when the large-scale conquest, administration and social and economic transformation of the Malayan peninsula by the British took place. I am aware of earlier Portuguese and Dutch colonial encounters in Malaya, but this study does not address them. Instead, this dissertation sets out to examine how meanings associated with the rainforest became embedded within meanings associated with other spaces; in particular, the postcolonial nation-state. The story of deforestation is illustrated through a tandem narrative of the growth of plantation agriculture in Malaya. The ascendency of planned, standardized growth for capitalist purposes replaced chaotic nature. In time, the forest as an impediment to plantation took on a malevolent dimension as the struggle to control plantations and Malaya erupted all over the country during the Emergency from 1948 to 1960. I intend to situate the Emergency in the context of the larger geopolitical concerns of the time: the waning of European colonialism, the rise of Communist China, and the accelerating rivalry between the US and the USSR as manifested in the Cold War. To return to a local context, the last part of this study examines how the plantation became the embodiment of the survival of the new nation-state.

Chapter Two presents the theoretical approaches that shaped my study. The chapter falls into two parts. The first half presents theories that argue for the social construction of categorical terms
such as nature and race which build on Edward Said's seminal 1978 study of Orientalism as a discursive field. Western studies of nature, like those of the Orient, are about the production and stabilization of knowledge that legitimizes prevailing hierarchies that adjudicate claims and allocate rights. I also use Bruno Latour's actor-network theory to argue that claims about nature can be studied as a jockeying for the power to stabilize definitions and standards for claiming something to be the case. In my research I examine how certain narratives are privileged in studies of resources and nature. I also examine how the Malaysian rainforest is defined as nature, resource, or 'other', through various cultural, political, scientific and economic agendas. These different agendas overlap, and the definition that prevails depends on the extent of these overlaps, and the relative power of the group supporting the definition. The more groups that can find commonalities in their purpose, the better the chances of a certain definition prevailing, be it the forest as natural heritage or resource. Political and economic agendas coincide, as do scientific and economic ones, or scientific and political ones. These coincidences mutually reinforce definitions, and these coincident agendas and mutual reinforcements are what I mean by social constructions. They are central to understanding not only how a resource is defined, but the relative values assigned to them.

The second half of Chapter Two takes up the issue of how cultural symbols and metaphors are invoked and deployed to frame the contests over rights and resources. The emergence of independent nation-states has been accompanied by an attempt to deny the humiliating memories of colonial subordination and complicity. And any study of postcolonialism must engage with that premier symbol of post-colonialism -- the nation. Where post-colonialism refers to a chronological break, I use the term postcolonialism to refer to a theoretical approach that engages with continuities between the colonial and post-colonial periods. In trying to understand the competing claims over and around the Malaysian rainforest, I have grounded the issue and the participants in a place and a time using the insights provided by the social historian Charles Tilly (1997, 1994) who argues that collective memories frame what actions are thought possible and permissible in the present by different groups.

The politics of memory inform this study in two ways. First, the Malaysian rainforest is a symbol of significant events in the life of the country. Second, a history of the rainforest reflects the contesting claims to rights, and as such, provides insight into how civil rights are framed in Malaysia. In examining how a history of the Malaysian rainforests might be implicated in contemporary contests over civil rights in Malaysia, I use Michael Taussig's (1987) study of the Brazilian rainforest-
based rubber economy at the turn of the century and Shahid Amin's (1995) fourteen-year study on
the riots of Chaura Chauri and their place in Indian nationalist mythology. In Taussig's study, the
forest emerges as a space of terror and death. For the purposes of my analytical framework, Taussig's
study shows us that memories of events give places and objects their significance. The fate of the
Malaysian forest becomes intertwined with memories that attach certain meanings to it. Moreover,
building on Amin's (1995) research of how a local event is reinscribed through a master narrative,
I examine how the history of the rainforest is inserted and incorporated into the master narrative of
Malaysian nationalism.

Chapter Three provides the historical background to the physical reconfiguration of the
Malaysian landscape in the wake of colonialism and the introduction of a capitalist agricultural system
that produced a commodified landscape and a radically different demography to cope with the
accompanying labour demands. Central to this chapter are the processes by which the forest was
devalued through the nexus of capital, science and empire. The British colonialists instituted a new
system of land tenure that was based on individual rights. The changing form of land tenure was
significant because of the accompanying transition of agricultural production for sufficiency to that
for surplus. The early planters were the first step in creating rural communities separate from the
Malay settlements. In the nineteenth century, the high price of wild Amazonian rubber persuaded
countries that possessed tropical colonies to cultivate rubber. By 1910, rubber had virtually displaced
all other crops, whether for cash or subsistence, occupying 62 percent of the cultivated land
(Headrick, 1988, p.246). Rubber estates became the "leading feature of Malaya's ecology" (R.
Jackson, 1991, p.5). Since even few Europeans could afford the outlay for a rubber plantation, many
of the new efforts were owned by British agency houses setting the stage for the corporate style
agriculture that continues to dominate Malaysia today. In addition, the rubber industry was supported
by research institutions such as Kew. The expansion of plantation agriculture also created a new
demand for labour thus triggering the emigration of Tamil labour from southern India. Together with
the Chinese and the Europeans, the Tamils would more than double the population of Malaya creating
the context for future racial conflict.

The last section in Chapter Three discusses the destabilization of racial hierarchies and
stereotypes because of World War II and the temporary Japanese victories over European and
American colonialists in Asia. At a local level, many Chinese families fled into the forests as a result
of the Japanese persecution. At the global level, the Japanese victories signalled a psychic break in
the colonial encounter. During the Japanese Occupation in Malaya, the forests provided a place to hide from, and from which to harass, the largely urban-based Japanese troops. The Malayan Peoples Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA), which later reverted to its original name, the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) emerged from the forests after the war in control of the rural areas. The clash between the British, seeking to reconsolidate territorial control, and the Communists, who needed land to settle on, was bound to result in a military struggle. Strikes also broke out on many estates reflecting the dissatisfaction over low wages and poor living conditions.

Chapter Four describes how the forest came to represent an uncontrollable landscape harbouring an uncontrollable population in light of the military struggle between the reoccupying British colonialists and the communists. The key theme is the forest as a frontier that had to be territorialized in the project of establishing and consolidating sovereignty. This project required a spatial reconfiguration of the demography of the country giving rise to the repressive laws that define contemporary Malaysia's social and political landscape. Chapter Four retraces the material and representative procedures by which the rainforest acquired imaginative resonance as a metaphor. The use of the sign 'jungle' heralded the incorporation of the forest into military discourse. I then go on to explain the containment strategy of the state to drive the Communists out of the towns and to isolate them in the forests. In response, Communists took the struggle into the estates, thus destabilizing the estates as symbols of progress and undisputed power. The final section discusses the ambitious resettlement schemes perpetrated on twenty percent of the Malayan people. Chapter Four describes the making of modern Malaya as a reconfiguration towards a more disciplined space. The tandem strategies of physically disassociating the space of the Malayan rainforest from people's lives accompanied by the imaginative association of the forest with danger and violence in the course of the Emergency concretized the forest as the place to be avoided or erased.

Chapter Five situates the theme of the rainforest as a violent space within the geopolitical contours of that period (post-World War II to the 1970s). My objective in this chapter is to identify and trace the strands weaving the imaginaries of the Malaysian rainforest with the construction of a canonical narrative of identity of the post-colonial nation-state Malaya/Malaysia. The Malayan Emergency was officially declared over in 1960, but a low-level insurgency continued into the eighties. As a symbolic event, the Emergency acquired political and cultural significance at both the local and international levels. Locally, the Emergency became the salient fact of Malaysia's recent collective history. Globally, it was inserted into, and reinscribed through, the trope of the Cold War.
The forest as the place of the Emergency became inserted into the master narratives of nationalism and the Cold War. The Cold War was an especially convenient discursive device to elide the unpleasant details of a local elite collaborating with their colonial rulers, thus allowing the elite to emerge as freedom fighters on the side of good against evil. Within the context of the Cold War, Malaya's 'jungle war', along with others in the Third World, and most spectacularly in Vietnam, became the symbol of anti-state, anti-West, anti-freedom, anti-capital and anti-God challenges. Insurgencies and tropical forests are very much implicated in each other's fate because the forest is often the most tangible sign of Third World insurgencies.

Chapter Two introduced the relationship between the cult of technological progress and capitalism by describing the introduction of plantation agriculture, and with it, the scientific concepts of planned, standardized growth and the accompanying social transformations to accommodate this system of agriculture. Chapter Six picks up the thread of the economic narrative by examining the factors contributing to the devaluation of the rainforest when traded against the value of the plantation in the context of the political economy of post-World War II Britain, and later, post-colonial Malaysia. I examine how resources are constructed and assigned their relative values by focussing on the place of rubber in global capitalism as it was inflected through the negative balance of payments situation that evolved between Britain and the US in the aftermath of the Second World War. The second section looks at the development paradigm as an economic strategy in Cold War geopolitics. This Western model of development posited the creation of a market-driven economy as a pre-requisite for the evolution of democracy. It played a central role in promoting export-oriented agriculture in many post-colonial states through its adoption by international financial institutions such as the World Bank, and more specifically for Asia, the Colombo Plan. The third section discusses state-sponsored plantation agriculture in post-colonial Malaysia as a strategy to legitimize government. For many governments of new nation-states, economic development was seen as their legitimating seal in the face of insecure political conditions. In particular, this last section looks at the race riots in 1969 and the government's decision to speed up development programs to facilitate wealth transfer across racial lines. The policy changes enacted as a result of the race riots saw Malaysia embark on the third, and most ambitious phase, of expanding the export-led plantation system. This last section of Chapter Six continues the 'othering' of the forest through its place as impediment in the discourses of progress and nationalism as national survival becomes predicated on
the success of its development program. In turn, the success of the development program was based on the eradication of the forest.

In Chapter Seven I conclude with some brief remarks on the relevance of this research for contemporary Malaysia.

1.4 METHOD

In 1995 when I was carrying out research in Malaysia, I stopped in Singapore on my way back to Canada. In Singapore I attended an exhibition of striking photographs of early Singapore. Not being an antiquarian, I assumed that the sepia tinted photographs came from the national archives. Two years later when I was researching the Royal Commonwealth Archives at the University of Cambridge, I came across the originals. This trivial incident encapsulates the postcolonial predicament. Political independence does not give back the past. Malaya's history is still in the 'old country'. My thesis has used mostly archival material derived from both the Royal Commonwealth Society archives and the Public Record Office at Kew. All of the files have been accessible to the public since the early to mid-eighties. Yet I believe that the selection of material is original in the way it is presented, and this intellectual filtering of material forms a central plank of my thesis. The more contemporary material, in particular, on environmental issues, was culled from newspapers, magazines and other publicly available documents during my stay in Malaysia.

A matter that needs to be dealt with is that by using largely archival material, it is the official voice that I have analyzed. Imperialism emerged, and continues to emerge from contests, even if between great imbalances of power. If there were indecisions, uncertainties in colonialists and their successors, these frequently were overcome by an excess of violence. The disempowered do not write, they are written about, to paraphrase Shahid Amin (1995,p.1). This is a hazard with any kind of historical research where the voice of the 'subaltern', that is the colonized, women and labour are not represented except in circumstances where their lives have intersected institutionally with those in power. The records of these confrontations prove that if the speech of subalterns was not recorded, their actions sometimes forced recognition. I have attempted to produce a counter-reading based on their brief words, and more significantly, on their actions. Even when I have been fortunate enough to come across documentary evidence in the words of the subalterns, they have been translations of the actual documents. Needless to say, a certain amount of subconscious editing goes on here as well. Using Ranajit Guha's (1988) categories, I have examined primary, secondary and
tertiary documents. Each category is defined by its formal and acknowledged identification with the official point of view. In practice, it was useful to see how little they differed, if at all; the official voice was often more reasonable than the unofficial voice which usually called for more excessive violence than was acknowledged. Primary documents also at least contain statements from the 'other side' in the immediacy of the event. Guha (in)famously argued that secondary documents enter the realm of history through the distance in time from the event, and this historical status camouflages the particular manner of representation of these documents. If documents are judged for their partisanship based on the possibility of an opposing code to the text, then it must be said that the distance of time and affiliation produced little difference from the official point of view in all three categories of documents. Contemporary academic analysis of the period I focus on often falls into the category of the official voice; it is remarkable for the lack of dissent from the official point of view even among Malaysians. The rare departures, usually from a Marxist perspective, relegate the record to one of class differences (Puthucheary, 1955; Mohamad and Caldwell, 1977; Jomo, 1988). As far as possible, I have tried to corroborate events and the decision-making process by using more than one account of the same event. This was sometimes helpful in showing the discrepancies between various perceptions of what went on. In particular, it was helpful in highlighting the cases when the official and unofficial voices were consciously different; that is, the colonial authorities did not intend to carry out what they proclaimed in public.

So, in answer to the infamous question, “Can the subaltern speak?” (Spivak, 1988), the answer is “No”. I begin this dissertation fully acknowledging the difficulty of writing about groups that have been multiply silenced -- by class, race, gender and most irredeemably of all, by being on the losing side. Furthermore, I will not be able to avoid social translation, mine as well as others on whose accounts I rely on. Because of the paucity of sources of writing by disempowered groups, I have had to rely on official sources. The ideas in this thesis are interpretations filtered through the lens of my personal history and memory of growing up in Malaysia and experiencing some of the events discussed. Yet to me, all research in social science is a straining to hear other voices and read other words. Because I have written on a subject that personally intersects with my life, I have periodically interjected my own experience in the ensuing pages. One last note remains to be made. Individuals often disappear from historical writing especially when they are on the losing side. Whenever possible, I have named the individuals who died in the violence recounted in the following pages as a minor attempt to reinsert them into the spaces of memory.
On the most obvious level, this study is about how one space, the plantation, comes to be valued in relation to another, the forest. But this study is also about spaces of modernity displacing the old -- native and nature. The only way the native could recuperate his space was to reclaim it within a framework legitimized within the global geopolitical discourse -- the nation-state. At an empirical level, my study attempts to look at the experiences of one country within the larger global phenomena of imperialism, capitalism and modernity. This work is about nature and nation: two ideas and spaces that have been reified into ontology. This brings up two questions -- why are the plantation and the nation-state the obvious manifestations of the modern? And why is modernity valued beyond all else? What I wish to do is explore the contingencies and alliances both material and imaginative that have allowed one space to prevail temporarily over the other. My story of the Malaysia rainforest is also a story about how we come to assign values to different definitions, goals and ultimately groups of human beings. In the NICs, economic success until now has delayed the day of reckoning of the trade-off between civil rights and economic growth. Therefore, the story of the contest over resources is a story of the rights of civil societies and the struggle to keep the parameters of political engagement alive. Finally, while it is a story of the competition between different collective remembrances, it is also a map of my memories. The 'field' in this research is colonial Malaya, but it is also my heartland. It is not a place I will leave behind when I have written the last page.

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1. Arturo Escobar (1995, Chapter Five) argues that the language of sustainable development and conservation comprise the new moral vocabulary to blame inhabitants of the Third World for environmental degradation that he argues is more the result of the vicious downward economic spiral they have found themselves in as they are incorporated into global capitalism.

2. The Berjaya Group operates in Guyana and Surinam; it was previously expelled from the Solomon Islands after being implicated in a bribery scandal. Also in Guyana are Malaysian companies, Mafira (operating as Kwitari Investments Inc.) and Solid Timbers (Guardian Weekly, 17 August 1997). Samling and Rimbunan Hijau were cited by the Environmental Investigating Agency among the 15 companies with the worst logging practices. Samling and WTK (as Amaplac) operate in Brazil (Guardian Weekly, 22 June 1997). According to their annual reports, Malaysian multinationals Boustead, Guthries and Sime Darby have either bought land or are negotiating with local governments to open plantations in neighbouring countries.

3. The arrest of the lawyer and human rights activist Irene Fernandez earlier in 1998 appears to have gone unnoticed by the Americans.

4. The Malaysian Consulate in Vancouver confirmed that Malaysia provides aid to African countries but asked for my request in writing.

5. See Susanna Hecht and Alexander Cockburn, (1989) and Joe Kane (1995) for a celebration of forests and forest peoples and their association with Eden. Hecht and Cockburn describe this common approach but do not espouse it themselves.


7. By civil society, I mean society that structures itself and coordinates its actions through associations free form state tutelage (Chatterjee, 1993, p.228).

8. Across the Johore Straits, Singapore's strongman Lee Kuan Yew, provides ideological support for Mahathir when he suggested that a little bit of amnesia in ignoring state suppression was needed for the self-esteem of a country in response to a question on South Korea during his interview with Fortune (4 August 1997).

9. Datuk Ting Wen Liang (New Straits Times, 27 June 1995), Malaysian Permanent Representative to UNEP observed during
the Rio Summit, Western companies used conservation as a way to swap pollution credits so that by buying a few hectares of forest they could avoid having to reduce their pollution output. A larger pollutant emissions quota would be allowed for companies that agreed to buy up tracts of the rainforest in Third World countries and conserving the rainforest. The basis of the program rested on the assumption that since trees absorb carbon dioxide, preserving trees would offset the emissions allowed. Aside from a lack of understanding of how this trade-off would actually work out, the model also disregards the problems of continued localized pollution.

10 During the present fiscal crises, Malaysia's policy of deporting any inconvenient extraneous labour regardless of their human rights echoes the British colonial policy in the 50's and 60's but active long before that. The deportation policy has been implemented along ethnic and gendered lines, a much less publicized fact. Bangladeshis and Indian workers have been deported before Indonesian labourers (www.monde-diplomatique.fr/md/en/1998/04/06asiaq.htm). Among Indonesians, domestic workers (mainly female) have been the first to go (Aihwa Ong, personal communication).

11 Malaysia also exports the largest number of foreign students to Britain, Australia and New Zealand as well as a substantial number to the US. The engineers and technicians of the next generation of wealth producers is still in the hands of the colonizers.

12 In a fitting metaphor of Malaysia's insecurity regarding its neo-colonial status, the planning meeting for the MSC took place in Stanford, California.

13 Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim was dismissed as a result of his disagreement on Mahathir's move to further regulate the financial sector. The numerous conflicts within the ranks of UMNO in the last two decades also lends caution to the claim of a singular voice for the Malaysian state. Nevertheless, I refer to the voice of the Malaysian leadership as the voice taken to represent the country's point of view in the international arena.

14 I refer to the U.S. as a colonial power that has inherited the mantle from Britain. The reasons I give for making this connection are explained in Chapters 5 and 6.

15 Non-destructive economic alternatives such as pharmaceuticals and crop strains derived from forest products have elicited little interest.

16 Said's (1988, p.vii). Actual comments in Guha pertain to why given the numerical advantage, justice of their cause and great duration of struggle, did subalterns stay subalterns. If Said's early work is characterized by its emphasis on how the West imposed its view of the non-West on themselves, his more recent writing on the Palestinian leadership has raised impassioned questions of why we continue to abet schemes that destroy us. Guha's (1988) comments pertain to why nationalism never evolved into a larger liberatory movement. Ghosh (1997) and Gandhi (1998) question why the colonized went along with colonialism, and Lazreg (1994) questions women's complicity with male nationalists.

17 I use postcoloniality to denote an area of scholarship that has its intellectual birthmarks in research on the historical condition of colonialism and its subsequent effects on social relations. I use post-colonial to refer to the temporal divide between foreign rule and self-rule.

18 Chronologically, the Malayan Emergency took place during the same period as the Algerian Revolution and lasted longer. Yet Algerian women who fought in the revolution were valorized for their efforts (albeit problematically) in books and films such as "The Battle of Algiers" while women communists are largely ignored in chronicles of Malaya.

19 The negotiation over who would take over the space was always carried out between men.
CHAPTER TWO
CONSTRUCTIONS AND DE(CON)STRUCTIONS

It is a painful re-membering, a putting together of a dismembered past that makes sense of the trauma of the present.

Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*

This sense of taboo is trauma's surest trace -- this teaching how not to ask, this careful education in how to lie.

Patricia Williams, *The Nation*

2.0 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter One I suggested that contemporary discussions of the fate of the Malaysian rainforest can only be made sense of in terms of its embeddedness in other issues such as economic growth, global capitalism, national sovereignty and race relations. In this light, Malaysia's media reputation as Third World villain since the early nineties can be viewed as a series of related issues with common historical underpinnings rather than separate instances of 'bad' behaviour by Western standards. Malaysia's roles as environmental villain and human rights abuser both rely on the same moral basis – depriving some group of its rights. However, the security instruments used to dismiss the claims to forest resources by the *Orang Asli*, and to harass former Deputy Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim, are legacies from the colonial period when such instruments were deemed necessary to protect and control Malaysia's resource economy.

Whereas Chapter One set out the context for my study, this chapter discusses the theoretical approaches that shaped it. To restate my objectives, I trace a history of the Malaysian rainforest by focussing on how contesting claims over rights and resources were framed through scientific, cultural, economic and political discourses. And I try to connect these historical struggles with contemporary struggles between the state and civil society. Since this study about the Malaysian rainforest concerns the inherently political contests over and around it, my survey only covers that part of the theoretical conversation that accepts that such a discussion cannot be objectivist, and therefore, politically neutral. This is in contrast to approaches that see deforestation as a resource management problem to be overcome with better techniques. Chapter Two falls into two parts. I want to stress that the theories I review are not used in their "pure" form, but simply *underwrite* my narrative of the rainforest. I think this is fitting in a study about the ethical advantages of taking a hybrid approach since it is less likely to create excluded others. Moreover, given, the importance of context and
contingency in real life situations, all these theories will have travelled a long way from their geographical locus – the Middle East (Said), the European scientific laboratory (Latour), South America (Taussig) and India (Amin), when used in this study. However, the ways in which these spaces have been analyzed are useful to my project. And as this study hopes to show, spaces are not sealed off from events happening elsewhere. The spaces in my story – forest, plantation, state, battlefield – have fluid and porous boundaries that are imaginatively redrawn when events in one space affect another. In the same manner, the chronology of my narrative arcs back and forth over different periods to emphasize my point that not only does the past bear the imprint of the time in which it is revived, but that the past bears weightily on actions taken in the present.

The rest of the chapter covers four theories/ideas that underpin my narrative. I begin with a brief survey of current thinking on environment and development. I then move on to the main body of the first section that discusses theories of the social construction of categories such as nature and race. In tracing the fate of the Malaysian rainforest I examine how certain narratives are privileged in studies of resources and nature through perceptions of gender, race and class based loosely on Edward Said’s study of Orientalism as a discursive production of the Orient. I weave this theory with Bruno Latour’s actor-network theory to examine how supporters are won over to an idea. I argue that focussing on the influence of a single discourse such as gender, race or class alone to explain definitions, rights and access to resources is futile because it is in the imbrications of these discourses that they are materially enabled and politically mobilized. Moreover, these perceptions frequently encode each other’s ideas of difference and hierarchy (Thomas, 1994, p.67).

The second half of Chapter Two takes up the construction of the nation as the central category invoked in the physical destruction of the rainforest. The nation is the pre-eminent political sign in the post-colonial world. As a cultural code it stands for a host of anxieties that connect the colonial and post-colonial periods. As the vocabulary deployed in anti-colonial struggles, nationalism now claims the official identity against which other contesting groups must struggle. Nationalism has become the hegemonic code that can both sanction and condemn the claims to rights made by different groups in a polity. Therefore, any account of the postcolonial condition must engage the category of the nation theoretically. Claims to rights and resources were launched and fought for within a climate of anxiety over racial survival subsequently coded as national sovereignty. And these contests were articulated through cultural codes and signs the meanings of which only came into focus in the context of shared understandings. The objectives of the contests in which the forests
were featured were rarely seen through ecological aims on the part of many Malaysians; to accept that this is what was fought over is to accept Western parameters of the issue. Instead, the contests in and over the forests were interwoven with the struggle over the access to, and rights of, citizenship. In particular, I examine the work of Charles Tilly (1997, 1994) and Shahid Amin (1995) in an attempt to understand how collective memories of contesting groups frame their negotiating positions. I then assess the role of writing about a violent history by building on Michael Taussig’s (1987) question of whether we can write about terror without furthering the aims of the perpetrating regime. And I extend Taussig’s argument by asking how the health of civil society is related to the continued historical and psychological excavations of political life. Therefore, my story of the Malaysian rainforest is a story about how we come to assign values to different definitions, goals and ultimately, groups of human beings. And finally, this story of the contest over resources is a story of the rights of civil societies and the struggle to keep the parameters of political engagement alive.

2.1 FROM POLITICAL ECOLOGY TO LIBERATION ECOLOGY

In the mid to late eighties Piers Blaikie and Harold Brookfield looked at environmental degradation, particularly soil erosion, within a framework of political economy; that is, as issues of conflict over the control of resources between state, capital and peasantry. Their key text *Land degradation and society* (1987) concluded that land degradation results from the social relations of production that compel the land manager to overwork the land. This then becomes an environmental problem. Blaikie and Brookfield departed from the mainstream approach of the period that depicted environmental problems as resulting from bad management that could be corrected with improved scientific practices and technology. Lastly, and a harbinger of the subsequent poststructuralist approach of the nineties, they suggested that the ‘facts’ of degradation are contestable and contested (Peet and Watts, 1996, p.6). The political economy approach was later taken up by Keith Bakx (1985), Alan Grossman (1990) and notably Susanna Hecht and Alexander Cockburn (1989) in the context of deforestation in the Amazon.

At the same time a related body of work arose among Third World researchers, of whom, Vandana Shiva, perhaps because of her political activism, was the most prominent. Other scholars associated with this approach are Senanayake (1983), Chaitanya (1983) and Kothari (1988). This group has sometimes been referred to as green anarchists (Mellos, 1988). Shiva’s (1988) contribution was to make the connection between control of relations of production and
environmental degradation by weaving together strands of feminist, indigenous and ecological ideas. In common with many counterculture movements, anarchist environmental philosophy is informed by the mutual aid and self-reliant community ideals of Kropotkin, Chayanov and Gandhi (Friberg and Hettne, 1985). The key assumptions of the anarchists are human self-reliance and ecological limits. They criticize technocracy, industrialization and urbanization. The critique is not one of inappropriate technology but the reductionist view of science itself. Unlike Marxists, anarchists stress small-scale organization and distrust the state. A more significant difference is that while the anarchists share the Marxist goal of social transformation, theirs is a cultural critique as opposed to an economic one. They argue that Western knowledge is a regional knowledge rather than a universal truth. The solution lies in developing self-sufficient communities by voluntarily withdrawing from the global economic and social system.

Both Marxists and anarchists depart from the Western mainstream approaches to environmental thinking. Namely, they are neither Darwinian, in focussing on the survival of the fittest or the most technologically advanced, nor Malthusian in blaming population pressures. Instead, they focus on peasant and agrarian societies in the process of complex capitalist transformations involving market integration, and accompanying dislocation of customary forms of resource management (Peet and Watts, 1996, p.6). All these changes point to poverty as a central cause of environmental degradation as opposed to mismanagement. By focussing on agrarian societies in the process of economic transformation, they suggest that environmental problems result from economic and political decisions taken far from the point where the problem is physically located.

The political ecology approach, however, is criticized for its lack of explanation of why certain factors, be they physical or social, take root and become causes of environmental degradation. Peet and Watts (1996, pp. 7-9) argue that political ecology does not provide an analytical framework for studying the political relations within which control and access of resources or property rights are defined, negotiated, and contested. Specifically, Third World ecologists are criticized for essentializing Third World- First World distinctions, albeit positively (Mellor, 1988). I would also criticize them for not providing a practical strategy for unilateral disengagement from the rest of the world.

The political economy and anarchist approaches to framing environmental degradation in terms of nature-society relations became mainstream with the publication of the United Nations-
sponsored document *Our Common Future* (1987), more commonly known as the Brundtland Report. Here, environmental concerns are articulated explicitly in global terms thus linking the fates of the developed and developing world. The use of the term "environment" signals a cultural change in the way nature is viewed by society. The most significant of these new connotations is that current patterns of economic growth are not physically sustainable leading to global environmental crisis. In particular, mainstream policy-makers are obsessed with the notion of resource limits and over-population. The report produced the concept of sustainable development defined as development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. This definition accomplished the considerable feat of encompassing features attractive to both environmentalists and free-market enthusiasts by allowing an emphasis on either sustainability or development. The anthropologist Arturo Escobar (1995) argues, however, that sustainable development was born from the restructuring of global capitalism that required a strategy that non-destructively incorporated nature within global capital.¹ Thus, concern about the effects on capital investment rather than concern for the deteriorating physical environment drove policy initiatives.

In the early nineties, Escobar (1995) introduced Foucauldian concepts of the discursive production of knowledge, power and truth into an analysis of orthodox development categories such as poverty, backwardness, rationality and progress through his seminal work *Encountering development*². Escobar's work came in the wake of other writers such as Marglin (1990), Banuri (1990) and Hettne (1990) who challenged the conventional development model through a cultural critique rather than simply through an economic one. Collectively, echoing concerns raised earlier by Shiva and her colleagues, they challenged the universalist assumptions of Eurocentric and modernist goals. Escobar (1995) argued that state and multilateral development policy once yoked to economic growth was a way for the West to produce governable subjects. Escobar's (1995, pp.192-195) critique of the concept of sustainable development sees it as a Western perception that its physical well-being calls for a problematization of global survival. He argues that ecological professionals, mainly white, male scientists assume that environmental problems are defineable at a global level so that all problems are equally compelling to all local communities (Escobar, 1995, p.193). In his view, sustainable development has become the new moral vocabulary. The poor are now chastized not for laziness but lack of environmental consciousness that is not just detrimental, but 'irrational'. The subtext to this charge of irrationality is that there is a biological defect that
keeps them poor through lack of industry or intelligence, thus justifying the interference and tutelage of ecological professionals. Perhaps sustainable development is not quite so different from the civilizing missions that justified colonialism.

Escobar's view of development as a complex historical process involving cultural transformation and the production of knowledge has been taken up by geographers, most notably Richard Peet and Michael Watts (1996) in their edited collection of papers *Liberation Ecologies: Environment, Development and Social Movements*. In a reworking of political ecology, they derive liberation ecology that marries the framework of political economy to poststructuralism. The objectives of the struggles on which they focus are expressed as the ecological requirements for life. In addition to challenging orthodox development categories, liberation ecology attempts to integrate general questions of the rights of civil society by focusing on community participation in environmental protection and conservation strategies. This focus on civil society is manifested in an interest in alliances outside traditional class ones. Peet and Watts (1996, p.30) conclude that more work needs to be done on how people perceive nature, and how this affects struggles over resources as they suggest "group consciousness and collective identities are made through the sharing of confined spaces ... and have tendencies towards common environmental imaginaries".

Among the authors in *Liberation Ecologies*, Escobar, citing Donna Haraway as an influence in his work, is the most concerned about the impact of science in constructing categories to discuss nature. Donna Haraway's (1989) study of primatology, ostensibly a 'science', and therefore, objective, argued that the methods and results of primate studies were inflected through the cultural understanding of the researchers themselves. Like Haraway, Escobar (1996, p.60) argues that nature must be historicized rather than seen as pure pre-existing objects revealed through science. In this view nature is co-constructed between humans and non-humans within a continuous dynamic process.

This study picks up the thread from liberation ecology in that I trace the constructions of imaginaries of the Malaysian rainforest, that is, how different groups perceive the meanings associated with the forest, and how these affect its fate. Borrowing a phrase from Anthony Vidler (1993), I recount 'a small history' of the Malaysian rainforest as an entry point to understanding the relationships between possession of land and production of images. By a “small” history, I mean my story is partial, one of many other stories that could be told in its place. Vidler has stated that there are three common ways of constructing spatial imaginaries: describing how space is occupied and exploited; analyzing how space is represented; and lastly, showing how meanings referring to non-
spatial signifiers are projected onto space. I do not see each way of recounting the history of the rainforest as separate, but rather, as intertwined and building upon one another. While my research approach has some points in common with liberation ecology, my thesis does not fall within the ambit of liberation ecology as the objectives of the contests in which the forests are featured are rarely seen by Malaysians through an ecological lens. Instead, I trace how the forest is incorporated into the discourses of modernity through colonial, scientific, military, development and ultimately, nation-building discourses. I focus on how contesting claims over rights and resources were framed historically, and how these contests bear upon contemporary struggles between the state and civil society in Malaysia. Although Peet and Watts (1996, p.20) suggest national sovereignty is only one of several goals, my study suggests that in Malaysia other factors – conservation, economic growth, indigenous rights -- refer back to national sovereignty in each case. In this light, I want to extend their insights a little further to ask why this is so. Lastly, my approach is less binary than the liberation ecologists who focus on the environmental problems of Third World agrarian societies, thus reinforcing the reigning dualisms of First World/Third World, urban/rural dichotomies. The binary approach emphasizes the role of the Third World as a negative ‘other’ to the First World. Instead I try to make the connections between the material and discursive practices of constructing the rainforest and the way social and political relations have been framed in a country that is a mid-level economy, current woes notwithstanding.

2.2 LEGITIMIZING AUTHORITY IN THE COLONIAL WORLD
This history of the Malaysian rainforest is about how hierarchies based on difference evolve and what happens when these hierarchies clash. The conflict over what counts as a resource, and access and rights to resources, opens up questions of how certain groups of people became denigrated, and how this denigration was used to justify denying these groups access to material wealth and control of their lives. But it is also a story of what came to be considered material wealth and how it came about. Understanding the links between dominance and knowledge is integral to understanding how the categories in the relations of dominance were created. These hierarchies of organization govern relations between the different categories through rules that permit certain statements and actions but not others. Yet, far from being real and essential, hierarchies of race, class and science to mention a few common ones, arrive after the contests over truth claims are over; thereafter, they acquire status of fact (Latour, 1987, p.93).
2.2.1 Orientalism and Discourse Theory

Understanding the complex rules that govern the value, access and distribution of resources in the post-colonial world requires questioning how relations of power were produced in the colonial world. The starting point of this study is Said's question of how ideas acquire the authority of 'normality', and even the status of natural truths during the period of high imperialism. By this I mean the period from the late eighteenth century though to the nineteenth century when large-scale conquest, administration and social and economic transformation of the non-European world by Europeans took place. During this period, Said argues one could mention the word 'Oriental' and be sure that certain associations would be understood by it (Said, 1978, p.32). In a similar vein today, one could designate a place or a people as 'Third World' and immediately conjure up certain images. Said's definition of Orientalism as a style of thought based on an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' (most of the time) and 'the Occident' has relevance for this study that looks at distinctions between forest and plantation, colonial authority and colonized subject, and nature and society. Said argues that the basic distinction between East (developing) and West (developed) becomes the starting point for elaborate theories concerning the Orient (1978, p.3).

In a more specific historical and material vein, he writes:

Orientalism was the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient -- dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. (Said, 1978, p.3)

Said made the distinction between manifest and latent Orientalism. Where manifest Orientalism is a question of codes and laws, latent Orientalism is a corporate identity that influences the unconscious sense of the way things are, or should be (Said, 1978, pp.206-207). And while Said admits that the importance of any knowledge is gauged by its proximity to economic decisions, following Gramsci, he is more interested in the kinds of knowledge that allowed control through consent rather than outright force. In other words he is interested in the kind of knowledge that could influence the behaviour of civil society without overt coercion. This is especially relevant in the context of colonialism because of the long-standing conundrum of how so few dominated so many. Colonialism was not only a political or economic relationship, it was also a cultural process imagined and energized through signs, metaphors and narratives (Dirks 1992; Thomas, 1994, p.2). Gramsci identified this indirect influence of cultural leadership as hegemony (Said, 1978, p.7). It is
this acceptance of evaluative judgements about oneself that constitutes hegemony, and presumably depends on the extent to which a subject population acquiesces with the external judgement of itself. Said (1978, p.12) described Orientalism as "a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, sociological, economic and historical texts" that allowed the understanding, control and manipulating of what was manifestly different. This Orientalism, he argued, was, and is, a considerable dimension of modern political and intellectual power.

To show how Orientalism worked, Said borrows Foucault's analysis of dominating frameworks. Said (1978, p.40) argued that the Oriental was contained and represented within dominating frameworks such as being judged in the court of law, studied and depicted in the curriculum, disciplined in a school or prison, or depicted in a zoological manual. Where this attitude differed from its manifestation in Europe, according to Appadurai (1993, pp.317-318), is that while these frameworks were deployed on the fringes of the general population, in the colonial world, all non-whites were part of the fringe. Said (1978, p.43) argues that Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (West, us) and the strange (East, them). What bound the archive together was a family of ideas that can be understood as a set of constraints upon and limitations of thought. Without examining Orientalism as a discourse, he argues, one cannot possibly understand the "enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage -- and even produce -- the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period" (Said, 1978, p.3). The vision and the material reality propped each other up, kept each other going. But this vision could prevail because it belonged to the stronger side. Vision plays an important role in Said's analysis of how the Orient was framed by the Europeans. In the same manner, vision (or lack of it) frames the imaginaries of the rainforest in my study. Moreover, so authoritative a position did Orientalism have, that it acted as a gateway or obligatory passage point for anyone writing, or acting on the Orient (Said, 1978, p.3). In the same manner, the development paradigm of economic growth has come to define much of the writing about the Third World.

Said's contribution to colonial research has been to show the difference between attitudes to writing and discussing colonialism and their effects on the colonized. In the past colonial 'attitudes' or 'perceptions' implied personal prejudices. Said's reading of Orientalism has shifted the parameters of the issue to a discourse, thus acknowledging the systematic aspect of such attitudes to collective identities, thus establishing connections with other discourses such as class and gender.
(Haraway, 1989; McClintock, 1995; Stoler 1995). While previous writing might have examined the role of academics in specific projects, recent writing has focussed on asymmetries in representation and presumptions of authority in sustaining those in power (Thomas, 1994, p. 19). I have used the intersection of these discourses in my analysis of the fate of the Malaysian rainforest. In this thesis I construe Orientalism in the more general meaning of a set of beliefs about the ‘other’ non-European world premised on the basic notion of the inferiority of the ‘other’, which in turn, legitimize institutional practices.

While I do not suggest that a discourse unilaterally determines what can be said about the forest, I do argue that a whole network of interests is involved on any occasion when "the forest" is discussed. Therefore, the relevant question for my work is how the forest became constructed as such. These constructions are systematic in the sense that they probably prevail all over the world during the period of social transition in the quest for modernity. Said (1978, p. 4) argues that the "Orient is not an inert fact of nature"; neither is nature. But what is meant by the word ‘rainforest’ in the Malaysian context? Or to rephrase Donna Haraway's (1989, p. 1) question about nature, “In what specific places, out of which social and intellectual histories” is the rainforest constructed? For the struggle over the rainforest is not only about possession of land but possession of the imagination. The Malaysian rainforest has been made to stand for many things: as a resource in itself for export; as an impediment to capitalist agriculture to be replaced with plantations, and as a source of fear and ambivalence. The rainforest is given meaning through specific material and discursive practices; its physical transformation embodies the relations of power through which dominant images are produced. The rainforest is an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in society, in the same manner as contemporary discourses on the Third World, that are beyond any correspondence with a real place. Moreover, the dominance of the discourses that turned nature and the Third World into negative places lies in their ‘knitted-together strength’, that is, the very close ties between socio-economic and political institutions. Unfortunately, despite some modifications, the political thrust of these discourses has continued across the post-colonial divide. In the same manner that Orientalism as a political doctrine could be willed over the Orient because the Orient was weaker, development today can be imposed as a policy and practice on the Third World. A field like development has no corresponding field in the First World which witnesses droves of non-Western researchers and experts studying the faults and failures of the West and prescribing solutions. In common with the doctrine of the civilizing
mission, development programs such as the Colombo Plan and the American Peace Corps are seen by the West as a moral credit to themselves because of their altruism (Chapter Six). Many development funding agencies have now added environmentalist agendas in the form of sustainable development to their charters for intervention. As much of the research has been used on the subject populations with questionable results, we need to ask whether, and why, this 'wisdom' is believed.

2.2.1.1 Charters of Intervention: Categories, Representation and Management

Efficient social intervention and management of bodies requires both imaginatively and physically slotting them into categories. As a management strategy, categorization allows policy planning and allocation of resources based on groups rather than individuals, clearly a dividend in saving time and human resources on the part of management. Michel Foucault (1980, p.74) argued that people do not "collect" data raw, but rather, according to some schema. In the colonial world, categories frequently incorporated stereotypes of behaviour based on race. Popular stereotypical characteristics of natives in imperial writing included greed, cowardice, simplicity, lack of logic, shiftiness, irrationality, dishonesty, treacherousness (Spurr, 1990). Bhabha (1994, p.80) argues that the objective of colonial discourse was to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest. According to Bhabha, colour was the cultural/political sign of inferiority or degeneracy. Racism in the form of stereotypes pertained to both the dominant and dominated and was enacted through practices, both institutional and personal. But Nicholas Thomas (1994, p.14) argues that not all colonial encounters were marked by racism. While this may be true of individual encounters, it was certainly not true of any institutional encounter. More to the point, during the period of high Orientalism, racism was a highly nuanced discourse with variation in degrees and quality. For example, British fears of Muslims in India were influenced by their stereotypes of who constituted belligerent races (Cohn, 1987, pp.243; cited in Thomas, 1994, p.38). And British fears of Mau Mau rebels in Kenya were different from their fear of Malayan communists who were mainly Chinese. Certainly, as the following chapters show, British anxieties and policies that influenced the treatment of different racial groups in Malaya depended on stereotypes. As categories became reified they were used to allocate resources and responsibilities by characterizing groups in terms of their proclivities for violence or compliance and their suitability for specific occupations (Cohn, 1987, p.243; cited in Thomas, 1994, p.38). The following chapters show that in Malaya stereotyping influenced how labour was allocated, the use of banishment legislation, criminal
surveillance and ultimately, what citizenship criteria were institutionalized.

Said's analysis of the imaginative grid within which the Orient came into being for Europe is derived in part from Michel Foucault's concept of discourse and more immediately from the disciplinary grids in Foucault's (1977) *Discipline and Punish*. Foucault (1980, p.69) suggested that space linked power to knowledge. That is, the effects of power can best be grasped by studying the way knowledge is deployed across geographical units of analysis such as territory, region and field. The terms themselves infer relationships of dominance. Geography, as Foucault (1980, p.77) suggested, is central to tactics. Foucault (1977) argued that disciplining bodies in space was achieved in two ways. First, through the technique of elementary partitioning that allocated each individual, or group, its place (Foucault, 1977, p.143). By enclosing individuals or small groups, authorities could avoid dangerous congregation, establish presences and eliminate uncontrolled appearances. Large groupings, on the other hand, could lead to collective identification and solidarity that would be uncontrollable in rebellion. Second, disciplined space is visible space; Foucault (1977, p.200) described visibility as a "trap" because authorities were always aware of the activities of those in their power. The architectural corollary to the need for visibility is a grid design. This facilitates control because it promotes visibility while reducing the potential for congregation through enclosure.

Colonies were disciplined spaces in the Foucauldian sense. Colonial Malaya's physical development was literally one of opening up the country by cutting down the forests. This can be seen in the transformation of the Malayan landscape after colonization. Plantations and towns in the first half of the nineteenth century appeared part of the encroaching forests whereas those in the early decades of the twentieth century were designed along the lines of geometric regularity. The estates featured trees evenly spaced apart and the towns featured wide, open streets (see Figures 3.3a and 3.3b in Chapter Three). Moreover, Asians were confined to certain areas usually as a function of their role in the colonial economy while Europeans were mobile. Partitioning space for different groups in Malaya was a function of work, but suitability for different kinds of work was determined by race. In contrast to the estates and towns, the forest was the antonym to the controlled domain of the colony; a marginal space inhabited by those on the margins of colonial society such as landless or unemployed immigrants. As colonial territory extended across Malaya, the frontier of the forest moved inwards, but until World War II, colonial control over forest margins and their inhabitants remained informal and de facto. A colonial authority secure of its place in the racial and economic hierarchy could afford to be generous and appear lenient in the use of discipline and punishment.
Foucault (1977, pp.84-85) argued that spatially regular technologies of discipline and punishment evolved concomitant with certain economic and social transformations. But Foucault's suggestion that as economic changes allowed more people to acquire property, crimes against property such as theft, burglary and robbery became crimes against the majority did not pertain in the case of the introduction of capitalism to Europe's colonies.

Nevertheless, Foucault's model of technologies of control that saw punishment as the other half to the equation of control pertains to colonies as well. Where the disciplined landscape necessitated major physical changes such as buildings and lay-outs, the punitive landscape relied on both physical changes and a system of signs that successfully conveyed the lesson to be learnt. Instead of points of spectacle such as the exhibition of executions, there would now be a serious theatre of moral lessons played out across the landscape (Foucault, 1977, p.113). The result would be a carceral archipelago: a punitive system dispersed yet covering whole societies (Foucault, 1980, p.68). Together, disciplinary and punitive processes overlap, repeat, imitate and support one another, and although applied in different domains, eventually converge to produce the "blueprint" of a general method of control (Foucault, 1977, p.138). In Malaya, the informal and irregular control over the country gave way to a detailed and comprehensive system of discipline and punishment in the wake of World War II. Short-lived Japanese victories over European colonial powers destabilized the racial hierarchy for the colonized, even if this was not immediately obvious to the colonialists, and gave rise to indigenous challenges to colonialism in the post-war period. In the struggle for power between the British and the Malayan Communist Party, the marginal members of society literally lost the space to manoeuvre as colonial authorities declared the forests off-limits to everyone but military personnel. Punitive zones were distributed across the landscape as whole towns were declared under curfew and civil rights suspended for the local population. In a sense, the transformation in where insurgent warfare takes place signals the success of territorialization techniques so much so that the frontier in many contemporary insurgent wars is no longer unpopulated areas but the most populated. Anonymity characterizes the place of safety for the insurgent rather than physical hide-outs.

Early modern Orientalism developed as it followed the transition from individual exploration to systematic knowledge production that accompanied routinization of colonial rule (Breckenridge and van der Veer1993, p.7). Marking out a 'subject nation' established a system of governing for administration and instruction based on the reification of group stereotypes. Ordering by difference became a way to establish political and social boundaries (Haraway, 1989, p.10). These categories
and boundaries hardened as increasing widespread faith in science gave them the status of ontological truth and influenced and justified far-reaching colonial policies. According to Said (1978, p.54), it is enough for "us to set up these boundaries in our own mind" for space to acquire emotional and even rational sense, thus justifying the material manifestation of these boundaries. This is not to say that there was no positive geography or history, but that an internally structured archive is built up from various experiences. Science and Orientalism joined forces to promote the colonial endeavour in the following ways. By relating experiences, documenting and comparing, Europeans could offer the European public empirical proof that the Orient was being outstripped and outdated by Western science. This form of early public relations was important for garnering support for colonial projects. Records of earlier explorations permitted later European travellers and explorers to avoid many of the vicissitudes of foreign exploration by warning them of the dangers. Science was imported into the colonies to name, identify, compare and reveal the order of indigenous flora and fauna (including humans) to rank its economic worth. (Chapter Three provides various examples.) In the acquisition of empirical data on local conditions, scientists frequently came to rely on Orientalists for knowledge of local languages and conditions, which, in turn, influenced what scientists looked for. Systematic training and journals disseminated information and took much of the unpredictability out of replicating tasks, that is newcomers to the field could avoid mistakes by reading the experiences of others. The point I am trying to make is that by cooperating with each other, scientists and Orientalists could pool their knowledge to take the risk out of imperial ventures. Each successful venture strengthened the case for future ventures.

The management of knowledge by society is an intricate interplay between local expertise and metropolitan interests. For example, European planters in the East were initially unwilling to fall in with imperial plans to cultivate rubber (Voon, 1971). Yet when the Malayan rubber industry took off, it was the imperial ability to coordinate Indian and Malayan colonial interests that enabled the Malayan planters to expand their plantations thanks to the large-scale export of Indian labour to Malaya to work on the plantations (see Chapter Three). At the same time, as corporations took over the ownership of the plantations, they relied on local planters to manage the new estates made up of smaller plantations. The Colonial Office with its various African, Far Eastern and South East Asian departments processed information from various parts of the Empire and translated it into policies that were beneficial to the whole. The national interests of imperial powers were thereby translated into the specific policies of domination at the local level. Knowledge also allowed policies to be
translated into local languages, cultural codes and 'hot' terms used to trigger off local enmities while simultaneously arguing that Europeans were fighting on behalf of different indigenous groups, as we shall see in the coming chapters.

Aside from biophysical information, other types of empirical data sought by colonialists included data on community and religious organization such as caste, cadastral and census information. These produced imagined communities from enumerated communities (Appadurai, 1993; Hirschmann, 1986). Texts and reports in colonial times may be read as simply descriptive, but they can also be read as the production of the "scope for surveillance" that create "charters for intervention" (Thomas, 1994, p.41). World Bank country reports and documents by international agencies such as the International Monetary Fund and World Resources Institute function in much the same way today. Having knowledge means having authority. In colonial Malaya, as in many other European colonies in the nineteenth century, the transformation of the environment and the imposition of a new socio-economic hierarchy were legitimated through the rhetoric of modernization. Nor was the fascination with science and technology restricted to plantations alone. Science allowed land barriers to be transgressed and mitigated by electrical lines and roads thus projecting the state everywhere. Exhibitions and museums were an important aspect of the impact of white men on chaotic nature in terms of ordering and sorting information into knowledge and then displaying it for public consumption. Science and technology were also an important aspect of convincing local elites that the colonial government was improving the lot of the majority. More than its effect on Europeans, science and technology had the far-reaching and deeply insidious consequences of persuading (to some extent) the colonized of European superiority, and thereby, pacifying large numbers of dominated peoples. The fascination with technological progress continues today.

Ways of telling evolve. Area expertise works in the same manner today as scientists and bureaucrats during the colonial period, and similarities can be drawn between the old "Asia hand" and contemporary development experts. Development experts from Western countries collect information that is used by agencies such as the World Bank, USAid, or the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) to devise policies that ultimately appear to be to the benefit of Western business consortiums. The CIDA brochure Your Guide to Working with CIDA (August 1997) states that 70% of every aid dollar goes back to Canadian business. Development experts are now the heirs to the "white man's burden." The Third World must be coached to the point of economic take-off. If they
are profligate, that is, if they cannot repay their loans to Western banks and agencies, they must be punished. They are ordered to retrench on barely existent social services. Of course this does not excuse the elites of many post-colonial countries whose contempt for their own people equals or exceeds their former colonial rulers. Nor does it depend on the ideological bent of the elites as socialist states ranging from Zimbabwe to Burma have shown. Part of the argument of this thesis is that the colonial past is still very much of the post-colonial present.

The interwoven webs of meanings of nature produced through its relationships with science and capital produce the world we live in and cope with today, although it is important to recognize that the encounter and outcome was not the same everywhere. Therefore, the story of nature changes from encounter to encounter. The contemporary conflicts between developed and developing countries over the issue of technology transfer suggests that as a hegemonic device, techno-science (the term is from Bruno Latour, 1987) represents the foremost sign of the persisting unequal relationship between the colonizing/developed world and the post-colonial/developing world. Not surprisingly, it is the symbol of what the Third World desires to aspire to, and the tool to constructing the nation-state that will forever banish the memory of colonialism. Partha Chatterjee (1992, Chapter Ten) argues that national planning, through its use of experts, technical evaluation and choice on scientific grounds positions itself as the neutral arbitrator in determining material allocations outside the modality of power. Post-colonial states have two responsibilities: representation and improving the lot of people. In many post-colonial states, representation was always partial to begin with. The only way to get whole populations to ignore unequal representation is to promote material well-being. In Malaysia, the majority was cajoled into accepting the state's decisions on resources and rights in the name of development in part by the argument that some of the population would enjoy the benefits of material well-being. The truly remarkable aspect of progress and capitalism is that neither necessitates the promise of material well-being for all but can persuade the majority to fall in line with simply the possibility of success for some; even the chance of success is enough. But perhaps technology's great appeal for post-colonial elites is its claims to neutrality and universalism. The former claim grants technocrats the status of unbiased decision-makers, and the latter claim makes science, once the route to intellectual respectability for the middle-classes in Europe (Brockway, 1979, pp.61-71), now the route to respectability for the NICs, perhaps the middle-class in the hierarchy of nation-states. Techno-science brings up the intriguing question of whether, given a choice, the colonized should have submitted to the humiliation of colonialism as a rite of passage to
obtaining Western knowledge. While this dissertation examines the lack of local protest over deforestation, it is worth noting that one of the few acceptable channels of public protest in Malaysia has taken the form of environmental criticism, albeit not on deforestation, using the language of science.

"Can one divide human reality ... and survive the consequences humanly?" (Said, 1978, p.45.) By surviving the consequences humanly, he asks whether there is any way of avoiding the hostility expressed by the division of human beings into ‘us’ (Westerners) and ‘them’ (Orientals). At its crudest, and unfortunately it is still commonplace, Orientalism was set up as a binary classification based on essentialized categories as a means of justifying a double standard in governing. There are Europeans and there are Orientals. The former dominate; the latter must be dominated. Science and Orientalism were both premised on the superiority of the knowledgeable versus the ignorant. Moreover, mastering science and technology is proof of superiority; it becomes the visible character that revealed the invisible character – the inherent intellectual inferiority of those who cannot master science and technology (Adas, 1989). Unequal rights and curtailment of freedoms not justifiable in the metropolitan countries were usually justified in the colonies by arguing that natives could not handle freedom or responsibility because they were intellectually inferior. And because it was generated from a position of strength, those in power could always move the goalposts when the classification no longer served their means. Sometime before World War I, the Empire had gone from an object of ambition to a political, sociological and historical fact. Politically, the status may have changed after World War II, but changes can occur at the level of the manifest while durability is the realm of the latent. The binary standard prevails today, nowhere more apparent in standards of living pronounced by the IMF to be acceptable for non-Western countries in financial difficulties. To protest the conditions imposed by the IMF is to demonstrate moral weakness and a greedy desire to acquire material wealth without sacrificing anything. Unlike Western industrialization, and thus wealth, which was built on technological creativity, Asian models are copies. The insidious competition between ‘us’ and ‘them’ continues, now recast as derivativeness. Thus, the present currency crises prove that Asian wealth is ephemeral. The point I want to make is that the notion that only certain knowledges are ‘deserving’ continues to prevail.
2.2.2. Corporate Identity and Networks of Power

In my study, I try to reconstruct the conditions under which the value of the plantation industry came to prevail over the value of the tropical forests in Malaya. Understanding why certain programs such as plantation agriculture prevail becomes a matter of determining the degree of its links to, and embeddedness within, other programs such as colonialism and nationalism. One way of approaching the issues of linkages and embeddedness is as a network made up of various discourses that interact, sometimes in contradiction to each other, but with an overall discernable direction. The process of acquiring allies, both human and non-human (such as machines) can be examined using Bruno Latour's network theory (1987). Latour proposed his network theory to show that science is a political process in its practice. In order to acquire the status of truth, a paradigm must acquire allies. Yet, Latour's network is general enough to justify its use outside the laboratory of science and technology alone where he originally applied it. In *We Have Never Been Modern* (1993, Section 4.11) he takes his network theory outside science into the “chains of command” of the Red Army, the French Ministry of Education and American big business. Applying Latour's actor-network theory to Malaysian deforestation, we see that the status of the plantation system of agriculture in Malaysia relative to the forests it replaced physically depended upon the plantation's role in colonial enterprise as well as the larger project of progress. Latour sees a scientific claim as a regime which acquires credibility when it has collected enough allies—non-human allies such as textual references and laboratory equipment readings become the ‘proof’ of the claim. In a similar vein, Foucault (1977, pp.83-90) suggested that the increasing importance accorded crimes against property began with capitalism and modern property ownership that gave more members of society a stake in not siding with transgressors against property. The process of acquiring allies begins with several contests which only with time and routinization acquires the status of truth or normality. In recruiting allies, Latour (1987, pp.108-111) suggested that one must find as many views as possible that coincide with yours, or, at the very least, can be manipulated to sound like yours.

The most obvious example of this process in colonialism was Lord Salisbury's statement regarding British competition with the French over territory, "You may renounce --or monopolize -- or share.... So we resolved to share" (quoted in Said, 1978, p.36). Fact construction is a collective activity and consensus lies in the creation of a network of commensurabilities, by which I mean an agreement among the participants in the activity on the general aim of the project at hand. This agreement is brought about by each participant seeing that she/he can derive some benefit by going
along with the larger idea even if on a point-by-point basis they do not agree. The spread of an idea is facilitated by allowing each user a margin of adaptability, that is, allowing each participant to adapt the larger goal to individual goals. This process of adaptation has to be within limits, hence, the use of the qualifying term 'margin', otherwise the group loses coherence in the overall aim. Thus, in the larger project of European colonialism, we find agreement among Europeans about the inferiority of non-European races even if the individual European powers dealt with their colonies with different policies. We will see examples of this in the following chapters. In Chapter Three, I show that the British disapproved of French policies in Indo-China but publicly and materially supported them as part of the larger project of colonialism. In Chapters Five and Six, we see the Americans publicly supporting the European colonial powers even though the Americans were in favour of independence for the colonies. Finally, through all the chapters, I show a tension in the relations between capital and colonial authority. While agreeing overall on imperial social policy and the need to create conditions to facilitate profit-making, the weight of importance accorded each aim differed depending on the particular context.

Fields of learning are constrained and acted upon by a web of social and cultural traditions, worldly circumstances and by stabilizing influences like libraries and institutes. A disciplinary field like geopolitics or development has a cumulative and corporate identity, by which I mean an association of ideas that together form a unified identity. It could also be argued that within the discourse of nature, resource management and latterly, sustainable development, are the corporate identities that shape decisions about nature. The concept of sustainable development became popular precisely because of its ambiguous definition that allowed it to mean different things to different constituencies. Said has argued that a network of interests -- economic, political, academic -- is involved on any occasion when that particular entity 'the Orient' is in question. Orientalism according to Said had its strength in both its numerous alliances but also as a powerful political project to prove the superiority of the West. Since power is a result of alliances holding fast through a range of circumstances, any opposition must test the limits of this range. Revolutions and counter-revolutions are the most dramatic examples of opposing networks. Following both Said and Latour, I try to map the corporate identity of, and linkages between, the categories brought to bear whenever the forest is in question, particularly that of plantation agriculture as the preeminent category of resource management. Significantly, in Malaysia today, monocultural tree plantations have been put forward as sustainable silviculture (brochure from Institut Penyelidikan Perhutanan Malaysia, undated c.40.
Finally, the networks of support between imperial and scientific institutions were crucial to keeping projects afloat. Modern science was always in part a political project because it needed a political dimension to give it relevance in the eyes of the public. In Malaysia, the plantation industry that caused deforestation was tied to research institutes that came up with new ways to increase production thereby justifying the expansion of plantations. In addition, senior and retired government civil servants such as Frank Swettenham sat on the board of plantation companies (Chapter Three). Their dual positions allowed them to be effective lobbyists for the industry.

Furthermore, not only must one's idea be adopted by others, in the competition for allies one must also obtain credit for the idea; that is, the proponent must control the public relations process so that naming begins with him/her. You may cite your opponents but must cast doubts on them when you do so. An example is the current appropriation of traditional medicines by the pharmaceutical industry which has tried to portray these indigenous knowledges as suspect until translated by the industry for public consumption. In a society such as ours that promotes individual over collective identities, being acknowledged counts significantly. The criteria of success lie in becoming a passage point. The importance of formal or manifest Orientalism was that in order to study the Orient, the student had to pass through the learned grids and codes of Orientalism. Statements in Orientalism depended on being incorporated in later statements, that is, a network of statements. We do not determine hegemony, we can only fight contests and win converts (Banuri, 1990). The science/emprise nexus that came to depend on each other for their mutual survival and legitimacy has implications for post-colonial nature survival. As Marglin (1996), Hettne (1990), Shiva (1994; 1992) and Escobar (1995) have argued, development studies today act as a gatekeeper to keep out alternative versions of studying the developing world.

The strength of a network lies in its parsimony; resources only have to be concentrated at a few points linked to each other by a network. The metropolitan centres were the nodal points at which implicit knowledge became explicit. In his brief review of exploration, Latour (1987, pp.215-225) stresses the importance of this accumulative nature of Western science. It achieved two things. First, it could make local knowledge universal through textual reproduction thus making knowledge conveyable to others without personal contact as well as creating charters of intervention. Equations, maps and charts are examples of the portability of accumulated knowledge contributing to the safety of explorers, thus reducing the risk posed to recruits to colonial projects. The ability to collect, organize and recombine information allowed some measure of predictability for others encountering
the same situation thus, removing much of the risk from exploration (Latour, 1987, p.220). The
centre of control over unknown space rested in the centres of accumulation of knowledge that allow
decisions and choices made by a few people at a great distance to have an effect on local populations.
New technologies also conveyed the instructions on how to preserve specimens for the voyage back
and record the contexts in which they were found. This was important if these specimens were to play
an active role in further recruitment. The systematic organization and representation of information
allowed local knowledges to be presented as a European discovery. Accumulation begins to create
a great divide between 'us' and 'them'. Today developed countries maintain the gene banks and
databases of flora and fauna collected from developing countries to be used in the development of
chemical simulators in the pharmaceutical and agricultural industries (Maréchal, 1999; Shiva, 1997;
Hobbelink, 1991). The systematic organization and representation of such information allows
Western scientists and businesses to make the argument that the information is now 'intellectual
property' or a Western discovery that should be protected by patents. It should be noted that if
earlier generations of European politicians and administrators said what they did about Asians with
confidence, they could do so because of the vocabulary provided by Orientalism (Said, 1978, p.41).
But in time, the proliferation of Orientalism was reinforced by the military and political expansion
of European power across the globe. Technology was the material enabler of imperial exploration,
conquest and consolidation through shipping and navigation for exploration, firearms for conquest,
medicine to combat tropical diseases, railways to open up the conquered space and modern
agricultural methods of seed selection to reconfigure space on a scale not known before (Headrick,
1988). Modern technologies of photography and printing disseminated tales of new resources to the
European public and were useful in keeping the imperial adventure popular at home. At the same
time, photographs of 'primitive' natives provided a material focus for the superiority of the
colonialists in the colonies. Thus, the relative 'advancement' of societies is encoded in the material
proof of photographs.15

If technology was the material enabler, then science, as the study of essences in the world,
legitimized the colonial project through the development of both the theories that naturalized social
hierarchies and the empirical methodologies to 'show' proof of this ordering. As Said (1993, p.69)
has pointed out, Joseph Conrad was shrewd enough to understand that imperialism involved more
than just physically taking over territory, it required a justificatory regime for its actions, and in this,
science was a useful ally. Although a binary ordering had been proposed early on by classical
Orientalists, the rise of science provided the finer shadings of hierarchies of social order based on race as a biological determinant.\(^1\) The ability to produce and accumulate material wealth was always underwritten by the concept of limitation based on biology (Livingstone, 1994; Cooper and Stoler, 1989). Climatic origins of people determined their suitability for different tasks in the new political and economic order since this was already naturally evident. Scientists in turn, came to depend on the colonial project to provide a laboratory to test their claims as well as to provide allies in a political project that could legitimate, and financially support, their research. The imperial venture and the anxiety of encountering new places, peoples and things gave urgency to scientific research to find solutions to these anxieties. The first step was usually to develop a theory to explain the problem, be it malaria, hysteria or drought. The colonies offered a theatre for the staging of science. First, there was a diversity of problems to be solved and discoveries to mine; second, the colonies were a living laboratory where experiments could be carried out with fewer constraints of ethics and popular objections (Prakash, 1992, p. 155).\(^1\)

Latour does not address how certain factors such as gender and race seem systematic in influencing the extension or declension of a network (Demeritt, 1994, p. 180). The power of Latour's theory is that it shows how a few can control so many. According to his argument, the power of techno-science lies in enabling a few human actors linked to many non-human actors to form a powerful alliance that prevails against other human and non-human actors less well-organized. These less well-organized humans end up as isolated. Meanwhile discourse theory postulates that the lower down on the hierarchy the category, the more likely it is seen as the outsider or 'other'. Network theory and discourse theory meet in that the chances of ending up at the bottom of the ranking system increases the larger the network of allies ranged against the group or category. This question of why demographic majorities fail to oppose an idea that could translate into deprivation of rights, others or even theirs, is central to this study.

Certainly, this study argues that the history of the Malaysian rainforest shows that Malaysians have been persuaded to ignore the dangers of social instability inherent in any system where various groups are deprived of rights so that other groups can enjoy the material benefits of a system that favours them. Latour has nothing to say about the persistence of the structures that exclude certain groups nor the masochistic insistence of groups to make choices against themselves. Groups can be persuaded against their interests. What is remarkable is that the group that enjoys the benefits need not be overwhelmingly numerically superior. I suggest that a more significant factor is the belief
among disadvantaged groups that they may succeed against the odds. In Malaysia, even discriminated groups generally support government policies on the chance that they will be part of the ‘haves’ rather than the ‘have-nots’. Malaysian elections, while criticized for featuring government propaganda and censorship of the opposition parties, are not characterized by wide-scale vote-rigging. Nor are Malaysians ignorant of labour and immigrant exploitation or state and capital collusion. Rather the issue appears to be one of selective amnesia. Another issue that Latour does not address is whether overt acquiescence with the goals of a group in power is the same as internalization of those goals, that is the existence of hegemony. The lifespan of a network depends in part on contingency, but also on whether disempowered groups accept their position or are on the lookout for weaknesses to exploit. But as this study shows, it is rarely possible to distinguish when choices in conflict conditions have been due to pragmatism and when they have been due to hegemony.

Said argues that the power of Orientalism lies in establishing a corporate identity that can isolate the ‘other’. In his readings, Orientalism becomes the gateway through which all writing or commentary on the Orient must pass; thus, the views of the inhabitants of the physical Orient are ignored. Similarly, Latour’s network theory claims that power is the prize of the side with the most alliances ranged against the isolated individual or fragmented group. Although Latour (1993, p.90) mocks sociologists who repeat the word ‘power’ as a mantra because they cannot cope with reality, elsewhere he describes his networks as “networks of power” (p.122). However, Said and Latour do not see the solutions in the same light. Said, naively or not, perhaps in keeping with his suspect humanism, does not want to duplicate the structures of Orientalism by replacing one category as ‘other’ with an ‘other’. In the case of Latour, extending his theory that only networks can counter networks, destabilizing a network of power would require the establishment of an ‘other’ network. Since every network of power produces outsiders who are oppressed or disadvantaged, those excluded must form an alternative chain of alliances and hope for an opportunity to exploit weak links in the networks of power. Resistance can be in the form of alliances across the bottom of hierarchies of power; not just across the top. After all, these groups have no choice but to challenge power. In this, Latour and Said coincide as Said also sees regimes of power producing resistance. Homi Bhabha’s (1993, Chapter Eleven) notion that any place can be a site of resistance translated into action through the body, what he calls “History’s intermediacy” (p.235), is a useful one. Spaces of repression can be spaces of resistance to the status quo by providing “signs of survival, the terrain

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of other histories, the hybridity of cultures” (Bhabha, 1994, p.235). After all, there is little option to do anything else.

2.3 POSTCOLONIALISM: CONTINUITIES ACROSS THE DIVIDE

The term ‘post’ implies periodization. To call something post-colonial reframes its history in terms of the relations between colonialism and nationalism (Breckenridge and van der Veer, 1993, p.1). Post-colonialism has yet to show a clean break from its past; decolonization has not meant an escape from the discourse of Orientalism (Spurr, 1992, p.6). Instead, it has been distinguished by "critical reaccentuation" of colonialism through administrative forms, institutions and relationships predicated on colonially dictated forms of representation (Thomas, 1994, p.7). As Leela Gandhi (1998, p.3) argues, there is no separation between colonialism and its aftermath: the postcolonial condition is inaugurated by the onset rather than the end of colonial occupation. The colonial aftermath is fraught by anxieties and the fear of failure. Prime Minister Mahathir (Star, 31 December 1999; Guardian Weekly, 20 October 1996) plays on this fear of failure as when he tells Malaysians that foreigners will laugh at them and exploit internal dissent if Malaysians degenerate into bickering amongst themselves. Albert Memmi (cited in Gandhi, 1998, p.7) describes the postcolonial dilemma as a historical condition marked by the visible freedom and invisible persistence of lack of freedom. The longevity of colonialism is nourished in part by persisting hierarchies of knowledge and value which reinforce what Edward Said (1989, p.207) calls "the dreadful secondariness" of some peoples and cultures condemned by a whole vocabulary denoting their inferiority. This results in a political independence that is merely cosmetic (Gandhi, 1998, p.6). Postcolonial studies attend to these continuities in domination as a consequence of the colonial relationship (Breckenridge, 1993, p.2). Understanding colonial history is urgent because it is about understanding contemporary politics.

Postcolonial scholarship departs from Said's approach in Orientalism in a number of ways, one of the most significant being the postcolonial emphasis on resistance by the colonized. Said has been criticized for his silence on a lack of ambiguity in the colonial project, which in turn, has been read as a neglect of resistance on the part of the colonized (Bhabha, 1994). I believe this is related to Said's curious silence on the role of Islamic reformists in challenging 19th century colonial hegemony in the Middle East.¹⁸ Perhaps in this, Said, like many other intellectuals, is himself caught in the modernist bind that refuses to acknowledge religion as a serious positive political force. Another criticism comes from James Clifford (cited in Thomas, 1994, p.24) who argues that Said's theoretical debt to Foucault sits uneasily with his humanism. But Said (1983) responded to the criticism of his
yoking of different theories together by arguing that the only reasonable criterion for evaluating his theory is whether the new combination makes sense. If one is to take poststructuralism's attention to contingency and unstable identities seriously, then theory can be no more than a starting point in understanding how societies work. Homi Bhabha (1994, pp.70-72) however, believes that Said's analytical weakness lies in his assumption that the Western perception of the Orient was coherent, rational and knowable and that European intentions were fully knowable to themselves. Bhabha (1994, p.72) argues that by assuming the intentionality and unidirectionality of colonial power Said also unifies the subject of colonial enunciation. In doing so, Said had himself reduced Orientalism to a stereotype – exactly what he accused the Orientalist of doing to the Oriental. Instead, Bhabha argues that because each colonial situation was new and the outcome by no means predictable, they were individually negotiated to produce hybrid outcomes. Stereotypes were used by Europeans because they were anxious about their abilities to master and control difference, a situation Bhabha (1994, p.75) describes as “[the stereotype] gives access to an identity which is predicated as much on mastery and pleasure as it is on anxiety and defence.” By introducing the notion of the subconscious into postcolonial analysis, Bhabha argues that there was more room for manoeuvring and intervening by the colonized than expected because neither colonizers nor colonized acted strictly on a rational basis, that is, there was a slippage between intention and articulation of actions.19

Even if we do not accept Bhabha's use of psychoanalysis, we can accept that meanings engendered from hegemonic codes and narratives do not exist in isolation but are contested and distorted through being enacted and experienced. Like market objects tailored for various consumer niches, colonial projects were adapted and enacted by the colonizers and construed by the colonized, all of them actors with fractured subjectivities (Prakash, 1992). While postcolonial researchers have tried to show that discourses are interrelated, by focussing on specific instances of discourse translated into management practice, they also argue that different experiences of race, gender and class do not flatten out into a transhistorical category. An important group in advancing postcolonial studies has been the Subaltern Studies group led by Ranajit Guha (1988) who study colonialism from the perspective of disempowered groups not represented in official documents. Guha and his fellow researchers point out that while colonial domination is undisputed, there was no monolithic imperial project; there were always lags and disjunctures between articulation and implementation. Moreover, pre-existing hierarchies clashed with European colonialism and there was a need to understand what resulted from the overlapping templates. Colonial rule must have been haunted by a sense of
insecurity because colonizers felt that they could not completely understand native mentality since it was not based on rational decisions. Colonialism itself was a product of two contradictory gestures; one denying difference through assimilation because that won converts, the other stressing difference to maintain the existing racial hierarchy (Prakash, 1992). These contradictory gestures ensured a certain amount of contingency around each encounter. For example, in the crucial persuasive tools of science and technology, native elites in general saw technology as something they could and should assimilate, yet even in the supposedly standard form of transmitting scientific knowledge, there were slippages between the transmission and the reception. The point both Prakash and Bhabha make is that the colonialists themselves did not always know which direction to take. The irony is that colonialism was both less secure than assumed, yet longer lasting than expected. Foucault's own argument for power describes it as historically contextualized, meaning that at another time, another configuration of events and another place, a different set of actors may emerge in control.

Given that each colonial encounter was historically contextualized, the task of postcolonial scholars is to examine whether a pattern of continuity exists between colonialism and postcolonialism, and if so, why. The emergence of independent nation-states has been accompanied by denial and a historical re-invention to erase humiliating memories of colonial subordination (Gandhi, 1998, p.4). In response, postcolonialism can be a theoretical resistance to the amnesia in the aftermath of colonialism devoted to remembering and interrogating the colonial past (Gandhi, 1998, p.4). If the postcolonial condition requires remembering colonial oppression, it must also remember the complicities in the relationship. Michel Foucault (1977, pp.83-90) has argued that the spread of disciplinary regimes was made easier through the advances of capitalism that allowed more people into the 'have' part of society and, therefore, created the conditions for inter-class complicity. But in colonial societies, the seductive temptation of capitalism was always tempered by the knowledge that colour effectively disbarred the non-white population from an equal stake in protecting colonial property. Since control could not have been so ambiguous if colonialism lasted so long over so much of the globe, why did this complicity exist? And how does this influence the parameters of contemporary struggles? I suggest that a more important 'unknown' was less the outcome than the degree to which the outward acknowledgement of superiority was internalized. Instead, I suggest that a far more important unknown was the extent to which the hegemony was internalized rather than simply the outward acknowledgement of physical defeat. The work of postcolonial theory is to commit itself to recovering memories of colonialism as a means of understanding contemporary
problems. Memory is the necessary and sometimes hazardous bridge between colonialism and cultural identity (Gandhi, 1998, p.9).

2.3.1 Post-Colonialism, Nationalism and the Ideology of Progress

Any serious attempt to interrogate the postcolonial condition must theoretically engage with the 'nation' as the key sign of post-colonialism. The importance of the category of nation lies in its status as a self-evident unit in world politics. Benedict Anderson (1991, p.3) says that "nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our times". The Hegelian view maps historical identity onto space resulting in the state (Boyarin, 1994, p.138; Gandhi, 1998, pp.105-108). In this view, the nation-state is the teleological endpoint of unfolding Reason and the embodiment of progress. For Hegel, the overlapping narratives of Reason, Modernity and History reveal their proper end in the form of the nation-state. And Mellor (1981, p.30) argues that for political geography, the most significant level in a hierarchy of communities is the nation, that is, it is the highest level of identity. Even the individual's collective identity is articulated through the polity of the nation. According to Leela Gandhi (1998, p.105), by tying in the rights of the individual to the nation through the notion of citizenship, the nation-state has emerged as the canonical form of political organization and identity in the contemporary world. In contemporary geopolitics, international conversations can only be conducted by nations and their (perceived) representatives. The nation-state is not only the endpoint of any narrative of political identity but is also seen to take precedence above all others. For the nation is usually narrated as stemming from something primordial, and therefore, immutable. The converse of this perception is the creation of numerous excluded "others" who are just as immutably "outside" the nation.

This study has less to do with what the nation is, than why the nation became the category through which all contesting claims were launched in the colonial and post-colonial world. The support for nationalism in the non-West lies in its unquestionable legitimacy in the West (Chatterjee, 1993). And this pre-eminence, according to Ernest Gellner (1996), lies in the nation-state being the only form of political organization appropriate to the social, intellectual, and the economic conditions of the modern world. Gellner attributes the emergence of nationalism to the epochal shift from pre-industrial to industrial economies. As forms of organization become more complex and intricate, he argues that they come to require a more homogeneous and cooperative workforce and polity. Thus, the economic conditions of an industrial society require the supervisory apparatus of
the nation-state. This view is supported by Benedict Anderson (1991) in the context of colonialism. As part of the immanent process of bringing colonies into history, colonialism must end with the nation-state coming into being. In addition, Anderson (1991, pp.12-22) argues that nationalism in Europe filled the existentialist voids left by the decay of old systems of belief and organization such as religion and empire. Since at the time, empire was still a political reality for much of the non-Western world, and given the robust role of religion in many Asian countries, not to say primary role in some, perhaps this argument has less purchase outside Europe.

Yet, as Anderson's thesis (1991) argues, the paradox of nationalism is that as historical momentum supposedly propels societies towards rational civil society and the nation-state, the poetics of nationalism derive its passion and force from irrational beliefs or practices. Gellner's theoretical counterpoint in Europe was his fellow Czech Miroslav Hroch (1996, p.79) who argued that national communities, far from being the endpoint of a functionalist trajectory, could only exist if the cultural pre-conditions for the formation of a nation existed. In other words, Hroch was arguing that the imagined community had to pre-date the state, not the other way round as Gellner was suggesting. The spatial manifestation of a post-colonial state is as a bounded two-dimensional space on a map created by colonial authorities to facilitate managing and administrating their colony. More crudely, state boundaries could be described as the legitimate spatial limit of a "government's coercive supremacy" (Pratt, 1985). But the coupling of the nation-state in name was not always reflected in the overlapping of spatial limits with imagined solidarity. When history created in the name of a nation-state and mapped onto a bounded territory defines who should belong inside that space, the result is "cartographic incarceration" (Fonseca, 1996, p.218). Moreover, ethnically-biased new states were inevitable given that colonial authorities pursued a policy of divide and rule in the colonies. This view explains why the artificially constructed states that emerged from colonies often ended up harbouring revanchist and/or secessionist movements. Many colonial territories became states without there being prior nations. There was little time to negotiate selfhood. National identity was something either thrust upon them by the departing power, or put together as the best strategy to oust the colonial power rather than as a strategy for the future. Under these circumstances, selective amnesia became a significant aspect of the strategy to create a state identity. Those whose collective identity coalesced in the context of the struggles against European imperialism grounded their claims in narratives of territorial priority based on pre-colonial political history (Boyarin, 1994, p.9). Thus, because identity must literally be grounded in territory, the ability to control territory became a
prerequisite of nationhood. Not surprisingly, this mapping of history onto territory resulted in different claims of territorial priority, with each pitted against the other, often resulting in deadly consequences. Collective memory has become a much contested and urgent arena in nationalism. Partha Chatterjee (1993) argues that this is the expected by-product of setting up the nation as a domain of essentialized sovereignty in opposition to the colonial state.

Nandy (1983), Khilnani (1997), Ghosh (1997), Chatterjee (1993) and Gandhi (1998) argue that some native elites accepted the reality of colonialism as a pre-condition to progress and the nation-state. 'Natives' cooperated with colonialism as a means to achieving their political destiny. But nationalism in the post-colonial world is an offspring of Orientalism because it privileges transcendental values over material and historical ones. Instead of viewing nationalism as an unstable and negotiated process, the master narrative of nationalism sets up a series of true/false, legitimate/illegitimate divides. As governments of post-colonial nation-states imposed a master narrative of nationalism that elided internal differences, they frequently found that political conflict with their colonial rulers was succeeded by internal conflict. In the master narrative political independence becomes a trial by fire of nationalists against the colonial rulers. There is only one position and one identity in the fight against colonialism. In Malaysia the independent government collaborated with the colonial authorities to suppress anti-colonial protests while using the protests to gain concessions from the colonial government. But the independent government inherited a population effectively divided by the colonial authorities to facilitate control of the country. Challenges to the state's narrative of independence became a challenge to its legitimacy.

What then makes some nationalisms legitimate while others appear as illegitimate? Nationalism was the model chosen by indigenous elites to launch decolonization movements yet, as Gopal Balakrishnan (1996) points out, European nation-ness fueled the greedy policy of colonialism. Adopting nationalism as the collective identity requires asking if nationalists adopted the predatory underpinnings that shaped such an identity as well. In other words, do rights acquired through nationalist claims always come at the expense of someone else. Moreover, nationalism in many post-colonial countries is based on ontological categories such as race or religion. Chatterjee (1993) argues that the insistence on privileging ontological categories is a legacy of colonialism as post-colonial nation-states attempt to justify that they are not merely copies of Europe. Post-colonial governments have tried to counter this implicit charge of derivativeness by arguing that while the colonial state only conferred subjecthood on its populations, the post-colonial state offered full citizenship. But this was
never a practice in Malaysia or in many other post-colonial nation-states. After all, post-colonial nation-states such as Malaysia and Indonesia have proven themselves good students of colonialism by engaging in colonial attitudes with weaker ‘others’, thus, continuing the colonial importance of demarcating racial difference to establish group rights. A corollary to using essentialist categories was that while post-colonial governments inherited the apparatus of administrating a country, they rarely inherited the cultural and intellectual authority that went with colonial rule. How could they, when colonial rule was based on the biological inferiority of the colonized? In response to this problem, the new governments of post-colonial states concentrated on delivering material proof to legitimize their leadership. Material improvement through development became the route to legitimize the new governments, and the individual sacrifices required for development to proceed became justified in the name of the nation-state. This is especially important when identity in the global hierarchy is predicated on the country's gross national product (GNP). Thus, in Malaysia, the arguments for replacing the forest with plantation agriculture took strength from the coupling of plantation agriculture with development.

Malaysia's postcolonial legacy can be seen in the conflict over the forest in that it privileges only the claims of certain groups as part of a national survival strategy; that is, the well-being of some groups must be sacrificed if the majority is to enjoy the benefits of economic growth. Yet, paradoxically, the state justifies this particularistic strategy by invoking the universalist goal of progress through economic development. The views of native and environmentalist groups who see the forest as having cultural and spiritual worth is set against the powerful project of the forest as economic resource to be exploited in the name of national survival. This is contrary to Simon Schama's analysis of the conservation of redwood forests in the United States in *Landscape and Memory* (1995). In Schama's narrative, the giant redwood forests in California came to symbolize both the national magnitude as well as the primeval lineage of the United States, otherwise seen by Europeans as a new nation without a heritage. Thus, conserving the redwoods became an act of patriotism because it was also preserving national heritage. But in post-colonial states, the nation as an ontological category takes precedence over all others. In Malaysia as in many Third World countries, the forest and nature were suspect categories, because the forest as harbour of insurgents, or anti-nationalists, becomes the rival space to the state. Moreover, nation-states facing problems of legitimacy usually adopted development as a way of legitimizing state power. Economic growth would legitimize the state locally while offering proof of its competence to the international
community, or more specifically, its former colonial rulers. Primitive accumulation had to come from somewhere, and in many developing countries, the ‘somewhere’ meant the agricultural sector, which required land. The forest literally stood in the way of development so it had to be cleared. In Malaysia, as with many other countries, state and capital were never separate. There was no framework in which the forest could be associated with the well-being and survival of the nation-state; nature is set in opposition to the nation.23 In this study I argue nature could never be a metaphor for homeland in Malaysia because it stood in the way of the realization of the goals of the nation as tanah pusaka (homeland). I suggest that nature can only be incorporated into the modern narrative of the nation when post-colonial nation-states feel sufficiently distanced from the backward space of the ‘native’. Space here is displaced time and the chronology of racial hierarchy is physically placed in the forest. Thus, only highly technically developed nation-states such as the United States or Canada can afford to turn to a dream of Eden in the forests. Other states, less materially and politically secure, often see only the snake in Eden.

2.3.2 Negotiating Ways of Telling: the Politics of Memory

For Said (1993, pp.267-281) the essentially binary conceptions underlying nationalism, the non-West as the negative of Europe’s conception of modernized space, dooms the project of Third World nationalism by its acceptance of its backwardness and racial difference.24 Leela Gandhi (1998, pp. 108-109) criticizes Said for his cosmopolitan snobbery in dismissing nativism, yet she can hardly deny its roots in many of the bloodiest battles today. As Charles Tilly (1997) argues, most social conflicts today are articulated through the language of identity, specifically citizenship. Tilly focusses on citizenship as the category through which civil society and states negotiate what rights are due its citizens. This is relevant to my study in that it focusses on the ways that both claims and access to the rainforest have been articulated in relation to the state. Specifically, Tilly (1997) argues that citizenship in a nation-state rests on shared memories, understandings and means of action within particular identities; the past is embedded in the cultural symbols invoked in contemporary struggles over citizenship. The assertion of identity is a contingent interaction between different groups and is liable to both failure and success. Even in Malaysia, protests by the public, either in the form of non-compliance or violence, can sometimes alter the range of definitions to make it more exclusive or inclusive. In Malaysia, the landmark National Economic Policy that changed the parameters of citizenship in Malaysia, and directly caused deforestation through its policy of state-sponsored
agriculture came about as a consequence of bitter political negotiations after the race riots in 1969. Participants arrived at the negotiations with political positions deeply influenced by memories of the Emergency, which, in turn, were inflected through memories of almost a hundred years of racially divisive colonial policies. Collective memories played an important part because there were few sources of archival information from the perspective of the colonized. The result was one that was more inclusive by class but hardened the lines of racial exclusiveness. I discuss this case in more detail in Chapter Six.

The Malaysian scenario bolsters Tilly's (1994, p.249) argument that the redefinition of who belongs to a nation and what rights this entails is a negotiated, historical process. The degree of exclusion and inclusion that determines the rights of different groups changes. Collective memories constrain the struggle, but they are also a consequence of the struggle. Negotiation, contention and discourse all share properties of being collective, political, cultural processes. These rest on shared understanding, and are cumulative and modified incrementally over time (Tilly, 1994, p.247). Visions of the future change as a result of claims and counter-claims modified by memories of past experiences. To return to Bruno Latour's insights (1987, 1993), the narrative that emerges is the one that survives contesting claims to truth. The politics of memory refers to the process by which a collective experience is negotiated, and its result used to mobilize or constrain political action. Negotiations around identity and belonging have centred around the politics of memory because of the importance of historical priority, as a stand-in for racial ontology, in arguing rights. However, the politics of memory has been used by very different camps eager to challenge official accounts of the past such as the Subaltern Group of scholars as well as by privileged nationalist groups. Michael Ignatieff (1994, pp.245-246) described nationalism as a language of fantasy and escape that recreates a world of noble causes, sacrifice and necessity. The same could be said of most development programs imposed on the Third World. Needless to say there has been little debate as to whose cause, whose sacrifice, and necessity for whom. Yet, memory is also disruptive when events have to be incorporated into a master narrative in the name of social cohesion. Memory can be an important counter to the myth of ontological categories in privileging certain claims over others by remembering the social constructions of these categories. Alternative collective memories have often been used to shatter the coherent whole of master narratives and to act as the glue holding oppositional groups together.
Related is the question of why some ideas take hold of the collective imagination while others do not. Like Latour's notion of producing power through a network of alliances with human and non-human allies, ideas of the past build on existing traditions, in other words, they have a lineage. Some groups have the good fortune to be able to recruit alternative written accounts. Others have turned to less formal channels. As such they rely a great deal on memory, which differs from history in that memory usually relies on oral accounts and does not have official sanction. Because of this personalized aspect, memory is important in asserting self-identity and challenging externally written accounts. Should the group acquire power such as national movements, in time, their memory will be consecrated into history. Memory, then, is inherently contemporary because it is altered from generation to generation and bears the impress of its times (Samuel, 1994, p.x). For it is memory that ritualizes a space and turns it into place, and as such is very useful in constructions of imagined communities. In turn, it is the materiality of space when attached to memories that makes it such a powerful trigger. Particular places become symbolic, not necessarily in the monumental sense with obvious cultural references as argued by Benedict Anderson (1991, chp.11), but as spaces that trigger memories suggesting certain meanings associated with those memories. Claims people make depend on definitions attached to particular settings in space and time. In order to account for why the Malaysian rainforest was disparaged in nationalist memory, we have to try to understand the conditions under which the contest over its interpretation was waged.

The politics of memory affect the meanings projected onto the space of the rainforest in Malaysia as a symbol of significant events in the life of the country, and as a study in the contests over the rights of civil society. As I stated at the beginning, resources are very much implicated in how civil rights are framed in many post-colonial states because of the centrality of resources in the colonial project. Important here are works by Michael Taussig on the Brazilian rainforest-based rubber economy at the turn of the century and Shahid Amin on the riots of Chaura Chauri and their place in Indian nationalist mythology. Both studies show that memories of events interact with the context of a given time to imbue places and objects with significance. Michael Taussig's (1987) study of the forest as a space of terror and death located in the colonies and embedded in the context of capitalist agriculture focussed on the labour requirements engendered by the capitalist agricultural system. He argues that in the Amazon, the colonialists exploited the mystic association of the forest with the spirit world by ritualizing and staging torture and execution in the forest to discipline their workers, thereby increasing rubber production. In fact, terror did not work; the Indian workers
destroyed the rubber trees in their frantic attempts to obtain more latex. Taussig argued that the regime of terror put the forest beyond the rational analysis of political economy as the unspeakable place of the unspeakable act -- torture. For the purposes of my analytical framework, Taussig's study shows us that memories of events, torture in this case, give places and objects their significance. The fate of the forest becomes intertwined with memories that attach certain significances to the space of the forest. In my study, the fate of the rainforest becomes intertwined with memories that attach certain significances to the space of the forest.

In a similar vein, Shahid Amin (1995) traced the different ways in which the riots in Chaura Chauri were narrated and given an iconic status within Indian nationalist historiography. Amin was interested in how events become 'events' through being inseparable from certain ways of telling. Although the riots in Chaura Chauri in 1922 appeared to have had a complex combination of causes including religious and cultural ones, the riots were reported as criminal acts by the British. Indian nationalists, in turn, described them as the first authentic uprising against colonial authorities, while Marxists described it as a class uprising. With independence in 1947, the narrative that prevailed became Chaura Chauri's place as an icon in nationalist historiography. It is now associated with the heroism of the first nationalist protest. Amin (1995) was concerned with how an event at a fixed time acquired significance outside its own time frame. When Amin questioned how a local riot at Chaura Chauri acquired such widespread significance and longevity, he found that the original competing interpretations faded in the wake of Indian independence. In the same vein, I argue that events in and about the Malaysian rainforest became reinscribed through the master narrative of nationalism. Through the late forties and the fifties leading up to political independence in 1957, the Malaysian rainforest became associated with terror through the events of the Emergency. The Malayan Emergency may have been a local affair that officially ended in 1960, but it had a long afterlife, and as an event acquired a semiotic significance both locally and globally. The Malayan Emergency, through its incorporation within the narrative of the Cold War, would come to represent insurgency against the state. Within the context of the Cold War, Malaya's 'jungle war', along with others in the Third World, and most spectacularly in Vietnam, became the symbol of Third World insurgency against the West and its indigenous client states. In this way, a local event became inserted in a global trope of the struggle of the free world against the forces of evil. And the forest became associated in memory with challenges to the 'legitimate' state.
Taussig is also useful to my analytical framework because of his focus on the dilemma of writing about terror in a way that does not abet the aim of a regime of terror. Taussig understood that the most powerful weapon of terror was the rumour campaign that accompanied the deed and paralyzed the subject population into compliance. Taussig asks us how we can write about a regime of terror without abetting the aims of the regime. That is, the efficacy of terror as a regime of control relies on people knowing that it happens. For example, torture is not only about getting information; it is also a spectacular lesson, more effective for the whispers of rumour that follow it. This is precisely the dilemma that people writing about regimes of extreme violence face, and why Taussig makes his point so powerfully by opening with a passage from Jacobo Timerman's *Prisoner without a name, cell without a number* (1975, p.1) about torture in Argentina. But we can also extend Taussig's argument by further invoking Timerman (1981, p.351) who was arguing that the survival of civil society was deeply linked to keeping alive memories and continued discussion of the unspeakable; what he described as staying "loyal to our tragedies". And Timerman's literary and intellectual descendants, Ariel Dorfman (1991), Tomas Eloy Martinez (1996), Carinna Perelli (1994) among others, have continued to focus on this point. For them, keeping civil society alive means fighting to keep the limits of the discussion of history and political life open. Memory is not only our key to overcoming postcoloniality, it is our key to preserving our human-ness by remembering when we have been in the position of the oppressed. But as the recent controversy over a Spanish judge's request for Augusta Pinochet's extradition from London to stand trial on charges of genocide and torture shows, those who choose to keep alive memories of violence are fighting against the greater tide of those who want to forget (refer to www.newsunlimited.co.uk/pinochet_on_trial). This dimension of memory politics -- coping with the blood memory that divides the population -- has been little articulated in Southeast Asia within the public domain. In the NICs, economic success until now has delayed the day of reckoning of the trade off between civil rights and economic growth. The NICs instead have chosen to focus on their stories of success while downplaying the contested recent past. If we are to believe government propaganda today the only contests that took place were between the nationalists and the colonial rulers. Southeast Asian countries, like those in East Asia, have been able to postpone this reckoning because of their successful economic trajectories. Not surprisingly, the current economic crises have precipitated political challenges in South Korea, Indonesia and Malaysia.
2.4 CONCLUSION

In Malaysia the various significations of the forest stemmed from its place in social relations of power, in particular, the colonial relations of power centred on the plantation, which was by far the main cause of deforestation. Any attempt to deal with the signification of the tropical rainforest in the colonial world must also deal with the capitalist phenomenon that was at the centre of many colonial economies and, at the same time, the diffracted image of the forest: the plantation. The forest was cast as the negative 'other' of the plantation's modernity and as an oasis of scientific order. In time, the vast green spaces of plantation agriculture have come to be a 'natural' feature of the Malaysian environment; more recognizable than the disappearing forests. And as the physical environment changed, forms of consciousness -- perceiving, symbolizing and analyzing nature -- were also reconstructed (Merchant, 1989, p.2). In the process, the colonial and capitalist transformations legitimated a set of symbols that placed Europeans and their technology above natives and wild nature. I believe that the plantation system had far-reaching consequences for Malaysian society because of the way nature was captured and incorporated into the social imaginary. Colonialism, in its promotion and defence of the plantation system also brought about significant demographic changes warranted by the economic changes. These, in turn, warranted the creation of a political system and the institutionalization of social relations that continue to frame contests over rights and resources in Malaysia today.

Without official colonialism it has been harder to identify the continuities from the colonial period in relations of dominance in the contemporary political landscape. Yet, in the post-independence period, nationalism as an offspring of colonial discourse continues to impose and maintain a hierarchy of categories. Governments of new states frequently find themselves in the situation of trying to wield disparate social groups into citizens of the new state. The modern tragedy has been that most governments choose to co-opt ethnic nationalism, rather than to repudiate it. Post-colonial societies unable to deal with conflict over difference also turn to economic development as a way of legitimizing their rule. Governments in Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea and other newly industrializing countries, assert that the 'consensus' is that sacrifices are justified in the name of national development. But consensus, according to Chantal Mouffe (1995, p.262) is only a form of hegemony. This is certainly true of the Asian values model that so many Asian politicians promote. In Malaysia, the current struggle of aboriginal peoples in East Malaysia to control the forests is dismissed by the state, and supported by the majority as an insignificant consequence of the
development that is necessary if the majority are to enjoy a higher material standard of living. Thus, the conflict over rights is still settled within the old parameters of the colonial period. Yet, I would argue that no consensus is fixed. Instead it is a moving point that is resisted, and therefore, at least partially negotiated, if only because those in power have to take into account how much the populace will tolerate. Hegemony is temporary, and consensus is always reworked. Even in cases such as Malaya, where the independent government was obviously the junior partner in the colonial enterprise and granted independence as a form of keeping de facto control, Mahathir's example has shown us that no ally can be taken for granted. It is this negotiated, and thus temporary, aspect of hegemony that makes it a useful and hopeful concept. Edward Said (1993) sees as a source of hope a group he describes as migrants, individuals who choose not to lay claim to only one identity. This aspect of choice is also tied to the politics of memory. As I noted in my theoretical survey, memory can be used to prop up elitist aims, but it can also be a tool for dismantling hierarchies by remembering the social construction of ontological categories. The options open to civil society in countries such as Malaysia may be small, but much can happen in the interstitial spaces, and as in the physical world, hopefully, such cracks will eventually evolve into fissures.

1. Moreover, since the demise of the Soviet Union, the information emerging from the former republics indicates that the environmental problems there are also severe. Peet and Watts (1996, p.10) suggest that the crisis in socialism was precipitated by serious environmental and resource problems generated by an economics of shortage.

2. Cowan and Shenton (1996) argue that the concept of development evolved in 19th century England as a means of socially managing the disorder engendered by unfettered capitalism. But contemporary understanding of the term development has much more to do with the post-World War II reconfiguration of the colonial world as the developing world.

3. But both Said and Appadurai ignore that the same frameworks were deployed in Europe on women; the Orient may have been always in need of "corrective study" (Said, 1978, p.41) but so were women. Perhaps a more nuanced reading of women's positions, is that while we may not completely share in the privileges of power, as wives, mothers and daughters we, nonetheless, are complicit with power. Thus, women of certain race and class have a degree of mobility within the confines imposed upon us. Moreover, Stoler (1995) argues that the white population in colonies were also subject to disciplinary regimes and surveillance. I suggest that it was still white men in the position of deciding who was watched and punished. 'Natives' on the side of the regime of power would have been taking orders rather than making decisions.


5. Although certain right-wing narratives regarding poor and/or visible minority populations in the First World echo the narratives applied to the Third World.

6. For example, Clerkx and Wertheim (1991) in their book on the plantation society of Deli in the colonial Netherlands East Indies claim that poor whites were escorted out of ports rather than have them destroy the appearance of a competent, powerful race. Said provides the example of colonial officials retiring at fifty-five, a practice continued till today in Malaysia.
despite the severe shortage of professionals during the economic boom. But it should be remembered that behind these petty details lay the ability and strength to impose the parameters governing social relations.

7. See the description of Napoleon’s conquest of Egypt in Said (1979). Also see David Ludden (1993, pp.251-277).

8. However, translation from native languages required native interpreters who ‘interpreted’ in the most fundamental sense of the word. See Dirks (1993).

9. Controversial projects in contemporary Malaysia, such as the Pergau Dam which is being financed by the British government, are still justified in the evangelizing language of development and modernization.

10. Prakash (1992), however, argues that the deployment of science to normalize sometimes produced inappropriate transformations. He looks at the history of science staged in museums and exhibitions. He suggests that the process of enunciation is always ambivalent because there is a disjuncture between meanings articulated and the processes and conditions that make articulation possible.

11. In fairness to the post-colonial governments that made material well-being a goal, they were at least behaving better than some of their colleagues who treated government as a personal bank account.

12. I use the term paradigm rather than theory to distinguish between an idea that has been accepted by the majority and one that is seen as one explanation among several.

13. Although there is no evidence that Latour has read the sixth century Chinese military strategist Sun Tzu's *Art of War* (1971), in terms of precedence one could argue that Latour has applied Sun Tzu's theories on conducting war and setting up alliances to science and technology.

14. There are allies, and there are junior allies. The NICs are the junior allies in global capitalism.

15. See Thomas’s (1994) *Colonialism’s Culture* for examples.

16. For example, criteria for classification of intellectual capability and creativity and progressiveness could be based on material accumulation. Fernand Braudel (1981, pp.58-59) depicts a map of the progressive societies of the world based on hierarchies of farming implements.

17. Admittedly, there were limits to what locals would put up with; resentment to new technology could also be a rallying point for resistance as in Gandhi’s rejection of the industrially produced cloth (Prakash, 1992; Grove, 1995).


19. In turn, Bhabha has been criticized by Robert White in *White Mythologies* (1990) for universalizing psychoanalytic categories to explain specifics.

20. Gandhi, of course, was the exception.

21. Even the seemingly simple tasks of classification involve anxiety because there is no assurance that it is achievable. In a contemporary example, the Israeli journalist Danny Rubenstein recounts a poignant story of Palestinians travelling in to work on buses bearing the names of their destroyed villages. By refusing to accept the Israeli names of villages built practically on the ruins of their old homes, these Palestinian villagers keep their faith with their collective identities. See *The People of Nowhere*, trans. by Ina Friedman, (New York: Random House, 1991).

22. Boyarin does allow that his reading of Hegel is disputed.

23. Moreover, because the plantation system in Southeast Asia was not associated with a legacy of slavery like its counterparts in the Americas, it has not had its legitimation challenged on moral grounds.

24. A less binary conception of nationalism may be the one conceived by Chantal Mouffe (1995)—as one form of identification.

25. This is one of the points brought up by the Subaltern Historians. In turn, Gayatri Spivak (1988) raised the counter question of how anyone could actually represent the voice of absence in her famous essay "Can the subaltern speak?"

26. The great Indonesian writer Pramoedya Ananta Toer attempted to deal with the psychological poisons of colonialism, among the colonized, most prominently in his Buru quartet, and has been hounded by the independent Indonesian regime.
CHAPTER THREE
CONFIGURING NATURE, NATURALIZING CLAIMS

3.0 INTRODUCTION

The name of the town of Batu Gajah in Peninsular Malaysia literally translates into ‘elephant mile’. This name comes from an incident in the early years of British colonialism in Malaya and signifies a second and equally crucial colonial encounter embedded in the first; the introduction of the railway. According to one version of this tale, on the morning of the maiden trip of the train on the railway, British officials and local dignitaries were watching as the train approached the stop when a bull elephant stepped out and locked his tusks on the engine in an effort to stop this 'monster' encroaching into its territory. The early trains were small and the outcome was not predictable, but after an agonizing passage of time the elephant collapsed; dead from a crushed skull. The grisly evidence of this incident is preserved in the town museum in the form of the cracked skull.

This incident is suggestive of several interesting interpretations. On that day in which the elephant halted the train, the indigenous forced the Empire to a standstill. The tale can also be read as irrational nature confronting rational Western technology. And while details of the tale change in the telling, the elephant was definitely a bull elephant in all accounts. I think this point is suggestive of a once neglected aspect of the colonial encounter now seen as a male/colonizer encounter with the female/colonized other; it was the impotence of the native male to stop the colonial penetration that made the colonized space 'female.' The technological arrival of the train also symbolizes the arrival of capitalism in Malaya, interestingly, courtesy of the revenues raised by Chinese tin miners whose taxes paid for the early railways (Voon, 1971, p.1). Lastly, even the origin of the name of the town is subject to debate. Another explanation suggests the name came from a limestone formation that had the shape of an elephant. I have interpreted the story as one of how the science/empire/capital nexus came to depend upon each other for their mutual survival and legitimacy, tracing the implications of this productive relationship for the construction of colonial nature.

Any attempt to deal with the signification of the tropical rainforest in the colonial world must also deal with capitalism which was at the centre of many colonial economies, and its diffracted image of the forest - the plantation. Certainly, in the context of Malaya, the plantation was the main cause of deforestation. I suggest here that the plantation system not only caused deforestation, but it cast the forest as the negative 'other' to the plantation's modernity and scientific order. In time, the vast green spaces of plantation agriculture have come to be a 'natural' feature of the Malaysian
environment; more recognizable than the disappearing forests. And as the physical environment changed, forms of consciousness -- perceiving, symbolizing and analyzing nature were also reconstructed (Merchant, 1989, p.2). In the process, colonial and capitalist transformations legitimated a set of symbols that placed Europeans and their technology above natives and wild nature. In colonial Malaya, as in many other European colonies in the nineteenth century, the transformation of the environment and the imposition of a new socio-economic hierarchy was legitimated by the rhetoric of modernization. Moreover, because the plantation system in Southeast Asia was not associated with a legacy of slavery as its counterpart in the Americas, its legitimation was not challenged on moral grounds. Yet I believe that the plantation system had far-reaching consequences for Malaysian society not only because of the subsequent physical and demographic changes warranted by the economic changes, but also because of the way nature was captured and incorporated into the social imaginary.

The plantation both reflected and instilled many ideological and philosophical attitudes towards nature and race. These attitudes were physically manifested through the changes wrought on the physical environment and through the plantation system's division of labour. Insofar as a set of physical changes brought about the reorganization of society to support it, the plantation economies became plantation societies. By this I mean that a recognizable set of patterns of social, cultural and ultimately, political relations came into place. The next three chapters deal in detail with the physical and social reconfiguration of Malaya that took place in the wake of the arrival of colonialism and capital symbolized by the plantation. As such, plantations are not only economic entities, but social and political models. Adopting the plantation model, to a certain extent, commits a society to following certain pathways of relating to each other, and to the state. I suggest that in Malaya, this resulted in a society that justified repression and discrimination against certain groups in terms of sacrifices that are prerequisites to economic success. The sacrifices are always made by disempowered groups -- women, minorities, immigrants -- that cannot oppose the decisions made on their behalf. The current political crisis beginning in 1998, coming on the heels of an economic one, appears to be the first time Malaysians are openly debating the sustainability of a social organization that subordinates itself to economic imperatives. Even now few Malaysians seem willing to discuss their history of racial divisions and class alliances that produced the political compromises of contemporary Malaysia. This chapter provides some background to how those compromises evolved concomitant with the expansion of the resource economy in Malaya. In keeping with the historical
period, I use the male pronoun when referring to someone in a position of authority or responsibility because this reflects the realities of the period.

Chapter Three is divided into two parts. The first section begins with a brief description of pre-colonial agricultural society. I go on to look at early colonialism and the manner in which the Malayan landscape was reconfigured and its society restructured demographically to meet the labour demands of the plantation economy. The British colonialists instituted a new system of land tenure that was based on individual land ownership. The changing form of land tenure was significant because of the accompanying transition of agricultural production from self-sufficiency to a system based on profit maximization. The early Chinese agricultural communities were the first step in creating racially separate rural populations. I then describe the introduction of rubber in the last decade of the nineteenth century. By 1910, rubber had virtually displaced all other crops in Malaya, whether for cash or subsistence and occupied 62 percent of the cultivated land. Rubber estates became the “leading feature of Malaya’s ecology” (Headrick, 1988, p.246). Since even few Europeans could afford the outlay for rubber plantations, these were owned by British agency houses setting the stage for the corporate style agriculture that continues to dominate Malaysia today. In addition, the rubber industry was supported by research institutions such as Kew Gardens, England, the Singapore Botanical Gardens and the Rubber Research Institute in Malaya. The expansion of plantation agriculture also created a new demand for labour thus triggering the emigration of Tamil labour from southern India. Thus, Malaya became a frontier society with almost half of its population made up of new arrivals who came to work the land. The section ends with a description of the discursive practices prevailing in the period before World War II. By then imperialism had moved from a project to be implemented to a fact of life replete with attitudes, rules and hierarchies that acted as intellectual and physical gateways.

The second section looks at Malaya in World War II between 1942 to 1945 followed by the period from 1945 to 1948 before the declaration of a state of emergency by the colonial government. These six years were critical in that the hitherto prevailing discourses controlling claims to rights and resources were destabilized. I examine the effects of World War II on destabilizing racial hierarchies. In particular, I examine the consequences of the temporary Japanese victories over European and American colonial authority in Asia. This section makes two major points. First, that the rise of resistance against colonialism was a result of the psychic fractures brought about by the defeats of World War II. These anti-colonial movements and their relationships to the Japanese, whether in
opposition or in alliance, trained local leaders and provided them with the confidence to continue agitating after the war. I then describe the conditions under which subsequent contesting claims to rights and resources were launched. During the war, forests provided a place to hide from, or harass, the largely urban-based Japanese troops. The Malayan Peoples Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA) which reverted to its former name, the Malayan Communist Party (MCP), after the war, emerged from the forests in control of the rural areas in the wake of the Japanese surrender in 1945. The competing demands of the British who sought to reconsolidate territorial control, and the Communists who needed land on which to settle inevitably resulted in a military struggle. Strikes also broke out on many estates reflecting the continuing dissatisfaction over low wages and poor living conditions. Second, I argue that the pre-war administration of a beneficent, if patronising, colonial authority gave way to a repressive police state as the appearance of a peaceful and grateful subject people dissolved in the country-wide conflict. This conflict and the institutional practices justified in its name laid the foundations of the modern social and political landscape of Malaysia.

3.1 CONFIGURING NATURE

The British established a foothold in Malaya on the island of Penang in 1786. Singapore was added to their possessions in 1819 followed by Malacca in 1824. British possessions in Malaya were administered by the Government of India until 1867 when they were made Crown Colony and administered by a Governor. There was a lull in territorial expansion until 1874 when the British assigned an advisor to the Sultan of Perak in the wake of civil unrest within both the local Malay and the Chinese immigrant populations.\(^2\) Ramasamy (1994, p.7) has suggested that the British may have been looking for an excuse to intervene as their plans to develop land commercially depended upon political stability and consolidation. Between 1874 and 1914, British residents or advisers were appointed to the courts of Malay rulers in nine states. Of these, four eventually formed the Federated Malay States (FMS) in 1896. By 1914, all of Malaya was under British rule (Figure 3.1) with the Malay sultans providing legitimacy as figureheads in the administration.

In the wake of British plans for agricultural development, a peculiar and mutually reinforcing spatial and racial division evolved in Malaya. In this section I briefly sketch the evolving spatial division of Malaya according to the main racial groups: the Malays, Chinese, Indians and British.
Figure 3.1 Administrative units of British Malaya by 1914.
Such a division developed in tandem with the resource-based capitalist economy during the colonial period leading up to World War II. The category of race is more appropriate than ethnicity as it highlights the biologically determinist aspect of the colonial carryover that is still in use in Malaysia today. I should note that there are also aboriginal forest dwellers known in Malaya as the Orang Asli. Many of them still live in forest reservations and interaction with the rest of the population was, and still is, limited. However, my main concern is with the interactions between the Malays, Chinese, Indians and British and the competition for arable lowlands. As competition for valuable land increased, it was precisely this competition that led to conflict between the different racial groups.

3.1.1 Pre-Colonial Political Ecology
This section sets out the pre-colonial political ecology of Malay settlements to provide the reader with a basis for assessing the changes described in the following pages of this chapter. With the exception of the Orang Asli, the Malays are the group with the longest history of settlement. In Malaysia, a Malay is taken to be someone who can show that he/she comes from an ethnic Malay background and who professes Islamic faith. Pre-colonial Malay communities consisted of small groups inhabiting river valleys, forming linear settlement patterns and accessible to each other only by the waterways. These early Malay communities were largely self-sufficient. Tenurial rules were based on livelihood needs, and control of land use was structured through a system of adat or custom. Land was held by the community as a whole and individuals worked the land after obtaining permission from the headman who was answerable to the sultan of that fiefdom. Land fell into two categories -- 'dead' or 'living' land, where 'dead' land was that which had not been cultivated over the last three years. Maxwell (1883) suggested that forms of "land pawning" might have existed. The first form was outright selling for silver or gold; the second was known as jual janji (selling on promise) where an indebted person might use his land as collateral while he worked off his debt (Brookfield et al, 1991). Landlessness existed for some individuals -- after all slavery was widespread -- but non-commercial land tenure prevailed. This designation of 'ownership' of, or right to, the land based on cultivation, was later interpreted by the British to their advantage as they proceeded to alienate land that did not appear cultivated. In contrast the Malays saw this period of fallow as a time for the land to replenish itself until someone else in the community decided to cultivate it. With the advent of British rule, the British instituted a new system of land tenure that was based on individual ownership and which allowed Malays to dispose of their lands without the consensus of the community. In addition, the
new classification of land use based on occupied land, lands allocated for transport, lands suitable for agricultural enterprise and mining effectively meant that the British reserved the right to three out of the four categories of land use by decree. After 1875, all land not previously occupied and thereby covered by adat law, became state land to be disposed of by the state (Table 3.1). It is debatable whether widespread non-compliance by the non-European population with this new legal system would have halted British acquisition of the best lands. But it is useful here to recall Said's (1993, p.69) point about Joseph Conrad's awareness of the need of a justificatory regime for greed; in this case, disguised by imposing new property laws. The ritual and order embodied in the new legal system imparted a sense of propriety to what was essentially theft. Through the loss of tax revenues engendered by this transformation of land tenure, the power of the Malay rulers over their people became symbolic. The rulers would pay a high price for inviting the British into an alliance against local enemies. What they gained in monetary terms, they lost in power. The changing form of land tenure was significant because of the accompanying transition of agricultural production from self-sufficiency to surplus. The subject of land tenure is taken up again in sub-section 3.1.6.1.

3.1.2 The Early Plantation Economy

In the wake of British colonization of Penang, Singapore and Malacca, immigrants from southern China were imported to mine tin and grow export crops such as pepper, nutmeg, gambier and sugar cane. Groups known as kongsis, based on the region of origin in China, were each headed by a Kapitan who also arranged for new immigrants to come to Malaya. In fact, the Chinese rather than the British, pioneered plantation agriculture in Malaya. While the early definition of a plantation was land cultivated for export purposes, in the twentieth century the term 'estate' has been often conflated with plantation (J. Jackson, 1968, p.xiv). In this study, I have taken the term 'estates' to refer to plantations over 100 acres; smaller acreages are smallholdings (The Malayan Agricultural Journal, 1939b, p.214). The early Chinese settlers who possessed little capital and intended to return to China, opted for crops that would yield quick returns. The British administration encouraged the Chinese immigrants to cultivate the land as a way of clearing the forest and expanding the agricultural frontier. While the Chinese paid taxes to the British, they organized themselves separately from both the Malays and the British. Chinese agricultural settlements were administered by a headman who was recognized by the Malay ruler and who paid rent on behalf of all the cultivators to the Malays. Chinese were not allowed on Malay land nor could they trade with the Malays. These agricultural communities were the first step in creating a rural Chinese population that existed beside, but separate
from, the Malay population. This segregated system and easily available land meant that the different ethnic groups had very little interaction with each other, and this minimized social friction on a day-to-day basis. The advent of rubber cultivation would upset this balance.

Table 3.1 A simplified outline of the evolution of Malaysian land legislation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-colonial times</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Adat</em> sayings determined land-ownership rules. Local variations, but generally similar in structure throughout the peninsula.</td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colonial intrusion</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Straits Settlements received land enactments in the 1830’s (revised by Maxell in 1886). After British control of the Peninsula in the 1870’s, the Resident in each Malay State attempted to introduce some sort of land code in Perak. Later for Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Pahang.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896: Common codes for the FMS.</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Colonial Consolidation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1911: <em>Land Enactment of 1911</em> for the FMS. A separate enactment for registration and ownership of land. Owners given copies of ownership papers (<em>geran</em>).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colonial Stabilization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1926: <em>Revise Land Code</em>; More comprehensive than the 1911 <em>Enactment</em>: All lands under the jurisdiction of the state, under the control of the sultan. The British Resident advised the sultan. The <em>Revised Land Code</em> was in use until 1965. Various amendments and additions in each state, e.g. 1931, 1948, 1983.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933: Amendment making illegal the pledging or mortgaging of Malay reservation lands to non-Malays.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


3.1.3 Western Writing about Nature

The early plantations were isolated and unhealthy places. Through lack of medical treatment many of the planters (almost all Chinese) fatally succumbed to malaria, beri-beri and gangrene from cuts and wounds (Jackson, 1968, p.12). Attacks by tigers were also a frequent occurrence. Isabella Bird (1884, repr. 1967, p.110) reported 300 tiger attacks in one year on Singapore plantations alone. The lack of written accounts by the Chinese planters or Malays about the transformation of the forest landscape in that period makes it problematic to draw conclusions about changing Malay or Chinese
perceptions of nature based on their experiences. However, based on early descriptions by John Turnbull Thompson (1884, repr.1984) and James Jackson (1968), I suggest that these plantations were extensions or fringes of the forest rather than an alternate form of green space (Figure 3.2). Even early urban settlements appeared to be temporarily wrested from the jungle (Figures 3.3a and 3.3b). Texts written in English from the mid 1880s to before World War II by travellers such as Isabella Bird (1884, repr. 1967) or colonial civil servants such as Sir Frank Swettenham (1895, repr. 1984), John Turnbull Thomson (1884, repr.1984) and Sir Hugh Clifford (1929), or about that period by later authors such as Winstedt (1988), J.Jackson (1968) and Aiken (1994), used the terms 'forest' and 'jungle' interchangeably. There are a few distinctions in usage; tiger attacks always take place in the jungle and J.Jackson distinguishes the jungle as secondary growth; the latter distinction is still common in Malaysia in technical documents. Certain textual tropes were associated with the forest/jungle: primeval innocence, economic potential and danger. These tropes provided backdrops for the different races in colonial writing. These themes dominate early Western writing about Malaya insofar as the forest was Malaya.

The most dominant, and still the most dominant, is the trope of economic potential. Europeans’ perceptions of the landscape were always inflected through the needs of Empire. So John Turnbull Thomson's (1884, repr.1984) account of his sojourn in Penang before the large-scale expansion of the estate system nonetheless records numerous scenes of cash-cropping. It was as though cash-cropping was the lens through which Europeans visually recorded Malaya. Even Bird (1884, repr. 1967, pp. 115-116), technically no servant of the Empire, evaluated the economic potential of the landscape before her, and the innate suitability of different races to their tasks. Nature as a source of material wealth was always forefront in Malaya's significance to the British Empire. Unlike India, whose value to England was bound up in perceptions of the prestige associated with governing a fabled land, Malaya had not much to recommend it in terms of fantasy. Its status as a country that exists as an economic unit and its population as labour to produce the wealth of that economy persist today as the governing foundations for its multi-racial elite. Although some Chinese were owners, the majority featured as labourers to realize the economic potential of the forest by converting it into plantations. Bird's (1884, repr.1967, p.133) remarks on the honesty of the Chinese as miners and businessmen were a long way from the views of late colonialism in Malaya when the competition between the two groups had polarized the country.
Figure 3.2 Early Chinese settlement. Source: BAM 12/10 circa 1904-1910, University of Cambridge.
Figure 3.3a  Early colonial settlement on the Kangsar River. Source: Isabella Bird

Figure 3.3b  Open spaces around colonial government offices in Taiping.
Source: BAM 17/22 circa 1907, University of Cambridge.
A corollary to the trope of economic potential was the trope of duty. Colonial civil servants acted as benign agents of 'the white man's burden' as they advised and tempered the autocratic rule of the sultans in administrating the giant outdoor factory of Malaya (Bird, 1884, repr.1967; Swettenham, 1895, repr. 1984; Thompson, 1864, repr. 1984; Clifford, 1929; Winstedt, 1988). Their narratives emphasized submitting to, yet conquering, mere discomfort -- the mosquitoes, heat, lack of facilities, the ineptitude of native workers and despotism of Malay rulers. These accounts also featured 'apathetic' Malays accepting orders from their white tuans (masters). In fact, they sound much like latter-day development experts/ecotourists who dwell on the inconveniences of travelling in the uncivilized parts of the world for the sake of improving the lot of the backward or experiencing nature. These colonial officials were the Victorian equivalent of management consultants, only with an imperial purpose, as opposed to merely personal ambition, to lend weight to their presence in a foreign land. If imperial purpose lent moral weight to the British presence in Malaya, danger provided a superb backdrop for the white man (and occasionally, woman) to feature heroically in a "beast-haunted country" (Bird, 1884, repr.1967, p.224). The trope of Eden in Malaya was always undercut by a sense of danger; the languorous sensuousness of tropical isles never successfully extended to Malaya. The colonialist's role is to rule and tame wayward nature. Although Western writers often used lush language to describe the landscape, the forest provided just enough danger to provide an agreeable frisson. A story that brings together the tropes of courage and duty is Frank Swettenham's (1975) account of his escape downriver after the murder of the Perak Resident James Birch in 1873. Birch and Swettenham had planned to meet after they had finished delivering the proclamations inviting the rajas of Perak to sit on the Malay Council. Birch was murdered in Pasir Salak prior to meeting Swettenham who managed to escape downstream. Swettenham's escape may have owed more to the local noblewoman, Raja Andak of Chendiang, who hid Swettenham under a pile of fruit in her boat and took him downstream to the nearest British stronghold, than Swettenham's own swashbuckling account of his efforts. Raja Andak's actions were surprising as well as heroic when one considers that, after the murder of Birch, anyone caught helping the British would have forfeited her life. Unfortunately, for Swettenham to confess that he owed his life to a local woman would have violated both the stereotypes of heroic white men and timid native women. Raja Andak's role remained unacknowledged until 1960 (Winstedt, August 1960). But the chance to display heroism mostly came in tiger hunts or keeping a stiff upper lip in the face of discomfort. In the nineteenth century, while the forest could be dangerous and unhealthy, it was still nature rather
than society, and therefore, bore no intent of malice.

These racialized roles, Malay innocence and/or passivity, the despotism of the Malay rulers, Chinese industry or greed, and European courage and managerial skills were important in the interpretations of rights to land and political power that underlay the subsequent twentieth century military struggles. Malay innocence and passivity made them ill-suited to exploit the riches of Malaya, which the Chinese could do. But Chinese greed made them morally ill-suited to control the riches. By contrast, European courage and rationality (underpinning the managerial skills) perfectly suited them to making the most of nature’s bounty in Malaya, while at the same time protecting the innocent Malay raayat (commoners) from both their rulers and the Chinese. I will explore the ways in which these tropes were translated and deployed in colonial propaganda during the post-World War II anticolonial struggles. The Indians had yet to make an appearance in large numbers. It is also worth noting that even among the Europeans, mobility and consuming nature aesthetically were issues of class. Aesthetic consumption is still very much a status marker in contemporary Western societies; ecotourism in the Galapagos Islands or the forests of Borneo comes at a high price.

A curious dissonant note comes from the neglected Emily Innes’s *The Chersonese with the Gilding Off* (1885, cited in Morgan, 1996, Chapter Five) which presented a viewpoint from lower down in the colonial hierarchy. Innes’s account eschews the usual veneer of service to humanity to present a view that was no doubt more relevant to many upwardly mobile members of the middle and lower classes of Europe. The Empire was a place to go to better their social circumstances vis à vis the European social systems. In an example of hierarchies of signifiers encoding each other, being higher up on the racial hierarchy allowed European men (and some women) to trade on race to improve their class position by relocation. This was especially relevant for tradesmen, the lower middle-classes and younger sons and assorted others who failed at various competitions in the metropolitan centres (Spagenberg, 1976; Headrick, 1988, Chapter Nine; Clerkx and Wertheim, 1991). Morgan’s (1996) otherwise admirable study of white women in the colonies barely comments on the importance of physical relocation as a prelude for repositioning on the social hierarchy. Isabella Bird would have remained a middle-class lady who would not have had access to different circles of society in England had not her reputation been made by her travels. Henceforth, Empire would be the gateway to upward mobility. The colonies provided new material resources to exploit. But they also provided a social space where the social limitations imposed by class and gender were traded against the social gains inherent in being white. Thus, the colonies represented an escape hatch.
for the resentments that might have been manifested as social unrest in Europe. One escape hatch would be new profession of imperial scientist.

3.1.4 Science and Empire

This section discusses the symbiotic relationship between capital, science and imperialism by focussing on the role of nature in the British Empire and, more specifically, botany and the colonization of the Malay Peninsula. In the early days of scientific exploration, science was regarded as a series of revelations, and it imbued its followers with a sense of mission that kept them going under difficult circumstances. John MacKenzie (1990, p.6) suggests that it was a short step from this sense of mission to a belief in the redemptive powers of science to unlock the secrets of nature. Thereafter, science becomes part of a civilizing mission. This kind of progression is certainly present for the science of botany. In the eighteenth century, plant transfers were unsystematic, but by the second half of the nineteenth century the Linnaean classification system gave scientists a means of redirecting raw material to suitable locales in other colonies based on their understanding of plant types matched to environmental conditions. Significantly, Linnaeus himself was interested in botany as an adjunct to the political economy of Sweden (Koerner, 1996). In the nineteenth century science was characterized by “organized knowledge” (MacKenzie, 1990, p.4). Early scientists were made up of autodidacts, both men and women; they could be travellers, missionaries, administrators and officers. This way science could be seen as a “means of training and organizing common sense as a faculty crucial to the pursuit of power” (MacKenzie, 1990, p.5). Anyone could be an amateur pursuing scientific research given the time and money to do so. Brockway (1979, p.69) suggests that because scientific education was new, it was not yet filled with the ranks of younger sons of the gentry and aristocracy as was the case in classics, theology and the humanities.

Government funded research institutions, such as Kew Gardens, England, acted as clearing houses for seeds of potential crops from all over the empire, and scientists arranged plant transfers across the colonies (Brockway, 1979). Figure 3.4 shows the director of Kew Gardens, Sir Joseph Banks, as one of the nodes in the network through which newly-discovered plant material from exploration voyages was rerouted to other locations. The development of botany made the spatial reorganization of nature conceivable; territorial expansion allowed that reorganization to become a reality. Europeans could ecologically colonize new lands because their prior military and political colonization gave them the opportunity to do so. Europeans were able to treat their colonies as giant
experimental gardens, and because of the scale of the area available to them, they were able to
overcome the physical limitations of climate and soil conditions simply by moving a failed experiment
to another colony.\textsuperscript{15} The natural sciences fed the Victorian need to order the world (Morgan, 1996,
p.98) through their emphasis on taxonomy, but science also literally fed the capitalist need for
resources, what David Arnold (1998, p.4) described as the “economic intentionality behind plant
transfers”. Susan Morgan (1996, p.93) and Martin Kemp (1996, p.203) have suggested that the
interdependence between nineteenth-century imperial goals, British travel narratives and the natural
sciences becomes obvious when one realizes that scientists needed to publish to ensure future
funding. And publication of their travels was a way of proving the superiority of European culture
in contrast to the ‘backward’ peoples they came across. I would add that the importance of knowing
these ‘backward cultures’, and therefore, predicting their responses to European encroachment on
their lands and lives was sufficient justification for funding projects of this sort. Latour (1987, p.222)
stresses the importance of this accumulative nature of Western science and technology in colonial
expansion. Print technology made local knowledge universally available while equations, maps and

Kumar (1990, p.52) claims that early scientific activity was amateur and disorganized, and
that funding by East India Company promoted results not means. This policy eventually changed, and
government policy from 1791 onwards supported economic botany. The early projects were carried
out through the botanic gardens, and, at least in India, began with crops for local people. Eventually
the Gardens would focus on cash crops and research would be coordinated through institutions and
societies as well as gardens in both metropolitan centres and colonies (Kumar, 1990, p.60).
Information pouring in from various parts of the empire was organized to direct plans and policies
for the colonial project. Science would no longer just serve in exploration and cataloguing but in
directing investment; it would serve to remove risks from investors. Botanic gardens were a good
example of Bruno Latour’s (1987, Chp.6) “centres of calculation” where knowledge is collected,
analyzed and redeployed to parts of the world other than its place of origin. Latour (1987, p.225)
uses Kew as an example describing its role in the “general mobilization of the world that endows a
few scientists in frock coats, somewhere in Kew Gardens, with the ability to visually dominate all the
plants of the earth.” In most situations, metropolitan scientists took precedence over local scientists.
This caused tension in the division of labour between the two groups as the former focussed on
analysis while the task of the latter was to provide only samples (Kumar, 1990, p.62). Metropolitan

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scientists gave meaning, thus setting the stage for future scientific relationships. This almost subconscious subjugation may have been an acknowledgement of the need to keep the mother country in charge. Together, metropolitan and colonial scientists, the institutes they worked for and the societies they created, constituted a network nurturing crops and research until the time when the private sector was ready to take on the new crops. Local and specialist societies also published journals that provided platforms for the dissemination of new information.

Figure 3.4  Simplified networks of distribution of plant material from exploration voyages
Modified from David Philip Miller (1996, p.30).
Both Headrick (1988, Chapter Seven) and Brockway (1979) show the importance of crops derived from botanical studies to feed the engine of the industrial revolution and imperial enterprise all routed through Kew Gardens and its junior partner gardens around the globe. Kew's place in the dense web of interlocking interests between the rise in status of botanical science and its service to Empire is described by Brockway (1979), D. Miller (1996) and MacKay (1996). In particular, Brockway's study focusses on the awareness of the economic potential of botanical knowledge by Kew's directors Sir Joseph Banks, Sir Joseph Hooker, and his son Sir William Hooker. In an example of metropolitan philosophical battles affecting the periphery, Kew's importance in Victorian science in part derived from being on the victorious side in the great battle between Church and State in England. Joseph Hooker, along with Charles Lyell and Thomas Huxley led the triumphant defence of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* when it was published in 1859 (Brockway, 1979, pp.92-100). Kew directors Joseph Banks and William Hooker hired plant collectors to obtain specimens and seeds from all over the globe. This action was made possible through the directors' personal ties with government agencies and aristocratic patrons (D. Miller, 1996; Mackay, 1996). Hooker established cooperative arrangements with the Royal Navy, the Colonial Office and the India Office (Brockway, 1979, p.82). Although Brockway (1979, p.76) claims that there was no systematic or official relationship between Kew and the colonial gardens, the influence of Kew on colonial gardens was undeniable. Plants with economic potential were studied and bred at Kew before being sent out to colonial gardens. Among Kew's most illustrious contributions to imperial expansion were tea, cinchona (for the treatment of malaria) and rubber. The link between Kew and Empire is personal in the case of cinchona; William Dawson Hooker, the son of Kew's director Sir William Hooker, wrote his doctoral dissertation on cinchona (Morgan, 1996, p.115). Quinine, derived from cinchona not only allowed the conquest of new lands, it allowed Europeans to stay there (Headrick, 1988, pp. 231-237). Kew's directors nominated the directors of colonial gardens, and those gardens were often staffed by botanists trained at Kew (Brockway, 1979). The most famous of colonial botanists was Henry Ridley at the Singapore Botanical Gardens, whose contributions I will discuss later in this chapter.

3.1.4.1 Economic Gardens

While Kew was the best known of the economic botany gardens, others like Buitenzorg (1819) in the Dutch East Indies, Peradeniya (1821) in Ceylon, Calcutta (1787), Trinidad (1927), and Sydney...
were also important for their roles in the imperial economy (*Agricultural Bulletin of the Straits Settlement and Federated Malay States*, 1910). The Singapore Botanic Gardens, created in 1888, played an important role in the rubber industry that came to dominate the Malayan economy. Early botanic gardens were known as economic gardens (*Agricultural Bulletin of the Straits Settlement and Federated Malay States*, 1910). In a special centennial commemoration of the Singapore Botanic Gardens, P.R. Wycherley (1960) reviewed the work of gentlemen scientists such as James Collins whose work led to Sir Charles Markham's recommendation of the collection of *Hevea brasiliensis* rubber from Brazil.

The earliest gardens in the Malayan Peninsula were the Penang Botanic Gardens. These were created in 1800 from Sir Francis Light's ambition to create spice gardens that would break the spice monopoly of the Dutch. The Penang Gardens had a checkered history and only existed at intermittent periods. The Malacca Gardens were established from a gift of land by a Chinese planter in 1886 only to be abolished by Sir Charles Mitchell ten years later (*Agricultural Bulletin of the Straits Settlement and Federated Malay States*, 1910). The 1903 economic garden at Batu Tiga, Selangor was said to contain "a very complete series of plants likely to prove useful to planters". The shaky survival of the gardens traces the efforts of colonial science to make itself an indispensable part of the alliance of science and capital. The colonial gardens served as the first easily observable point of material accumulation and ordering in the project of commodification of botany and its alliance with Empire. Its survival in various parts of the Empire can be twinned to this project and can be seen in the jealous competition between the colonial scientists in Peradeniya, Ceylon and Malaya to claim responsibility for the success of rubber (Ridley, 1955). In tandem with the establishment of economic gardens was the establishment of amateur societies and clubs such as the Agri-Horticultural Society founded to lobby the colonial government for proper research funding for agriculture (*Agricultural Bulletin of the Straits Settlement and Federated Malay States*, 1910). The influence of economic gardens on Malaya's agricultural trajectory is discussed in the next section.

3.1.5 Rubber and Malaya

3.1.5.1 Introducing Rubber

European plantations in Malaya followed in the wake of the railroads and were mostly dedicated to coffee, notably in the Klang Valley. Early European plantations of pepper and coffee in Malaya were unsuccessful, and it was only with the advent of rubber that European commercial agriculture
took off.\textsuperscript{17} In the nineteenth century, the high price of wild Amazonian rubber was enough to persuade countries which possessed tropical colonies to cultivate rubber.\textsuperscript{18} The difficulty lay in getting the rubber seedlings; not surprisingly, the Brazilian government made it a crime to remove wild rubber seedlings from Brazil. It was not until 1877 that rubber seedlings were shipped to Singapore; of these, nine were planted in the garden of the British Resident in the state of Perak. The issue of whether the seeds were shipped out of Brazil illegally is still a controversial issue today. This charge has been denied by the British (Wickham, 1908; Ridley, 1955; Wycherley, 1960). The British emphasis on denying any association of illegality with the initial shipment of rubber seeds is an important illustration of Said's argument that imperialism needed the justification of high purpose. In the age of high imperialism, commercial enterprise would seek to distance itself by any means \textit{rhetorically}, if not in practice, from the ugliness of profit since commerce was now part of the project to exploit the earth's resources for the benefit of the human race.

Initially, there was little interest among the planters in the cultivation of rubber. While botany has achieved the status of science and is no longer challenged, in its early days, the notion of plants flourishing so far away from their place of origin clashed with common sense.\textsuperscript{19} Different perceptions of ecological possibility prevalent among planters of different nationalities influenced their reactions to the opportunities presented by this new agricultural crop. Even when Europeans in Southeast Asia undertook rubber planting, local perceptions influenced the strain of rubber they grew or the kinds of conditions planters thought rubber plants would thrive in. British planters switched from coffee to rubber in the 1890s because of declining coffee prices caused by competition from Brazilian coffee exports (Voon, 1977, p.291). However, local memories in Klang, once the centre of the Malayan coffee industry, point to the destruction of coffee plants by disease as the reason planters switched to cultivating \textit{hevea brasiliensis} rubber. The Dutch in the Netherlands East Indies were slower to adopt rubber because their plantation economy had been less affected by the coffee blight. (The Dutch had prudently switched to the more resistant strains of \textit{Robusta} coffee by the 1910s.) When the Americans opted to enter rubber cultivation in 1905, their tendency to cultivate huge plantations put them in conflict with the Filipino mestizo elites who already controlled vast tracts of lands with their estancias (Voon, 1977, p.295). Since appropriating enough land to justify the risk of adopting a new crop proved problematic, the Americans never adopted rubber seriously. The Thais in Siam and the French in Indochina were influenced by their belief that a pronounced dry season was unsuitable for rubber since it originated in equatorial South America. The first Malayan rubber
planters in 1895 were Chinese and British, but because rubber takes five to six years to mature, investment in rubber required capital to which European planters had easier access. Thus, European planters were in a better position to take advantage of this new crop (Headrick, 1988, p.245). At the beginning European planters had so little faith in the success of rubber that they interplanted rubber among their coffee crops to reduce financial losses should rubber fail to realize any financial gain.

3.1.5.2 Henry Ridley and the Singapore Botanic Gardens

In Malaya, rubber cultivation took off with the appointment of Henry Ridley as Director of the Singapore Botanical Gardens in 1888 (Wycherley, 1960). Ridley was an excellent example of the scientist as empire builder. He was as indispensable to the construction and functioning of Empire as the soldiers and administrators. Even in the days before the popularity of rubber, he handed out rubber seeds in the hope that people would plant the rubber if only as an ornamental plant. He was convinced that once the economic importance of cultivated rubber emerged, there would be a shortage of seeds unless he took precautions ahead of time. Ridley and his staff at the Botanic Gardens in Singapore studied ways to export seeds to ensure a high survival rate eventually fixing on the method of packing seeds in damp charcoal (Wycherley, 1960).

Among the other innovations discovered by the team in Singapore were the following:

- a non-destructive method of tapping
- refining the timing of the tapping with respect to collection
- bringing forward the age at which trees could be tapped; an important consideration in determining the economic viability of estates
- discovering the sheet method of drying rubber to reduce the time taken for drying; this in turn reduced the number of impurities in the exported rubber and dispensed with the washing requirements in the factory
- developing remedies for plant diseases and pests
- fertilizing crops
- improving smoking and curing of sheets
- field programs that determined criteria for suitable locales for starting new estates.

While Ridley (1955) understandably focusses on his own discoveries, there are accounts to show that tandem work was being done during the same period in gardens in Taiping, Kuala Kangsar and Penang (Wycherley, 1960; Agricultural Bulletin of the Straits and Federated Malay States, 1910). Ridley's early experiences of rubber cultivation corroborate Voon's (1977) findings that far from being the enlightened scientific demarcator between indigenous and European methods, the early practices of the industry were informed by a mixture of superstition, 'gut reactions' and hearsay. Ridley (1955, p.121) recounted tales of planters who thought that rubber was mined and others who
mistook seasonal leaf-shedding for disease. He was dismissed as "too scientific" and his advice ignored by planters and colonial officials, although scientists from other colonies took advantage of research done by him. What his own autobiographical account shows is the way in which the twinning of science with commercial needs inexorably overcame the far from enlightened attitude of European planters. Ridley's enterprise highlights another little known aspect of colonialism: competition among colonial powers did exist, but this competition had to be articulated in such a manner that it did not implicitly criticize colonialism. Science and technology were the perfect vehicles for articulating competition as the British led the way in many areas. The superiority of Britain among the colonial powers was evinced by its leadership in science. Ridley (1955) relates how visitors from Buitenzorg were impressed by the size and yield of rubber trees in the Singapore Gardens. Ridley's faith in the increasing economic value of rubber cultivation was a function of his calculations that natural rubber would run out in twenty years or so. The importance of Empire in this kind of global reckoning is the way it used the planet as a kind of giant conglomeration of factories, moving production to different parts of the globe when one locale had outlived its usefulness. The concept, if not the scale, of footloose capital was pioneered through Empire long before the advent of Phillip Knight and Nike.

Ridley's influence in Malaya extended beyond the rubber industry. As a naturalist, he was responsible for much of the cataloguing of Malaya's fauna and flora. Ridley, like the more famous Linneaus before him, stressed the importance of discovering commercially viable crops. Even more, he stressed the need to make these commercially viable crops available on a large scale (Ridley, 1955, p.114). Ridley was also aware that commercial interests would be on his side only if he could reduce the cultivation time before profits were realized. Hence, he stated; "The most important discovery we made at the time was that with care, one could go on opening the cuts daily" (Ridley, 1955, p.117). Until then, few planters had been interested in investing in rubber, because it was assumed that rubber needed 25 years to mature and could only be re-tapped after a two or three year interval. Ridley and his researchers showed that rubber trees were productive by the age of four years, and could be tapped on a daily basis. He also stressed that production had to be at a rate that would obviate the need for a substitute should demand rise (Ridley, 1955, p.120). His sentiments echo the views of companies which, attempting to obtain capital on the market, argued for the need to invest in plantations to meet future demand (Gow, Wilson and Stanton Ltd., 1906). Botanists at the gardens later justified their positions by arguing that unlike their narrowly focussed scientific rivals at the
Rubber Research Institute (RRI), they studied a variety of plants from the forests, thereby increasing the probability of chance discoveries (Wycherley, 1960).

3.1.6 Changes in the Administration of Malaya Due to Rubber

3.1.6.1 Land Tenure

To promote European-owned plantations the colonial government introduced land use legislation in 1896 that closed off new agricultural lands to non-Europeans. The idea was to standardize the laws of ownership and transfer to regulate administration of lands, an important issue in a country undergoing rapid development of commercial resource extraction. The colonial government tried to encourage cultivation by granting large blocks of land rent free, offering loans on easy terms, bringing in more immigrant labour, and extending roads and railways to improve communication and transportation to the isolated plantations (J. Jackson, 1968, p.91). In fact, when floating a company on the market, the directors were apt to use the proximity of railways lines as a selling point. Some estates even had their own railway stations (Gow, Wilson and Stanton Ltd.,1906). The ‘Lalang Clause’ allowed Europeans to alienate land that appeared idle to the disadvantage of both the Malays and the Chinese.23 Furthermore, non-Europeans were not allowed to buy land fronting transportation corridors, thus increasing marketing costs for smallholders (Ramasamy, 1994, p.14). Because the British had alienated almost all unoccupied low-elevation land, competition between Chinese planters, especially during the rubber boom in the first decade of the 20th century, meant that Malays were under a great deal of temptation to sell their land. But Chinese smallholdings, while having a localized impact on the configuration of the Malayan landscape, could not compete with the magnitude of the physical transformation brought about by the scale of the European operations. For example in 1899, the acreage of rubber in Selangor was about 500 acres.24 By 1909, the figure stood at 84,871 acres owned by Europeans. European companies bought out old Chinese plantations of sugar, gambier and nutmeg (J.Jackson, 1967, p.248) while the colonial government redefined many smallholdings as uncultivated so that they could take over the land which was then sold to European planters (J.Jackson, 1967, p.237).
The combined processes of land alienation through new legislation and large-scale commercialized agriculture radically changed the physical appearance of the landscape (Figure 3.5). By 1910, rubber had virtually displaced all other crops, whether for cash or subsistence, occupying 62 percent of the cultivated land (Headrick, 1988, p.246; Ramasamy, 1994, p.12). The great rubber estates became the “leading feature of Malaya's ecology” (R. Jackson, 1991, p.5). However, the value of rubber to its producer depended on the scale of the operation, which, in turn, was usually a function of race. The colonial administration restricted sales of rubber from smallholders through the Stevenson’s Scheme to prevent prices from collapsing during price slumps (Drabble, 1991, pp.38-46).

The Stevenson’s Scheme set a quota of how much rubber per acre each planter would be allowed to sell. This system favoured the estates by allowing them a much higher quota per acre than the smallholdings. The quota of rubber allocated to smallholders versus estates was calculated from the overall acreage of smallholdings compared to estates. The follow-up to the Stevenson’s Scheme, the Rubber Regulation Scheme allocated 36.8% of the export quota to smallholders whereas production capacity may actually have been as high as 47.8 % of Malaya’s total rubber production capacity (C. Lim, 1967, pp.79-81). Because smallholdings frequently interplanted rubber with other crops, the acreage dedicated to rubber was underestimated; hence, the volume of rubber the smallholders were
allowed to sell was also underestimated. While this may seem an inadvertent mistake on the part of colonial officials, it does highlight the point that even the definition of what constituted a plantation was open to interpretation. Needless to say, the interpretation that prevailed benefitted the group with the most power. Finally, the lack of access to long-term credit and new technology ensured that the Chinese planters could not maintain their successful positions for long. Table 3.2 shows a comparison of the acreages of Asian-owned (mainly Chinese) to European owned plantations through a comparison of smallholdings versus estates.

Table 3.2 Area under rubber in Malaya at the end of 1938. Note that the small holdings were entirely Asian-owned while almost 80% of the estates were owned by Europeans and a few Japanese.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Territory</th>
<th>Estates (acres)</th>
<th>Smallholdings (acres)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Straits Settlement</td>
<td>206,858</td>
<td>128,266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federated Malaya States</td>
<td>1,032,426</td>
<td>581,183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfederated Malay States</td>
<td>792,685</td>
<td>555,229</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


3.1.6.2 Colonial Financing

Since even few European individuals could afford the outlay for a rubber plantation, many of the new efforts were owned by British agency houses such as Harrisons and Crossfield, Guthrie and Company, Boustead and large companies such as Dunlop. This set the stage for the corporate style agriculture that continues to dominate Malaysia today. In the early 1900's responding to a demand for rubber from American tire manufacturers, companies were floated on the London stock exchange to raise capital for planting and production. Although European capitalisation is well recorded, what is less well-known is the extent to which European capital based in other colonies, notably India and Ceylon, also invested in the Malayan rubber industry (Voon, 1971, p.3). The success of the Malayan rubber industry made it possible to raise American capital. Malayan planters persuaded investors outside Britain to support their efforts in Malaya because there was anticipation that, as a wild source, the Brazilian supply of rubber would experience problems correlating supply with market demand. The company Gow, Wilson and Stanton Ltd. (1906), in seeking investment in the firms it represented, argued that the Brazilian supply was dependent on inducements held out to workers. This statement can be refuted from evidence showing that far from inducements, indigenous populations in Brazil were subject to extreme violence to bully them into increasing production (Taussig, 1989).
The fastest way for Western capital to enter the rubber industry was to take over existing estates. The transition from proprietary ownership usually followed this pattern. The European owner of an estate who may have been experiencing problems with cash flow would float his company on a metropolitan market with the help of merchant firms such as Harrisons and Crosfield. In the Malayan rubber industry, the pattern was for the vendor to yield financial control to the new majority shareholder. The vendor would be bought partly through cash while retaining some stocks in the new ownership. The vendor sometimes stayed on as the manager of the estate. In the case of the consolidation of several estates, the previous owner might be offered a directorship in the company or become the visiting agent on behalf of an agency house managing the estates for shareholders. Considering the impact of rubber on Malayan history and the corporatist model favoured even by the government today, it is surprising that only Voon Phin Keong (1971; 1976) has studied the transformation of ownership patterns in the Malayan plantation sector. Voon's research showed that control was concentrated in the hands of a few men who sat on several boards of directors. This was especially true of sterling companies registered in Britain rather than dollar companies registered in the US or rupee companies registered in India and Ceylon (Voon, 1971). Of the 221 directorships controlling the largest companies, over 50 percent were taken up by 40 directors represented on more than one board. Former civil servants also featured prominently on the boards. However, one of the largest companies, the Anglo-Malay Rubber Company featured Frank Swettenham as a director even before he retired from the civil service (Gow, Wilson and Stanton Ltd., 1906). And the same names appeared again and again on the various boards owing to the prominent role played by agency houses. At the same time, few companies within the circle of European ownership changed hands whereas these rapidly gained control of Asian-owned estates and smallholdings. To rationalize their holdings, European companies frequently bought up adjoining Asian smallholdings (Gow, Wilson and Stanton Ltd., 1906; Voon, 1971). The pattern of strength did not change until after independence and the intervention of a racially-based nationalist policy of agricultural expansion which will be discussed in Chapter Six. The interlocking control of a few individuals continues to characterize both government and commerce in contemporary Malaysia (Gomez and Jomo, 1997). The Malaysian government's takeover of the corporate sector in the 1970s and 1980s followed the same pattern of management transformation established by the plantation sector almost a century before.
3.1.6.3 Institutional Support

However, it was not only the financial backing and differential access to land that fostered the success of the rubber industry. I have already described the support through Kew and the other botanic gardens, I now examine the other types of research support available to the rubber industry. One of the most important contributions science made to capital was to introduce a degree of dependability to rates of production and standardization to quality. In the case of the rubber industry, this was a significant factor in persuading capital to invest in the Malayan rubber industry rather than the Brazilian one: “Method and supervision can be introduced [unlike the case of wild rubber]” (Gow, Wilson and Stanton Ltd., 1906). Supervision, of course, meant white supervision. Cooperation between scientists of different colonial powers helped spread successful techniques (Headrick, 1988). In 1914, the colonial government established the Department of Agriculture to foster research suited for commercial application in the local geography, followed by the establishment of the Rubber Research Institute of Malaya (RRIM) in 1926 (Headrick, 1988, p.246). Early Institute reports show that their scientists were very receptive to problems posed by planters, and research programs were tailored to address these problems. The RRIM also published its own journal to deal with the latest technological developments. Soil testing, disease prevention, weed prevention, best practices such as knowledge of permutations of altitude, drainage and situation were all scientific contributions used by commercial agencies to persuade potential investors of the lack of risk involved in their investments. Stipulations on planting had become so specific that planters were told to space their trees eighteen feet apart at 120 trees per acre (Gow, Wilson and Stanton Ltd., 1906). Extension programmes established on estates kept European planters up-to-date on the latest technical advances that were crucial to the success of colonial agricultural enterprises. Later, extension staff toured kampongs in the hope of converting Malay farmers to using more advanced agricultural techniques (Jones, 1939). In an example of using one sort of technology to bribe consumers into adopting another, the Agricultural Department would screen films after the lectures. Information was disseminated through a variety of local journals. Malaya was well served in the area of documentation, thus conveying standardized agricultural methods to as many Europeans as possible. In addition to the Journal of the RRIM and Rubber Development, examples of documentation included the Handbook of Malayan Agriculture issued by the Department of Agriculture from 1924 onwards, the Malayan Agricultural Journal, Supplementary Bulletin of the Rubber Growers Association and Gardens' Bulletin. More general interest agricultural journals included Tropical
Technical education for local people also indicates the different extent to which their colonial rulers accommodated subject populations. As integral tools to the improvement of material conditions, science and technology were key factors in persuading the colonized of the superiority of the colonizers. If the former differed in their faith in colonial rule, this was in part a function of the degree to which they felt they could acquire the tools of progress. Although there was little opportunity for local people to obtain a Western tertiary education, the British founded an agricultural school in Serdang, Malaya in 1931, nineteen years after the idea was first put forward (Mann, 1939). Among the issues debated that delayed the opening of the college was the concern that the Asian students educated in the college would not be able to find employment with salaries commensurate with their education since management jobs were for Europeans. The Director of Agriculture argued that schools in England did an adequate job training estate managers, and that any school established in Malaya should have a purely research mandate. The main beneficiary of the college was the RRI which hired most of the college's graduates. Although one college was initially intended to train Asian students to the point where they would find employment on the estates, the Chinese and Indians were unwilling to be educated to end up as conductors (a non-management position) on estates supervising field labour. This was hardly surprising given that they were required to take technically challenging courses such as mycology, zoology and genetics among others. The college then decided to focus on Malay students, inadvertently revealing the British bias in a racial hierarchy of expectations.

Finally, the exhibition of the material gains wrought by science and technology were important in recruiting support for the Empire among metropolitan populations. Here, the role of exhibitions was to frame Britain's achievements in developing her colonies, once again, emphasizing the moral worth of the colonial project. Certainly, most colonies would have been encouraged to focus their exhibits on economic development that was supposed to be the best proof of the benefits of colonialism. For Malaya, metropolitan exhibitions were important in promoting colonial discoveries (Ridley, 1955; *Agricultural Bulletin of the Straits and Federated Malay States*, 1910). In the Empire Exhibition in Glasgow, 1938, Malaya was represented by a diorama of a rubber plantation against the backdrop of the forest. Once again, the forest was used as a baseline to show how far Malaya had developed through rubber.
3.1.6.4 Labour Requirements

The last ethnic group to be discussed in the context of the capitalist agricultural economy of colonial Malaya is the Indians. The expansion of plantation agriculture created a new demand for labour which could not be satisfied locally. Racial stereotyping at the time meant that Europeans were considered totally unsuited for manual work in the tropics (Cooper and Stoler, 1989; Livingstone, 1994). On the other hand, the Malays who had access to their own land would not put up with the dreadful conditions on the plantations, and there was competition for Chinese workers from Chinese plantations which drove up the relative cost of labour (Stubbs, 1989, p.51; Ramasamy, 1994, pp.32, 37). Tamil workers from southern India had moved to Malaya through the 1830s and 1840s, but the large-scale movement of Tamils did not take place until the mid 1850s (Sandhu, 1969). The Indian Passenger Acts of 1857 and 1859 attempted to cut down on overcrowding on steamships to improve the conditions under which Indian labour was recruited. But the final arrangements for importing labour were settled in The Indian Act of 1877 (Sandhu, 1969, p.80). This laid out conditions of wages, price of foodstuffs on estates, working hours and punishment for absenteeism or desertion. Even so, labour shortage in Malaya persuaded the colonial authorities in Malaya to pass the 1884 Indian Immigration Ordinance which subsidized the British India Steam Navigation Company. This resulted in lower fares and established medical officers to ensure that outward-bound labourers were healthy so that there would be fewer losses due to mortality. Thus, Malaya became a frontier society with almost half of its population made up of new arrivals who came to work the land.

Subsequent complaints about the estate system were strictly from the point of view of the owners and managers and revolved around inefficiency of the system; complaints of ill treatment by labour were dismissed. During the peak recruitment period in 1926, 165,377 Indians arrived in Malaya (Sandhu, 1969, Appendix 1). Racial stereotyping depicted Southern Indians especially as ideal labour for plantation work because they possessed “all the right qualities such as docility, submissiveness, malleability and little self-reliance” (Figure 3.6). The indentured system was a severe one; beatings, malnutrition, overwork and disease took their toll on the new immigrants (Sandhu, 1969, pp.75-152). Estate labourers were sold rotten food at high prices at the estate shop that was sometimes owned by the manager (Ramasamy, 1994, p.44). A chief cause of the high mortality rates was malaria; the Anopheles mosquito’s habitat increased by the opening up of the forest. Eventually, the rise of Indian nationalism on the subcontinent helped focus attention on the inequities of the indenture system, and in 1910, it was replaced by the kangani or recruiter system.

The kangani system was successful in recruitment but does not appear to have improved conditions for labour. Sandhu (1969, p.84) claims that the indenture system ended as a result of the protests of the Anti-Slavery Society, but Ramasamy (1994, p.26) argues that the protests appeared
to be more affective for the West Indies than for Malaya. Under the *kangani* system, an estate owner obtained a licence for his foreman, an Indian, who would be sent to India to recruit labourers on his behalf. While the system proved successful at increasing the flow of labour to Malaya, de Silva (1982, pp.336-338) contends that the subsequent discrimination in wages for Indian labour in comparison to Chinese labour was a function of the recruitment system. An Indian labourer was paid half the wage of a Chinese labourer (Arasaratnam, 1970, p.62). In fact, the situation became worse over time so that at the outbreak of World War II, Chinese labourers made two-and-half to three times as much as Indian labourers (Ramasamy, 1994, p.36). In contrast, the male/female difference in wages for Indian labour worked out to approximately twenty percent less for Indian women than for men (Ramasamy, 1994, p.33).

The wage difference between Chinese and Indian labourers can be attributed in part to the recruitment process. Chinese labourers were contracted through clan and society organizations whereby the contractor negotiated with European planters over the wages paid to the labourers. The contractor's cut was a percentage of the wage negotiated. Therefore, he had a vested interest in maximising the wages paid out. Not surprisingly, while European planters may have preferred Chinese workers, they resented having to deal with them. The Indian *kangani* as a salaried employee of the estate had no interest in negotiating a better wage on behalf of the labourers he recruited. Furthermore, (Sandhu, 1969, p.91) recruiting from his own village allowed the *kangani* to exploit shared bonds of kinship to allow for easier manipulation in the economic arena. The 1922 Indian Emigration Act allowed an Agent of the Indian Government to inspect estates, depots and other places of Indian labour settlement or employment as well as to improve the male to female ratio of workers but still failed to improve living conditions (Arasaratnam, 1970, pp. 24-25).

Parmer (1960, p.182) suggests that an entrenched sense of inferiority due to colonialism may be a cause of why Indian middlemen failed to fight strenuously on behalf of those below them. He recounts a case where an Indian agent sent to investigate charges of ill-treatment broke down under criticism from European planters and actually retracted his findings. However, Parmer may have been inferring the breakdown of a racial group from the behaviour of an individual. Efforts to settle on a fair fixed wage collapsed with the advent of the Depression. Immigration to Malaya was stopped, and between 1929 and 1932, 215,234 Indians were repatriated (Sandhu, 1969, Appendix 4). In a sense, Malaysia's recent appalling record of repatriating Bangladeshi, Filipino and Indonesian workers in poor economic times is in keeping with historical tradition. Prime Minister Mahathir, for all his anti-colonial rhetoric, has proven himself one of the best students of colonialism.

Early Indian labour protests about the inhuman conditions that they were expected to endure were manifested in desertions (Sandhu, 1969; Arasaratnam, 1970). From 1912 onwards, both Indian
and Chinese workers struck as a means of improving the conditions of their existence. Labour unrest appeared to cease during the Depression, but with an economic resurgence and accompanying demands for labour, strikes resumed from 1933 onwards culminating in the Klang strikes of 1941. These strikes began on February 8, 1941 and lasted until May 1941 involving over 20,000 workers from every estate in Selangor. The strikes of 1941 may have been triggered by the intransigence of estate companies on negotiations after the rubber industry was declared an essential service with the outbreak of World War II (Stenson, 1980, p.61). Labour troubles took on racialized overtones as striking Indian workers tried to prevent Malay workers from crossing the picket lines. Striking Indian women workers positioned themselves so close to the Malay men that they were unable to cross the line for fear of committing khalwat. According to Muslims, khalwat refers to the sinful act of a person being in close physical proximity to a member of the opposite sex who is not the person's spouse or a close relative.

Figure 3.6 Division of labour on a rubber estate. Source: BAM Archives 17/53, circa 1907, University of Cambridge.
Stenson (1980, Chapter Three) argues that Indian labour unrest from 1938 onwards was subsumed within Indian nationalist protests leading to the erroneous conclusion that there was no labour conflict during the period. Indian protests in Malaya were interpreted as in support of the nationalist movement in India rather than class protest. In part, this interpretation may have arisen because Sandhu (1969), Arasaratnam (1970) and Ramasamy (1994) all suggest that Indian nationalists made Indian labour in Malaya a platform in their political agenda. Indian nationalists protested the conditions of Indians abroad as part of the mistreatment of Indians everywhere because they were a subjugated people in their own country. Ramasamy (1994, p.49) records that appeals to racial solidarity couched as nationalism were sometimes even successful as a device for uniting workers and *kangani* in Malaya to strike for better working condition and wages. In general, Indian nationalism has been postulated as a device for co-opting the poor to fight on behalf of the elite (Grove, 1990). In this situation, while not exactly the elite, nationalism was used to persuade the *kangani* to desert their traditional alliance with capital. Moreover, the Indians were taking their cue from successful Chinese strikes in 1937. Over 30,000 workers had struck and, while the strike was broken through the use of the police and army, some concessions were obtained. The passage of the Aliens Ordinance in 1933 cut off the supply of Chinese labour, and paradoxically, improved the bargaining position of the ones left in Malaya. The rise of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) as an organizational force also helped Chinese workers to coordinate their demands.

### 3.1.7 Boundaries by Difference

Donna Haraway (1989, p.10) contends that political order works most effectively by negotiating boundaries ordered by difference, that is, the change from one set of social patterns to another marks where social territories begin and end. In colonial Malaya, territories were ordered by land use, which in turn ordered the labour hierarchy that was itself based on race. The result was a political ordering of space in which, in a striking micro-example of Orientalism, only the British and the Europeans were able to move about the country freely. While other races had a specific locus for their activities, Europeans could travel all over the country either as administrators or visitors. And their mobility was supported by the threat of armed retaliation in case of protests. In contrast, the Malays had their *kampungs* and reserves; the Chinese worked in shophouses, mines and small plantations; and Indians worked on the estates. As modernity penetrated the interior of the peninsula, estates, mines and Malay reserves were separated from each other by the roads between them that became physical
boundaries between difference. These spatial orderings were not just a question of urban/rural
divisions because while the Malays could be considered rural, they were largely confined to their
reserve lands. And the urban Chinese did not have access to certain buildings in town and would have
been frowned upon if they transgressed into the European sections of town in any capacity other than
that of a worker. Finally, the Tamils were probably the most restricted group, largely confined to the
estates through indentures. The non-white races, with the exception of a few sultans and Chinese
millionaires were restricted from access to many places.

British security policy in Malaya was dictated by their categorization of racial groups and the
intrinsic characteristics of each group such as loyalty, political sophistication and ability to organize.
This approach to colonial security was translated into administrative policies for different spatial
administrative units based on racial make-up because the order in which the domains of the Malay
sultans came under British control dictated the rate of settlement or emigration of Chinese and Indians
into the region. This latter move was in turn dictated by the rate of economic development of the
states. At the start of World War II the peninsula was divided into the following administrative units
(see Figure 3.1, p. 65):

- the Straits Settlement of Singapore, Penang, Province Wellesley and Malacca.
- the Federated Malay States comprising Perak, Selangor, Pahang and Negri Sembilan
- the Unfederated Malay States comprising Johore, Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan and Trengganu.

The Chinese were predominantly found in the Straits Settlement while the Indians were mainly found
in the Federated Malaya States. There were also communities of Eurasians and Arabs, the latter
mainly in Singapore.

Contrary to the peaceful colony image the British wanted to project, it appeared that many
Asians, other than the elites, did not approve of the division of labour and resources. In addition to
labour troubles, even as early as the 1930's educated Malays were complaining of being crowded out
of Malaya. The British on the other hand, continued to praise the Malays for their lack of
materialism, presumably because this allowed them to be easily dispossessed of their material
resources. And although some Chinese and Indian workers had been expelled from the country
owing to a labour surplus during the Depression, those who remained commanded higher wages once
the economy improved. W.F.N. Churchill (1932), British Adviser to Kelantan, complained that the
Chinese were costing the British Administration a great deal because of the cost of maintaining a
Secret Service to spy on them. On the eve of the Second World War, the Malayan landscape
reflected the physical changes wrought by capitalist agriculture, which sited people largely based on
class and race. And far from accepting their place in space and the social and economic hierarchy, labour unrest on the estates characterized the 1930's and 40's in Malaya. The gendered spatial division as it was reflected in the private/public domain demarcation within the demarcation of forest/plantation is beyond the scope of the discussion in this study. The war inaugurated a new phase in the contest not only for space, but also the narratives about space.

3.2 DESTABILIZING CATEGORIES

3.2.1 Malaya in World War II

Malaya fell to the Japanese troops with the British surrender of Singapore on 15 February 1942 (Winstedt, 1988, p.247). The reason for the easy Japanese victory is still a subject of controversy, but in another example of policy based on stereotypes, Britain had assumed that the Japanese made inferior troops because they had not managed to bring the war with China to a successful conclusion. And if they could not defeat an Asian force, how could they possibly defeat a European one? The repercussions of colonial defeats in Asia may not have impinged psychologically on the European powers in their moment of defeat, but a signal of its importance was noted by Asians, and perhaps not surprisingly, by the ultimate racist, Hitler himself. When informed of Japan's entry into the war, he remarked:

[I]t was also a turning point in history. It means the loss of a whole continent, and one must regret it, for it's the white race which is the loser.

I now want to describe briefly the consequences of the temporary Japanese Occupation of Malaya in terms of framing future political contests. On the one hand Japanese administrative policies exacerbated racial polarization, which negatively affected the potential for anti-colonial opposition after the war. On the other hand, the Japanese policy of promoting Malays and Indians to positions of responsibility provided the training ground for the psychological challenge to European supremacy after the war.

The British and other Europeans who had not been evacuated before the fall were interned in Singapore. The consequence of Britain's defeat was the loss of an economically important part of the empire, but more damaging in the long term was the loss of the psychological aura of invincibility. Resource-poor Japan was convinced of its need for the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, the Japanese title for conquered territories, to secure the resources it needed to grow. Resource-rich Malaya was an important prize in this plan. In Malaya, the Japanese administration coerced and persuaded some Malays and Indians into their administration. The reward for
cooperation would be eventual independence. Local elites in some countries cooperated with the Japanese as much out of fear as for the hope of once and for all getting rid of their European colonial rulers. However, Malay and Indian support was not unanimous. Prominent Malays executed by the Japanese in 1942 for non-cooperation included Raja Aman Shah bin Raja Harun and Dato Othman bin Kering (BAM Photos Collection 7/34 and 7/37). Unlike the British, the Japanese governed Malaya as a single central administration. Although the Japanese, instead of the British, now took the senior administrative positions, the Japanese favoured a pro-Malay policy for other administrative positions. The Japanese relied on a Malay District Officer (previously held by the British) at the district level and the penghulu and ketua kampong at village level.

However, the Japanese were extremely harsh in their treatment of the Chinese population in Malaya as opposed to their more conciliatory stance in Indonesia. (Cheah, 1983, pp.22-23). One reason was that the Twenty-fifth Army that conquered Malaya had come directly from China where it had encountered fierce fighting. The sook ching, or ‘purification by elimination’, claimed between 30,000 to 40,000 Chinese lives including babies. As a result of Japanese persecution, many Chinese families fled into the forests; others had already preceded them during the economic depression in the thirties when the lack of both employment and land forced many families to practice subsistence agriculture as squatters on the fringes of the forests. Older Chinese women in Malaysia relate how even those who chose to remain in urban areas would flee into the forest at the approach of Japanese troops looking for women to rape. My mother recalls hiding in the undergrowth and hearing the soldiers pass by only a few feet away. To many women, the dense tangle of the forest offered protection in a dangerous period. The forests provided a place to hide from, or harass, the largely urban-based Japanese troops. Shortly before the fall of Malay to the Japanese, the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) had approached the British to offer their services if the British would cease persecuting its members. The British held out until it was evident that the situation was drastic. On 18 December 1941, the British agreed to an alliance with the MCP (Chapman, 1949). After the fall of Singapore in 1942, the MCP renamed itself the Malayan Peoples Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA) and retreated into the forest to continue resistance against the Japanese. The Japanese responded by raiding Chinese villages with the cooperation of Malay guides and informants (Cheah, 1983, p.70). Throughout the war the urban landscape was the scene of most of the atrocities. Executions had to be public spectacles because the Japanese used them as part of the regime of fear to discipline the population; the Japanese were a minority trying to control the majority. In contrast, the forest
provided refuge and was associated with the fight for freedom because that was where the resistance was based.

Since Indian nationalism intersects with this study tangentially, I will only briefly sketch the outlines of Indian wartime activities. Japan's foreign policy brought it to the conclusion that it needed an empire, but in order to defeat the British, it would need to form an alliance with the Indians. The Japanese signed an agreement with the Bangkok-based Indian Independence League (IIL) on 15 June 1942, in which the Japanese pledged to use Indian troops only to fight the British for independence (Bhargava, 1982, pp.13-15). As Japanese forces moved into Malaya and thousands of Indian troops under British command were taken captive, the Japanese attempted to recruit troops from the ranks of the captured. Class divisions prevailed as few Indian officers were willing to “go over” but many among the rank and file did. These men, together with women who subsequently signed up, became the Indian National Army, referred to as the INA (Gordon, 1990; Ghosh, 1997). The forty thousand-strong INA was never used to its maximum capacity (Gordon, 1990), but its recruits were important in organizing estate unions after the war (Stenson, 1980, p.101; Cheah, 1983, p.49).

As the war progressed and the British reorganized their war effort, British officers, known as Force 136 were parachuted into the forests where they collaborated with the MPAJA. Jain (1970, pp. 302-305) contends that Indian estate labourers also joined the MPAJA or the INA as an alternative to being sent to work on the Siam Death Railway. Britain bought the allegiance of the Communists through a deal that provided the Communists with arms, supplies, money and training in return for which they would take orders from British officers. Although to begin with the MPAJA, through the use of the village intelligence networks usually picked their Malay targets for elimination carefully, a lack of cultural sensitivity to Malay customs quickly became interpreted as Chinese arrogance and chauvinism. Cheah (1983, p.33) suggests that while the Malay raayat (peasantry) may have resented their social superiors collaborating with the Japanese, they felt that the actual killing of collaborators should be left within the Malay community. Mutilation of corpses after death also ran counter to Islam and was greatly resented by the Malays. Chinese suspicion of Malays was founded in Chinese misfortune of being the target of Malay-Japanese collaboration, but Chinese racism for Malays who crossed over to the MPAJA side did nothing to help recruitment among the Malay community.

To summarize, the Japanese conquest of Malaya affected the pre-war organization of Malayan society. It demolished the idea of Europeans’ invincibility and their privilege to control resources.
In doing so, the war inspired a generation of Asian nationalists. Indian and Malay nationalists obtained training in bearing weapons and administration that would serve them well in their political agitation after the war. During the war, the British armed the mainly Chinese MPAJA which were the only racial group to stay staunchly anti-Japanese. The newly-armed Communists acquired proficiency in guerrilla warfare and surviving in the forests, skills that would serve them well after the war ended. The location of the war inaugurated a new narrative of the forest. Where once it was simply an impediment to progress, now it was physically part of the struggle for control over resources. Racial antagonism between the Malays and the Chinese in pre-war Malaya also deepened as a result of the pro-Malay and anti-Chinese policies of the Japanese resulting in a post-war settling of scores that took on a racial aspect. Lastly, the Japanese ruled Malaya from a central administration. This action prepared the psychological ground for the concept of a united country.

3.2.2 Reoccupation: British Military Administration (BMA) 1945-1946

Japan surrendered to the Allies in August of 1945, but the British Military Administration only reoccupied Malaya in late September. This time lag was crucial in the subsequent political turmoil. Not only had the British lost prestige by losing Malaya to the Japanese in the first place, they were also not seen to defeat the Japanese physically in 1945 because surrender was a consequence of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.\(^42\) The restoration of European colonial territories signalled a new phase in the project of imperialism as Europeans largely depended on American support to reclaim their colonies. In retrospect, it is interesting to note that the colonial powers were aware that the imperial order was changing. In particular, the important future rival was the United States. China was to be accommodated because of American pressure. In that sense, China was seen as more of a rival than Japan despite its initial victories. The Dutch Colonial Minister, Van Mook, when meeting with British colonial officials, complained that the Americans and Chinese were portraying the Dutch and British as imperialists.\(^43\) The British, for their part, were alarmed that the US intended to treat post-war China as an equal 'Power' and would presumably expect the British to do so as well.\(^44\) The British ambivalence regarding the newly significant role of Americans in the fate of their colonies is reflected in their complaint that telegrams regarding colonial political policy going through the headquarters of the Supreme Command in South East Asia would be seen by American officers and could lead to "'embarrassment' where British and American opinion does not necessarily coincide".\(^45\) The early American ambivalence towards colonialism faded as the war progressed. It became obvious that the US would assume the imperial mantle. During the Potsdam Conference in
July 1945, Britain's share of the Japanese empire was determined as the former European colonies of Southeast Asia as well as Thailand, despite Thailand's pre-war uncolonized status (Stockwell, 1995, Part I, p.lvi). While the Europeans were still thinking in terms of carving up the world, albeit now sharing it with a new partner, the Americans, their former colonial subjects were very much aware that an era had ended. I try to show that the events of the BMA period point to the increasingly widening gap in perceptions between colonizer and colonized in the criteria for acceptance of colonial rule. This last section describes the political conditions during the period 1945-1948 that set the context for the military struggle to free Malaya from British rule.

The BMA faced shortages of all kinds owing to the disruption of supplies during the war. Part of the problems with supply may have had to do with an agenda dictated by the urgency of reopening tin mines and rubber estates rather than concentrating on basic supplies such as food. The reinstatement of supply lines was important because Malaya had not been self-sufficient in food even before the war. To begin with, the comparison between the Japanese Occupation and the British Reoccupation showed the British in a favourable light. Even working class Chinese, later the most active resistance to the British during the Emergency, were initially welcoming of the British presence. But as shortages in basic supplies continued, social discontent rose. British Treasury officials argued that Malaya's resource wealth meant that rather than diverting money into the Malayan post-war reconstruction effort money would be better spent placating other parts of the Empire not so well-endowed with a dollar-earning capacity. In another instance of a clash between imperial and commercial interests, European investors in Malaya were outraged that Britain would fund reconstruction efforts in Burma but not Malaya. Investors in Malaya felt that Malaya's dollar earnings would pay for much of the reconstruction effort, including in Britain. Victor Purcell, the Chinese Adviser, noted some of the complaints from local people including allegations of taking goods without paying, looting and rape. In particular the commandeering of civilian buildings by the army prevented schools from reopening and caused great resentment. Asians working for the BMA also went short of rations in comparison to European staff. Finally, the greatest local resentment was reserved for the use of Japanese prisoners of war as troops to suppress both strikes in Malaya and nationalist struggles in the Dutch East Indies and French Indochina to prepare the way for the Dutch and the French to return to those countries. Although the British did not approve of the "reactionary" behaviour of the French, they felt that a united front had to be maintained. Britain's use of Japanese prisoners of war may have been a consequence of their inability to deploy
the large numbers of Indian troops after the war in part because Indian Prime Minister Nehru refused to allow Indian troops to be deployed against nationalist movements in other countries (Stockwell, 1995, Part I, p.lvi).

3.2.3 Britain's Policy Towards Malaya after World War II, 1945-48

In 1943, shortly after the loss of their South East Asian colonies, the British foreign Secretary, Oliver Stanley, stated Britain's policy: "We are pledged to guide colonial people along the road to self government within the framework of the British Empire." Britain recognized that the world order had changed, and while it wanted to keep its colonies, the US would have to be consulted and placated. Moreover, in the Far East, both the US and China would have to be taken into consideration in sharing the spoils. With regard to Malaya, the British saw their continued presence as integral to maintaining a social and political environment conducive to resource exploitation. Under the new order, Britain would share control with other powers while maintaining some privileges themselves. Britain expected that one of the most contentious issues in the post-war world would be her right to resume control of its colonies:

While we may readily assume that our resumption of control is the obvious and only reasonable arrangement, it is desirable to examine the grounds on which outright it can be presented to other governments and to public opinion (including certain sections of public opinion in this country).

In particular, the British and Americans clashed over the interpretation of the third Article of the Atlantic Charter which recognized the right of all people to choose the form of government under which they would live. The Americans saw it as pertaining to the Far East while the British did not. This was an ongoing process of internal as well as external negotiation as the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Cranborne (minute, 14 July 1942), felt that Britain was making too many concessions. Moreover, a memorandum put out by the Colonial Office and the Foreign Office lamented Britain's inability to "think imperially". The business of Empire is a balancing act. Bruno Latour (1987) has claimed that the agenda that prevails is the one that recruits the most allies by showing each potential ally how he or she could benefit. Anthony Stockwell (1995, Vol.1, p. xxxviii) points out that Britain's policy for post World War II Malaya was "primarily designed to please as many different groups as possible ... to win new friends while nurturing vested interests."

Concessions would be made as long as the essential point of controlling Malaya's wealth remained unchanged. In Malaya this meant that while the official stand of Whitehall had changed from indeterminate colonial government to eventual self-government, the on-the-ground policy was
actually one of recovering their colonies. In a sense, while lacking the glamour of India, Malaya's practical usefulness as a dollar-earner made it a far more significant prize in imperial stakes in the fiscally stretched postwar days. Aside from Malaya's revenue contributions to imperial coffers, Malaya had contributed over two million pounds to the British war effort (Stockwell, 1995, Part 1, p.93). The economic adviser for Malaya, Sir G. Gater stressed Malaya's importance to the imperial economy: "Malaya was before the war probably the most prosperous part of the Colonial Empire and, what is no doubt more important at the present, was among the most important dollar earners in the sterling block."

If Britain's attitude to Malayan resources was unequivocal, its attitude towards the Malayan inhabitants was a complex balancing act. In a sense, while the British, Chinese and Indians could all be described as immigrants, the significant distinguishing factor is the power differential between the groups. On the one hand, the colonial authorities understood the importance of immigrants to labour and capital in Malaya. On the other hand, immigrants could be used as scapegoats to rally Malay support for colonial rule. Moreover, the insecure position of immigrants made them a conveniently disposable source of labour which could be repatriated during economic downturns. In 1946, the British first proposed the Malayan Union, which would have opened citizenship in the Union to all races but was rejected by the Malays.

As the post-war conflict between the mostly Chinese Communists and the British accelerated, the latter's strategy of emphasizing racial differences would have enduring repercussions for Malaya that still define the country today. Anthony Stockwell (1995, p.lxi) in his introduction to the three-part *Malaya*, suggests that Britain was less afraid of Malay violence than it was of a lack of Malay support in the face of violence from other quarters such as Indonesian nationalists and local Communists. The compromise over citizenship and the creation of Malay-dominated state governments in tandem with a powerful British central government drove the simmering racial and class conflicts into the open. It is worth noting that successful colonialism must result in hegemony. Malay fears and resentment of economic success centred on the Chinese immigrants rather than the British who owned and controlled much of the wealth of Malaya (Table 3.3a and 3.3b). Finally, colonialism created the dilemma of preserving indigenous privileges at the expense of immigrant populations, or else witnessing the 'squeezing' out of indigenous populations if immigrant populations gained economic or numerical ascendancy in their new homelands. No country experiencing this dilemma has managed to create a political compromise ethically acceptable to everyone.
Table 3.3a  British Malaya: Ethnic Ownership of Estates, 1938 (acres).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic group</th>
<th>&gt;5,000</th>
<th>1,000-4,999</th>
<th>500-999</th>
<th>100-499</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Europeans</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indians</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Khoo 1980, p.202

Table 3.3b  British Malaya: Percentage of Tin Produced by European and Chinese Mines, 1910-1938.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>European</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


3.2.4 Contesting Claims

For the Malayan people, the most resistance during the war was associated with the MPAJA/MCP. As the Japanese withdrew into the bigger towns to await the arrival of the British, their withdrawal became the tacit signal for the MPAJA to emerge from the forests. The British tried to insist that the MPAJA stay in the forests until sufficient colonial troop strength had been amassed in Malaya to control them. However, it was apparent even to Force 136 officers that it was unreasonable to expect the communists to remain half-starved in the forests for the convenience of the reoccupation administration. The BMA then faced the dilemma of what to do with the MPAJA who, as the MCP, had been declared illegal before the war, yet had been their only allies against the Japanese during the war. Since the British did not want to face a struggle with the MPAJA before they had reconsolidated control over Malaya, they needed to appear to collaborate with the MPAJA while making plans to disarm them.

Unlike the urban areas, it could be argued that the British never really controlled the forests of Malaya. Before the Japanese occupation, British District Officers working in cooperation with
local Chinese community leaders indirectly supervised the forest fringes and rural areas. This system collapsed after the war as many wealthy Chinese fled the country during the war, and as a consequence, lost their influence over the Chinese community. This leadership vacuum made it easy for the MPAJA to influence the rural population. The aftermath of the war was as violent as the war itself as different racial groups took the opportunity to settle old scores. Most importantly, it was a time of uncertain territorial control. The Communists emerging from the forests were made up from a population that was landless and yet at the same time the most militarily aggressive of the non-Europeans. MPAJA flags and banners were raised in small towns and villages across the country. The British were also adamant that their erstwhile collaborators, the MPAJA, not take part in Councils of Government during the BMA. The political clash between the British and the Communists against a backdrop of labour strikes across the country was bound to result in a military struggle.

Part of the Communists popularity after the war was due to its reputation for resistance against the Japanese. After the war, the MPAJA reverted to its former identity as the Malayan Communist party (MCP). They were the only group willing to involve the majority of the population in the political stakes. A BMA document criticizing the MCP complained:

This does not mean that they have a majority of the people at their back, but they have the means to get at the lower ranks of the people by canvassing etc., of which the more straightforward parties would not attempt or trouble to campaign.

M.E. Dening, the political adviser to Admiral Mountbatten, the Supreme Allied Commander for South-East Asia, described the MCP manifesto as "irreproachable" before going on to complain that they had stolen British thunder by pre-empting the release of the new "progressive" colonial plans. The left-leaning New Democratic Youth League which represented 70 other organizations had petitioned the government to return requisitioned properties, stop press censorship — manifested by arresting journalists and closing down newspapers — and to stop military action against Annamite (Vietnamese) and Indonesian nationalists. In particular, the Chinese press argued for trade with non-sterling countries, that is, countries not using, or having their local currency pegged to, sterling currency. Restricting trade to mainly sterling countries was forcing Malaya to buy manufactured goods at an inflated price because of a lack of competition, while lowering the price of rubber exports since Malayan rubber was not sold to the highest bidder.

The relationship between the MCP and the British completely broke down on 15 February 1947. The MCP used the anniversary of the fall of Singapore to inaugurate the founding of the Pan-Malayan General Labour Union (PMGLU). When the BMA refused permission for the celebrations,
the MCP went ahead, and the BMA responded by turning the police on the marchers resulting in nineteen deaths in Singapore and the mainland Malaya. Thereafter, the MCP retreated into the background and the PMGLU took over its offices across the country. The decision of the BMA to suppress legal activities drove the organization underground and launched a new military struggle. The PMGLU encouraged its members to demand better working conditions. Police clashed with the striking workers resulting in mortalities. Strikes continued to multiply across the country affecting some of the biggest estates. Strikes also broke out on mines and docks as workers, both men and women, clashed with troops and police (Gamba, 1962). While it is true the Communists had organized the PMGLU, the dreadful working conditions on estates of Malaya and the docks and factories of Singapore provided them with a receptive audience. Workers joined the unions because they offered leadership, protection and food during a period of violence and material hardship. In July 1946, 43,000 workers went on strike in Singapore. In 1947, 696,036 work-days were lost in labour action (Gamba, 1962, p.288). The local police authorities and the Colonial Office pressured the civil authorities in Malaya to use the Banishment Ordinance to deal with the labour unrest. The colonial government had already instituted the Public Order Ordinance allowing for action against drilling and wearing of uniforms, the Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Ordinance that refused bail for intimidation offences, the Societies Ordinance under which societies had to register, and the Trade Unions Ordinance under which unions had to register. What was interesting about the strikes of the 1945-1948 period is their inter-racial character and how they encompassed both the private and public sectors. Perhaps the latter point is less surprising when one also understands that the public and private sectors in Malaya were one and the same, a conjunction that persists in contemporary Malaysia.

3.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided a brief sketch of Malaya’s colonial encounter in the nineteenth century through to the end of the World War II, and the period of the British Military Administration. Colonialism and the introduction of plantation agriculture wrought the following changes on the Malayan landscape and the ethnic make-up of its society. Land tenure was transformed from adat or custom law to individual ownership. This transformation in land tenure was accompanied by agricultural production for surplus. Finally, the labour requirements of the plantation system resulted in large-scale immigration of labour from southern India. The introduction of plantation agriculture
in the 19th century reconfigured both the Malayan landscape and the ethnic make-up of its society. In the process, these changes also transformed philosophical attitudes towards nature and natives, constructing them as inferior to the modernity of Westerners and their technology. These images remained consistent until World War II and the Japanese Occupation of Malaya.

The end of the Japanese Occupation of Malaya and the subsequent reoccupation by the British Military Administration saw the British presiding over a country where the legitimacy of colonial rule was no longer inevitable to Asians in the country. Furthermore, while Asians were experiencing a sea change of perceptions owing to the Japanese victories, it is doubtful that European colonialists returning to Asia understood the depth of the change. In the Malayan case, the colonial administration may have been additionally hampered by the overwhelming need to maintain control on Malaya's dollar earnings. Post-World War II Malaya became the site of a contest of strength between the British and the MCP against a background of labour unrest. Racial cleavages exacerbated by Japanese policies during their occupation, and the settling of scores along racial divisions after the war, resulted in a highly volatile political situation. Until World War II, the assumption in Malaya that Indian and Chinese immigrants were only temporarily resident in Malaya while exploiting its resource potential remained the governing myth. The BMA's lack of sensitivity to the changed climate of social perceptions, and its repressive methods of dealing with protests, made violence inevitable.  

1Controversial projects in contemporary Malaysia, such as the Pergau Dam which is being financed by the British government, are still justified in the evangelizing language of development and modernization.
2This section on the early colonial history of Malaya is taken from Richard O. Winstedt's A History of Malaya (1988, pp.65-222). Malaya is taken to mean the peninsular portion of present day Malaysia. Other accounts of the early history of Malaya can be found in Constance Mary Turnbull (1989). Malay resistance to British takeover of their lands is covered by Donald Nonini (1992).
3For the place and political struggles of Orang Asli in Malaysia see P.D.R. Williams-Hunt (1952); Richard Noone (1972); John Leary (1989); T. N. Harper (1997).
4Charles Hirschman (1987; 1986) claims that this system of ethnic classification was a colonial invention.
5Isabella Bird (1884, repr. 1967); Sir Frank Swettenham (1895; repr. 1984); John Turnbull Thompson (1864; repr. 1984). Swettenham, Bird and Thompson all describe how the early British administrators frequently had to resort to boats to investigate their territorial possessions because of the lack of roads.
6The material for this paragraph on Malay settlements and changing land tenure comes from Harold Brookfield et. al. (1991, pp.28-45). The trade in luxury goods such as silk, porcelain and incense came from China and India and is documented by H. Lim (1992).
7Much of the information on early Chinese plantations, unless stated otherwise, comes from James Jackson's Planters and Speculators (1968). The major revenue earning crop for the Straits Settlement Government was Opium; see Morgan (1996, pp. 41-45).
8The usefulness of Chinese planters to the colonial authorities is commented upon by Isabella Bird's (1884, repr.1967) frequent approving (notwithstanding racist) comments on the honesty and industriousness of these planters and her assessment of the economic value of their revenue contribution to British coffers. Financing came from Chinese merchants and shopkeepers in the Straits Settlements. Some of these Chinese merchants had become wealthy from tin mining and others were descendants of the Baba community.
These potentially cultivable areas were known as *kangkars* and covered between 2500-20000 acres. *Kangkars* consisted of both cultivated land, known as *bangsals*, and forested land. The *bangsals* were worked on by groups of ten men (there were very few women). See J. Jackson's (1968) *Planters and Speculators* for a description of early Malayan and Singaporean plantations.

Swettenham's (1895; repr. 1984) *Malay Sketches* and Thompson's (1864; repr. 1984) *Glimpses*, writing in the 19th century also devoted chapters in their books to describing attacks by tigers.

Also see Frank Swettenham (1975); Thompson (1864; repr. 1984); Sir Hugh Clifford (1929); Victor Savage (1984).

Morgan (1996, p.98) suggests Southeast Asia was the original location for the cult of science and fun in fresh air that has never applied to Africa where the dominant trope was courageous adventurism. Southeast Asian ecotourism has benefitted from its initial anaemic reputation. Malaysia, especially, offers a wilderness experience sans the danger of guerrillas (a problem in South America and Africa) and drug warlords, part of the natural ecosystem elsewhere. Morgan argues that specific places have specific significance in writing, but I would add that the specific time period of the place contributes to the meaning taken away by the reader. This is certainly the case of Malaya and nature where the site of fresh air scientific rummaging gave way to the darker concerns and associations of post-war Malaya and the new world order.

Cook's voyages are among the best examples of science in service of empire. See John MacKenzie (1990), Mackay (1996) and D. Miller (1996).

Victorian literary characters who were gentlemen scientists include Dr. Jekyll in Robert Louis Stevenson's Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, and Frankenstein, the eponymous (anti) hero of Mary Shelley's novel.

Brockway (1979) and Grove (1995) offer good descriptions of the various crop experiments in the colonies.

I have tried to keep to the spelling in use at the time. Klang is now spelt Kelang.

J. Jackson (1968) discusses the transition from Chinese to European primacy in plantation agriculture in Malaya.

See Hecht and Cockburn's (1990) discussion of the political economy of wild rubber in the Amazon in The Fate of the Forest; and Brockway's (1979) discussion of the theft and transport of rubber seedling from Brazil to Kew Gardens and thence, to Ceylon and Singapore in Science and Colonial Expansion.

Much of this passage is taken from Voon (1977), Images of the Physico-ecological Environment in Southeast Asia.

Of the early seeds acquired by Wickham, less than three percent survived the voyage from Brazil to Kew in England (Ridley, 1955, p.116). The contemporary problem facing Western gene hunters in their efforts to obtain material for gene banks is the difficulty of preserving the material in a live state.

The nearest competitor, Germany, had yet to acquire an empire worth the term.

Ridley's friend P. J. Burgess (1955) who shared a house with him in Singapore described how Ridley's butterfly net and specimen bottle were always kept at the ready on the verandah so he could capture specimens which were then sorted out and despatched to the British Museum.

*Lalang* is a tall, coarse grass that ecologically colonizes land that has had its primary forest cut down and is left uncultivated.

This figure of 500 acres probably covered both Chinese and European plantations as rubber was only introduced as a commercial crop in 1895.

For a history of the agency houses, see Voon Phin Keong, Western Rubber Planting Enterprise in Southeast Asia 1876-1921 (Kuala Lumpur, Penerbit Universiti Malaya, 1976).

The following paragraph is largely a summary of work by Voon's (1976) Western Rubber Planting unless stated otherwise.

The Vallambrosa Rubber Co., for example, bought up the adjoining 1000 acres (Gow et. al., 1906).

Letters between planters and Rubber Research Institute (RRI) scientists published in the annual reports of the RRI from 1928-1932.

Culled from issues of the Journal of the Rubber Research Institute of Malaya.


See Kernial Singh Sandhu (1969, pp.75-141), for a summary of the various Indian Labour Acts. According to Ramasamy (1994, p.24), The Indian Act No.XIII of 1859 had made gangs of labourers recruited under the same contract liable for the default of each other.

Ramasamy (1994, p.23) argues that the decision to import Tamil labour rather than more Chinese labourers was a political strategy to reduce the chances of a single ethnic group gaining a preponderance in the country.

J.S. Reid, Labour troubles in Klang, 1941, 10 May 1941, BAM I/18. Reid was the local District Officer.

An example of colonial retaliation is in the case of the murder of James Birch the British Resident in Perak; see Swettenham (1984, pp.227-247).

Haji Muhamad Eusoff, The Malays being denationalized, The Malay Mail, 16 September 1938. For an account of the history of Malay nationalism see William R. Roff, The Origins of Malay Nationalism (New Haven, Yale University Press,
of Western materialism.  
37 The Chinese especially were resented for their social solidarity on certain matters, which in retrospect, appear the sensible actions of a beleaguered minority. They patronized other Chinese businesses rather than European or Malay ones, and in certain cases, Chinese businesses levied a tax on sales to other Chinese which was then used to subsidize Chinese schools (Churchill, 1932).


Perhaps the oddest incident symbolizing the link between the British fate in Malaya and rubber is manifested in the eating of rubber seeds by the internees of prisoner of war camps. Rubber seeds were distributed to the internees with the most severe dietary deficiencies as the seeds were rich in protein and Vitamin B. Sime Road Camp, 22/9/44. Notice No.3 from the Men's Representative C.E. Collinge assigning five men to collect rubber seeds, BAM XII/19.

With the fall of Malaya to the Japanese imminent and the British decision to flee, the British had to cooperate with the Communists as they were the only group organized enough to make up a network of subversive agents during the Japanese occupation. See R. Jackson (1991, p.8). Also see F. Spencer Chapman's (1949) The Jungle is Neutral for a description of the temporary jungle-based British-Chinese Communist guerrilla alliance against the Japanese.

See Anthony Stockwell (1997, Part 1, p.lv) for a description of Operation Zipper aimed at the reconquest of Malaya. It was never operationalized owing to the Japanese surrender after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, thus depriving the British of the psychological benefit of appearing victorious.

Record of discussion between the Secretary of State, Viscount Cranborne and the Dutch Colonial Minister, Dr. Van Mook, at the Colonial Office on 12 June 1942, CO 825/35/4. Van Mook complained that in light of their defeats they were seen as bungling imperialists.

Minute by G.E. J. Gent on forthcoming talks at the Foreign Office, CO 825/35/4, f.8.

"Political co-ordination in South-East Asia", memorandum by M.E. Dening, 26 June 1945, CO 273/677/3, no. 5.

"South-East Asia: Work of the Special Commission during 1946", despatch from Lord Killearn to Ernest Bevin, 12 April 1947, CAB 21/1955, F6151/6151/61.

Interim Statement to the shareholders of the Tronoh-Malayan Group of tin mining companies on H. M. Government Declaration of the 26th April, 1948 regarding Malayan war damage compensation, 8 September 1948. Japan's compensation to Malaya for war damages came to ten million pounds.

John Maynard Keynes, in his capacity as financial adviser to Treasury, was keen to use colonial sterling balances for war damage reconstruction in Britain. Colonial Office staff were convinced that diverting money out of the colonies would result in substantial political unrest. See J.M. Keynes,"Overseas financial policy in stage III," 3 April 1945, CAB 66/65, WP(45)301; and A.J.D. Winifrith, 19 April 1945, Memorandum on Malayan reconstruction finance, T220/52.

The first charge was ingeniously presented in the form of a satirical play; the last two appeared to be collaborated by C.C. Too, later the mind behind the Colonial Intelligence Services. Too described one incident of mass rape as "the Passover" in his interview with Richard Stubbs (1989,p.75).

V.W.W.S Purcell, "Report on Malaya's Political Climate 10-30 November," 3 December 1945, WO 203/5302. Purcell's statement was corroborated by complaints in the Chinese press. See extract from "Chinese Press Summary", 6 December 1945. In fairness to the British, the Colonial Office acknowledged the "colour" problem, memorandum by N.J.B. Sabine, "Criticisms of colonial policy in the light of the Malayan campaign" 18 March 1942, CO875/14/9, but in another example of the discrepancy between policy at the centre and implementation at the local level, the acknowledgement of the problem never translated into action.

"Review of political events in South-East Asia 1945 to March 1946" despatch from M.E. Dening to Ernest Bevin, 25 March 1946, CAB 21/1954, F 5093/87/61. The despatch mentions that the continued use of Japanese prisoners of war was in part due to the unanticipated military engagement with nationalists in Indonesia who were fighting to prevent the return of the Dutch. The British response to the Japanese was a curious mixture of admiration for their "gallantry and devotion to duty" mixed with resentment that their cooperation was a function of their obedience to the orders of their Emperor rather than an acknowledgement of defeat. In the main, they were obviously more admiring of the Japanese than they were of their erstwhile allies the sultans.

"South-East Asia: work of the Special Commission during 1946" despatch from Lord Killearn to Ernest Bevin, 12 April 1947, CAB 21/1955, F6151/6151/61.


"Constitutional Policy in Malaya", War Cabinet memorandum by Clement Attlee, 22 December 1944, CAB 66/60,
WP(44)76. Also see minute by G. E. J. Gent 29 March 1942, CO 825/35/4, f8; minute by G. E. J. Gent, 1 July 1942, CO 825/35/4, f10; minute by Lord Cranbourne 14 July 1942, CO 825/35/4, f227; "A post-war settlement in the Far East: need for a definitive policy" joint Colonial Office and Foreign Office memorandum, 14 May 1953, CO 825/35/4, no.52.

Britain continued to send mixed signals regarding her intentions towards her colonies, in part because of the balancing act in wanting to keep her colonies while not alienating the Americans who at the start of the war did not appear to have colonizing intentions themselves, the pre-war occupation of the Philippines notwithstanding. See "Note on future policy in the Far East", Memorandum by G.E.J. Gent and D. M. MacDougall, July 1942, CO 825/35/4, £227.

56 Ibid. The actual words are, "Owing to the development by foreign capital... of the valuable natural resources... it has fallen to the British to develop the local administrative systems and to ensure law and order."


58 Ibid.

59 Ibid.

60 "A post-war settlement in the Far East: need for a definite policy" joint Colonial Office and Foreign Office memorandum, 14 May 1952, CO 825/35/4, no.52.

61 Sir George Gater to Sir Henry Wilson Smith, 31 August 1945, T 220/52, IF 23/01.


63 Stockwell (1995, p.lx) suggests that the British feared that the lack of cooperation in day-to-day activities such as the resignation of Malays from the police rank and file, would create a situation of practical ungovernability.

64 "Force 136 policy -- Malaya" by B.A.C. Sweet-Escott, 19 August 1945, WO 203/5642, no. 1/16/45.


66 During my fieldwork in Malaysia in 1995, a local newspaper ran reminiscences of people who had lived through the war. A certain well-known Chinese society matron cheerfully recounted tales of balls and tea dances with dashing fellow exiles in attendance during her Indian sojourn over the war years. Under those circumstances, it is easy to see why the Chinese working class lost faith in their leadership.

67 While it is true that the MCP used the time to seek out collaborators, much of the lawlessness and banditry appeared to be the work of village militias or triad gangs who had bought or picked up arms and belatedly claimed to be MPAJA (Cheah, 1983, pp.80-81). Although the British initially blamed the Communists, there is evidence that the Chinese involved in criminal activity were mostly from the KMT-influenced groups such as the Ang Bin Hoey. See outward telegram from A. Creech Jones to Sir Edward Gent, CO 537/2208, no.24 and H. Miller (1972, p.74).

68 W.L. Blythe to Hugh Bryson (?), 2 September 1970, claimed that Onraet, along with J.C. Barry and Wynne, "would have dearly loved to introduce a police state."


70 Extract from "Daily Report" G/3/60 by H.Q. 571 F.S. Section, No.2 Area, S.E.A.C., 12 December 1945.

71 Telegram, M.E. Dening to Foreign Office, 3 September 1945, WO 203/5642. See Appendix 2 for the aims of the Communist Party.

72 Extract from "Daily Report", G/3/60 by H.Q. 571 F.S. Section, No.2 Area, S.E.A.C., 12 December 1945.

73 Extract from "Chinese Press Summary," 6 December 1945.

74 Memorandum by A.E. G. Blades to Deputy Chief Civil Affairs Officer, 8 February 1946. Sir Shenton Thomas, the former governor of Singapore who accepted Communist aid in the fall of Singapore was a vociferous supporter of use of the banishment ordinance for political reasons (Times, 29 October 1948). The Colonial Office file series CO 537 outlines the debate between the Governor Sir Edward Gent, considered a Fabian in some circles, and the Colonial Secretary Anthony Creech Jones over the appropriateness of using banishment on political cases. Gent, to his credit, was against political banishment but weakened over time.

75 Communist activity had the result of moving the spectrum to the left so that once intolerable elements became tolerable to the British. Tan Cheng Lock, later the President of the business-oriented Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) was once considered "the more extreme Chinese element". This quote comes from the normally reasonable Malcolm MacDonald, in his inward telegram to the Colonial Secretary of State, Creech Jones, re: Chinese demand for constitutional review, 8 November 1947, CO 537/2144, no.264.
CHAPTER FOUR
SOVEREIGN SPACE: TERRITORIALIZING THE FRONTIER

4.0 INTRODUCTION

The heart of a Malayan city ..., is always a small clearing wrested from the jungle and, too easily, turns jungle again.

Han, ...And the Rain My Drink

It is the jungle; the jungle which none can escape, the jungle which reaches to the back of every compound, to the back of every mind; the jungle which blots out the sun over four-fifths of Malaya's 50,850 square miles. Harsh and elemental, implacable to all who dare trifle with its suffocating heat or hissing rains, the jungle alone has remained untamed and unchanged.

Barber, War of the Running Dogs

In Chapter Three, I examined the physical reconfiguration of the Malaysian landscape in the wake of colonialism and the introduction of a capitalist agricultural system that produced a commodified landscape and a radically different demography to cope with the accompanying labour demands. Central to this chapter is the process by which the forest was devalued by capital, science and empire. The last section in Chapter Three set up the destabilization of racial hierarchies and the stereotypes due to World War II and the short-lived Japanese victories over European and American colonialists in Asia. The break-up of empires during the Second World War forever demolished the illusion of unchanging European hegemony in Asia, and even reoccupation could not allay the insecurity about where the boundaries of rule lay. In Malaya, as the British attempted to re-establish and consolidate their power, the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) began agitating for political independence.

This chapter describes the violent struggle played out across Malaya and argues that the significance the forest took on is linked to the struggle for both physical and psychological control as it moved back and forth between the colonial state and their challengers, the MCP. The key theme in this chapter is the physical and imaginative construction of the forest as a frontier that must be territorialized to re-establish and consolidate control by the colonial state. This project required a spatial reconfiguration of the racial demography of the country giving rise to the repressive laws that define contemporary Malaysia's social and political landscape. Both the colonial state and the Communists sought to isolate each other while simultaneously extending their network of alliances across the country. While the colonialists could rely on the powerful network of interests that ran
Malaya’s resource economy, the Communists attempted to create an alliance of those excluded from power by virtue of race, class and gender.

The first section of this chapter explains why the forest was seen as an uncontrolled space in the context of the political struggle between the colonialists and the Communists. Yet while the colonial state saw the forest as the theatre of war, the Communists took the struggle into the estates as sites of colonial and capitalist exploitation. The third section traces the containment strategy of the colonial state to drive the Communists out of the towns and to isolate them in the forests. The forest was then treated by the state as a diseased space that had to be purified through a series of practices to render it visible to power. The fourth section discusses state policy in turning the entire country into a theatre of war and treating a large portion of its population as enemies of the state. This justified the ambitious resettlement schemes perpetrated on twenty percent of the Malayan population, and in the process, identified all those not involved in the military who were in the vicinity of the forests as enemies of the state. By emptying the forest of its peoples, the colonial state physically demarcated where the frontier of the state lay using spaces of vengeance, punishment, discipline and moral representation.

4.1 The Frontier: Forest as Uncontrolled Space

The aftermath of World War II in Malaya was punctuated by a series of disturbances that multiplied across the country setting up a serious political challenge to the reoccupying British and resulting in the declaration of a state of emergency on 16 June 1948.¹ The onset of the Emergency signalled the beginning of the struggle for control over space in Malaya with the violence between state forces and Communist forces moving back and forth across the sites of conflict. For example, the town of Gua Musang, seized by the Communists in 1947 and declared ‘liberated’, and then retaken by colonial troops, came to symbolize the nature of temporary control.² The town of Tras was fought over fifteen times before its final destruction by state forces as a decisive way of ending the struggle for control. Although state forces often succeeded in retaking control of a village or town, the nebulous nature of control was manifested by numerous ambushes on state forces and the subsequent difficulties of getting cooperation from the local population. Many towns that were designated problem areas during the Emergency had been symbols of resistance to the Japanese only three years earlier. This transformation in symbolism reflected the wider struggle to control both public imagination and allegiance. The key sign in this struggle for power was the forest. As state forces
retook control of urban areas, the Communists made their base in the forest and it was into this vast, seemingly impenetrable and undifferentiated mass that they retreated after an attack. The forest represented an uncontrollable landscape harbouring an uncontrollable population.\(^3\) The use of the sign ‘jungle’ heralded the incorporation of the forest into military discourse. In this section I examine how the forest went from being a passive impediment to profit to being constructed as a displaced sign for violence. Zones of violence and danger are designated by those in power; designation depends on whether the group in power is inflicting the violence or in fear of it. As Mary Louise Pratt (1985; p.126) contends, the current conception of the state as a form of public power is “constituted most basically by the exclusive right to exercise legitimate violence within a certain defined territory.” But if the state’s boundary is the limit of the state’s coercive supremacy, then the forest, as beyond the control of the state, was perceived as a frontier that had to be territorialized. In Malaya, who defined what counted as legitimate violence, and where the danger lay, depended very much on race, class and gender.

During the Emergency, the perception of the forest as a dangerous, alien space of ‘otherness’ was echoed repeatedly in accounts by both sides. The forest was no longer simply a passive impediment to profit to be replaced by plantations. Spencer Chapman (1949, p.115) who spent three years and a half years in the forests of Malaya fighting the Japanese forces, wrote that “the jungle seemed predominantly hostile, being full of man-eating tigers, deadly fevers, venomous snakes and scorpions ... and a host of half-imagined nameless terrors.” W. F. N. Churchill (1950, p.61) the British Adviser in Kelantan, described his experience of a forest trek thus: “The jungle is hell if you do not know it and you fear it; it is hell if you are unfit, sick, wounded or do not know how to take care of yourself.” After a two and a quarter hour trek through the forest, Churchill (p.62) continues, “I could not get enough breath; my heart seemed to be going 150 to the minute; my blood was liquid fire; my limbs did not belong to me; vaguely I felt in pain all over [sic]. I now realized I was suffering from heat exhaustion and lack of moisture.”

Unlike the forest-dwelling Orang Asli, neither Government forces nor the Communists could survive in the forests on their own. Moreover, Government troops could count on food drops during long tours of duty in the jungle while the Communists had to rely on what they could eke out. Captured documents indicated conditions so desperate that even the departure of one soldier eased the food distribution.\(^4\) The situation was so critical that even a few departures allowed the unit to carry on as it relieved strain on food.\(^5\) A letter from Comrade Ah Fun to Comrade Law Sow captured
Food scarcity was a serious problem but the Communists were also acutely concerned about the psychological effects of isolation in the forest. For that reason, as much as any other, communications were a key factor in their survival. Not only was communication essential for disseminating battle plans and party policy, but it was also crucial to keeping up morale. Loss of morale could result in troop defections. The Malayan Communist Party attempted to convey news of victories and celebrations such as the commemoration of the birthday of the Party:

On this great day, the Liberation Army celebrated the occasion solemnly on a large-scale. In Underground environments as the comrades in the interior did; .... On account of the environmental restrictions, the comrades were unable to know how their units held their celebrations; and because of this, we find it very necessary to tell them how our unit, which is controlled by x, celebrated the occasion.  

Unlike the government forces, the Communists could not rely on technology to overcome the physical impediment of the forest to communication. In 1948 under Emergency Regulation 12A (CO 717/167) the colonial government restricted sales of radios and parts for transmission equipment. Thus, the Communist communications network relied heavily on the population to act as couriers collecting notes, personal views, minutes of meetings and records of interviews for submission to the upper tier of the organization which were then published by sympathetic urban presses or Party-run presses in the forests. The major source of support for the Communists in the forest was the
numerous small settlements on the edge of the forests that gave food and help, albeit not always willingly. A police report noted, "In many places, new police stations have been provided, but there are many settlements which are too small and remote to be effectively policed." The report also added:

To bring the scattered inhabitants under effective administration and protection, large schemes of settlement will be required, and whatever is done in pursuance of such schemes, there will be a need after the emergency [sic] is over for a considerably larger Police Force than was maintained before the war. Otherwise, there will be a constant risk of the jungle being used as a base for terrorist attacks.

The report showed that even though the British were expecting to win the Emergency, they were wary of ever being able to control the forest or its population.

The forest may have posed difficulties for both sides, but its role in levelling the advantages of numerical and material superiority made the colonial state feel that the forest was on the side of the Communists. A major imaginative trope that evolved from a practical impediment to the exercise of power was the role of the forest in obscuring vision. A government pamphlet *Malaya: The Facts behind the Fighting* (1952) noted that four-fifths of Malaya was jungle. Malaya's 30,000 square miles of forests afforded "limitless opportunities" for ambushing (Purcell, letter to the *Times*, 3 September 1948). The forest gave attackers the opportunity to 'melt away' into nothingness after an attack. A Police Mission Report to the Colonial Office described the situation in this manner: "The vast tracts of country covered by continuous jungle give the bandits opportunities to elude pursuit, to move from one area to another, and make sudden attacks on life or property, now at one point, now at another"(A.Maxwell, et.al, 16 March 1950). The authorities in Malaya were aware that a large part of the country was hidden from their sights and beyond their control. In very dense forests or undergrowth, visibility could be reduced to three or four yards (Figure 4.1). A patrol of ten men would frequently find the lead scout invisible to the last man (Godfrey, 1978, p.8). During the battle for Pulai, the track to Pulai ran through such dense forest that one of the participants noted that troops were not aware of the towering limestone cliffs overhanging the track (Churchill, 1950, pp.21-22).

The Communists operated in small groups of five or ten for mobility making it possible for them to hide from state forces many times their size. Attempts to engage the Communists in open firefights were usually fruitless as the Communists knew better than to be drawn into an open fight with a numerically superior and better-equipped opponent (Warner, 13 January 1953 ).

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Arthur Campbell (1953, p.vi), who served with the Suffolk Regiment complained that the Communists were afforded “the protection of interminable jungles”. He referred to the forest as “[T]he jungle, the enemy” (Campbell, 1953, title of Chapter Two). As W.F.N Churchill put it, “In a war against guerrillas – ‘little’ for I believe ‘guerrilla’ means ‘little’ warrior or ‘little’ fighter originally, the jungle is very much on the side of the weaker -- a cloak for the life and movement of the ‘little’ fellow.” Limited visibility meant that Communist camps could be very close to nodes of power while remaining undetected. This sometimes had farcical consequences as in the case of a month-long firing campaign by colonial troops who later found that they were being overlooked by their target who were 500 yards behind them. At times, both sides must have felt as though they were fighting invisible armies. Troops fought in the forest under endless night conditions from the dense canopy relying on sound to anticipate attacks. The difficulties of fighting in the forests were corroborated from the Communist point of view. Confrontation in the forests and estates could be surprising for both. For example, during a contact near Katongmei between troops and two
Communists, the Government soldier who spotted them was so surprised that he dropped his rifle. The element of surprise bought time for the two Communists to get away.\textsuperscript{17} In another incident on 19 June 1953, two comrades were ambushed in a banana grove. This time, the wounded man, Leong Sang, blew himself and six approaching soldiers up to allow the second man to get away.\textsuperscript{18} A point worth noting is that the Communists tried to name the dead as means of giving them identity (even though they deplored individualism). I have maintained this practice whenever possible.

For the Europeans, this sense of insecurity was very hard to bear as the violence coming from the forest literally hit home; planters were killed in their offices and homes.\textsuperscript{19} Servants were under suspicion because of their paradoxical place of being outside the status quo but physically able to insinuate themselves inside enemy territory. A servant in King's House (the High Commissioner's residence) was arrested on suspicion of being a member of the MCP (\textit{The Times}, Malayan officials' servant suspected Communist, 20 December 1951). The Sultan of Johore (letter to Rene Onraet, 11 October 1948) claimed that the elite could not discuss their affairs over the telephone for fear of being overheard. I suppose this referred to the servants in private residences and clerks in offices. Another perceived incidence of everyday resistance was the role of roadside storytellers in disseminating information. It is doubtful that this was actually the case, but it appears to have caused the authorities enough anxiety that the Secretary of Chinese Affairs tried to pressure storytellers to cease, and police officers were sent in to listen in on the gatherings.\textsuperscript{20} If not pushed back, the forest was always threatening to overwhelm civilization in the form of roads, villages and estates; "war had come to the jungle edges and cities."\textsuperscript{21} The most spectacular instance of ambushing was the killing of the British High Commissioner Sir Henry Gurney on 6 October 1951 as he was being driven through a densely forested area.\textsuperscript{22} The main road between Singapore and Kuala Lumpur was especially susceptible to ambushes. This was a sore point with the colonial government that they could not guarantee the safety of such an important artery of the state.\textsuperscript{23} Furthermore, the railway lines between Singapore and Kuala Lumpur ran through heavily forested areas and trains were regularly ambushed (\textit{Evening Standard}, 12 November 1951). My parents and sister travelling on the night train from Singapore to Kuala Lumpur in 1959 were caught in an ambush. There was a brief firefight before the Communists abandoned the attack allowing the train to continue on its way. Han Suyin's (1981) autobiographical \textit{My House has Two Doors} claims that she was the exception to the unofficial policy that no private or Government vehicle on the road travel less than seventy miles per hour. No
unarmed vehicles moved at night without an escort. As late as 1960, a system of ‘black’ and ‘white’
designating the relative safety of roads from ambush was still in use.\textsuperscript{24}

Because neither side could rely on sight, both developed a dependence on sound as a warning.
Both sides came to rely on a system of natural signs to aid them in evading ambush. But since they
relied on the same signs to navigate their way through the forest, these were also the signs each side
looked for in tracking the other.\textsuperscript{25} Through experience, soldiers learnt to recognize the type of
vegetation dead or alive that would or would not snap or crackle when trod on. An alternative for
relatively soundless movement was to make use of animal ridge tracks. However, since this
introduced an element of predictability, it also increased chances of ambush. The relatively featureless
forests allowed the Communists to foil pursuers by using different routes whenever they entered the
forests. By the same token, they never left a track all at once. Government forces countered by
following water courses or cutting deep into the forest and tracing a path parallel to the forest’s edge
until the tracks converged at a camp. But this was a time-consuming task requiring more person-
hours per prey than engaging in a conventional battle.

Another factor by which the forest restricted the exercise of power is the way it reduced
mobility. At the same time as it restricted the mobility of those in the service of power, it favoured
the disempowered. Forests do not favour big groups, and the logistical problems of command and
coordination increased tremendously when companies comprising more than 20 men were involved.
The military advantages of sophisticated and heavy equipment were reduced because of the problems
of mounting guns in cramped conditions and the hardship involved in conveying such heavy
equipment over long distances and harsh terrain. Movement in dense forest could be as slow as 50
to 100 yards per hour (Godfrey, F.A., 1978, p.10). One infantry troop recorded a journey of three
miles taking six hours (‘S’ Troop RA 1954-1956). The struggle with the swamp, leeches,
undergrowth, and a barbed creeper, nick-named by the Malays, 'wait awhile', limited patrolling to
about eight miles a day.\textsuperscript{26} The constantly changing speed also posed problems for navigation
compounded by the inability to use maps. The featureless forests defied the advantages of
cartography since they provided few clues for navigation (Figure 4.2). Patrol commanders had to rely
on compass bearings and the number of yards travelled per hour to guide them (Godfrey, F.A., 1978,
p. 9). The difficulties of navigation were partially solved when both Government troops and the
Communists began to use \textit{Orang Asli} guides. Government forces later also used surrendered or
captured enemy personnel and Dayak \textit{sic} (Iban) trackers. While appreciating the skill of the latter,
the army’s faith in them appeared at least to be determined partly by the stereotypical view that as
a primitive people, the Ibans’ facility in the forest was due to their closeness to wildlife. The Ibans
were described by one group they guided as "these hilarious little men" who "follow scents".\textsuperscript{27}
In Malaya, as in other colonial wars, the British expected the advantage to lie with them because of their superior numbers of troops bearing technologically advanced weapons. However, in a forest war, sophisticated equipment rusted because of humidity, and equipment was frequently too heavy to be carried for long periods especially as it became heavier as it got wet which was
frequently the condition in the forests.  (Having trekked in a tropical rainforest, I can testify to the discomfort posed by the high humidity, the disorientation caused by the darkness, and the nuisance of leeches). Colonial troops discovered that ammunition pouches made of stiff canvas to withstand wear and tear became too stiff to be opened when they dried after a wetting. Boots and puttees filled with water and puttees became a nuisance as they could not be unwound when leeches got inside clothing. Furthermore, weapons were not designed for close firing which was the condition of an attack in the forest. The experience of what to avoid in forests rather than simply material advantage became more important for survival. Technological superiority was as much one of scientific method as that of material advantage because it was experiment and repetition, that is, local and situated knowledge, that allowed the colonial authorities to develop a battery of techniques and technology adapted to 'jungle warfare.' The types of equipment developed for the World War II battles in Burma were adopted after the experience of difficulties earlier in the Emergency. A canvas topped, rubber soled boot that allowed water to drain away replaced the boot and puttee combination. The No. 5 rifle was modified for close range firing by shortening both butt and barrel, the later adjustment allowing the fitting of a flash eliminator to prevent temporary blinding when the rifle was fired. Bren guns were slung from a broad band of webbing instead of being mounted on a tripod as this would fire from a standing position, important in an ambush situation. By 1951, patrol commanders were armed with the lightweight US Mk 2 carbine which was also effective at close range. While the use of armoured vehicles was not an innovation, the use of Goodyear tires that did not blow when hit by a bullet was. Air power was useful in neutralizing distances in the forest as the paratroop drops had shown (Cross, 1971). The Emergency proved the testing ground for the widespread use of helicopters in an army support capacity; they were used in casualty evacuation, reconnaissance and troop-lifting (Godfrey, 1978, p.1). Lastly, technology was important in overcoming the psychological isolation caused by the Malayan forests. Wireless communication was crucial for 'jungle squads', police stations and estates as there were no lines susceptible to sabotage by the Communists. Recalling Bruno Latour's network theory, each piece of weaponry added another link in the considerable network of humans and non-humans ranged against the Communists.

During the Emergency, various anxieties coalesced into a coherent narrative of fear associated with the forest. The sense of isolation and lack of orientation associated with the forest made it difficult to gauge how near or far the enemy was. Psychological stress was acknowledged by the fact that jungle patrols usually lasted only four or five days (Godfrey, F.A., 1978, p.4). The long isolation
of Communist troops was a major disadvantage for their morale. The inability by both sides to gauge the presence or absence of enemy troops led to exaggerated fears of the size and reach of the enemy (Godfrey, F.A., 1978, p.10). A letter from the Sultan of Johore (11 October 1948, BAM V) to Rene Onraet, Police Adviser to the BMA, reflected his disbelief of the estimated number of Communists set at three to five thousand:

They told me that the Chinese Communists, Indians, Chinese and Malays in the jungle are over 15,000 in the State of Johore. Of course, there are other parts of Malaya I don't know, but some of the places in the State alone there are from 500 to 1000 here and there.

As the Emergency progressed, the unspecified 'they' and the ambiguous 'here' and 'there' signified the currency of unverifiable sites of danger from unverifiable sources. In fact, Johore is only one of eleven states in Malaya. In addition, even at the peak of the Emergency, there were only 6,000 Communists in the whole country. But in a climate of information censorship, rumours exerted a greater degree of menace.

Unlike pre-occupation writers who used the signs 'forest' and 'jungle' interchangeably, writers dealing with the Japanese occupation, the Emergency and later periods almost invariably used the term 'jungle' (Chapman, 1949; Cheah, 1987; Han, 1976; Barber, 1971; Stubbs, 1989; R. Jackson, 1991). Understanding how this came to be requires knowing what Donna Haraway (1989, p.1) refers to as the social and intellectual history of the forest. The word 'jungle' is derived from the Hindi word *jangla* and, therefore, seems likely to be used mainly within British colonies. In Malaya, I believe this transition of signs from 'forest' to 'jungle' had to do with the evolving meanings associated with local events. Prior to the war, violence in Malaya had never occurred on such a scale. Through the later human-perpetrated violence, the colonial authorities assigned the forest a code of violence peculiar to it — “the law of the jungle” (Templer, quoted in Stubbs, 1989, p.148). In Malaya, the ambivalent feelings of the British and wealthy local urban elites toward the forest disappeared. The forest was seen as primitive, a source of disease, darkness and danger from wildlife (unless they enjoyed hunting) and an impediment to profit. But it was also the place Isabella Bird (see Chapter Three) and other nature enthusiasts had written about so glowingly, a place of beauty with just enough of a *frisson* of danger to add to its appeal. Then, the danger was from the wildlife. Now, faced with human violence, the ambivalence evolved into panic with the onset of the Emergency. As both Michael Taussig (1987) and Shahid Amin (1995) have said, memories of events give places their significance. Amin (1995) further argues that events and places become inseparable from the ways of telling the story. In Malaya, the forest became inseparable from the narrative of the
Emergency. Through the events of the Emergency, the forest was no longer a category of vegetation; it had become a spatial repository of the anxieties and fears of a world of military and political uncertainty summed up in the word ‘jungle’.

The forest may have been constructed as the frontier of the colonial state’s writ, but the actual political frontier was the border with Thailand. While this was not politically a subject of dispute it posed problems when pursuing the Communists as officially colonial troops could not cross the border. Physically, the border traverses 300 miles through dense forests. Although the frontier was crossed by rail and road at only three points, it could be crossed by forest track almost anywhere along the 300 miles. The difference signified by this artificial boundary lay in the attitude towards Communists. Because they were no longer pursued in Thailand, the country provided the Communists with a safe haven as the Thai government and population did not actively support the policy of the colonial Government in Malaya.31 Even had the Thais supported the British policy in Malaya, the British claimed that the Thais would have been ineffective against the Communists because they lacked forest fighting training, equipment and special units for forest operations.32 Again, the forest is seen as more problematic than the human enemy. Although the whole of the Malayan side of the forest was subject to aerial photo reconnaissance, there were fears that the Communists were using old smuggling routes that were not easily detectable from the air. However, despite public fears of arms being smuggled from China across the Thai border to Communists (Muggeridge, 21 February 1952) there appeared no evidence that arms-smuggling was ever a problem. The reporter Denis Warner (Daily Telegraph, 13 January 1953) argued that he doubted that even a hundred machine guns and rifles were smuggled across the border, and certainly, he saw no evidence of aid from China. This was corroborated by a switch in the Communists’ policy from minor acts of sabotage to arms procurement to address the chronic arms shortage (Warner, 13 January 1953). Smuggling by the Communists was restricted to food, medicine, watches and steel files. There were hints that part of the Communists’ success in smuggling lay with the customs probationers who could not be relied upon to refuse bribes.33 Ironically, the Communists may have increased the revenue contributions to the colonial coffers because official documents show that the presence of the Communists actually reduced the number of smugglers operating for profit in the area.34

The Malayan Emergency began as a class war, but race quickly became the dominant trope.35 Because the majority of the members of the MCP were Chinese, officially, the British proclaimed
confidence in Malay support for the colonial government against the Communists. In private the Intelligence Service admitted that they were concerned about Communist influence over Malays in the border towns of Dusun Nyor and Tomo. In fact, the actual number of Communists in the area only ran to 540 with 220 part-time members of the MCP fighting force. The Betong Salient area had a platoon of 56 of whom 10 were women, and the Party in the area was well funded by estate owners and labourers. In North Perak, the miners in Klian Intan provided food, recruits and money.\textsuperscript{36} Even after the resettlement of villagers had been completed on the Malayan side, forest settlements remained on the Thai side of the border as a source of help to the Communists. Falling back on stereotypes of greedy Asians, the British attributed Malay participation in the Emergency to 'cupidity' rather than political commitment.\textsuperscript{37} Certainly, despite official denials of Malay involvement, the Government admitted Malay participation in parts of Johore, Pahang, Negri Sembilan, Kelantan, Selangor and all the other states except for Penang.\textsuperscript{38} Their suspicion of their Malay allies also surfaces in their doubts about the reliability of the Malay Home Guard in the Johor-Muar area.\textsuperscript{39}

The Communist policy with regard to Malays was to try to emphasize similarity in aims between communism, pan-Islamism and Malay nationalism. Members of \textit{Angkatan Permuda Insaf} (API) banned in 1947 formed the \textit{Ikatan Permuda Tanah Ayer} (PETA) which eventually took to the forests with the Communists. The Communists always had an inter-racial military force as their objective and could probably draw upon 300 Malay Communists with more sympathisers.\textsuperscript{40} Again falling back on the stereotypes of the simple Malay, the British feared that the extreme illiteracy of Malays made them very vulnerable to propaganda from both Malay and Chinese anti-colonialists. They justified their suspicion of communist sympathies among the Malays by citing coverage in the Malay vernacular press \textit{Warta Negara}, \textit{Majlis} and \textit{Utusan Melayu}.\textsuperscript{41} I would describe the three newspapers as nationalist and pro-independence, but at that time, the British assumed that anyone who supported nationalism was a communist.\textsuperscript{42} Yet, scrutiny of captured Communist documents showed little awareness of the racial schisms among Asians. The Communists assumed that Asian groups would unite to drive out the British colonialists without ever considering that for the Malays, the British may have been perceived as the lesser of two evils. An example is the Communists' interpretation of the Hertogh riots in Singapore. In a reference to 'the outbreak of war of racial liberation', they cited the example of the passive attitude of the Malay police constables during Muslim riots in Singapore in December 1950 but conveniently ignored the religious aims of the riots.\textsuperscript{43}
4.2 **Shadow Lines and Fractured Reflections: Negotiating Boundaries through Race, Class and Gender**

Interestingly, while the forests were *cast* as the theatre of the war by the colonial state, the estates were the actual nexus of the violent struggle for most of the twelve-year conflict.\(^4^4\) The assigning of the forests as the battlefield had less to do with the location of violence than the use of the forests as a refuge by the Communists. The estates, as the premier symbols of capitalist exploitation and the sites of numerous strikes by the workers, were natural targets for Communist attacks. Edward Said (1979, p.6) has argued that the dominance of the discourses that turned the Orient into a negative place was due to socio-economic and political institutions adopting the discourses, thus giving it a coherence that individual support alone could not. In the same manner, the discourse that turned the forest into a negative place in Malaya during the Emergency was embedded in the considerable material investment of the colonial plantation industry whose opponents were based in the forest. The significance of rubber and the estates to the Malayan economy and the Malayan elite was considerable. During the fifties, the decade of the most intense conflict, rubber accounted for 30-40 percent of government revenues, almost a quarter of the gross national product, and between 50-70 percent of net export income.\(^4^5\) Although estates accounted for 57 percent of the output during that period, compared to smallholdings, the Europeans owned most of the estates, whereas all the smallholders were Asian. The network of interests ranged on the side of protecting the plantation industry included planters and the Malayan colonial economy, as well as Britain’s economy. I discuss the links between the Malayan and British economies in detail in Chapter Six.

### 4.2.1 Sites of Punishment

While the initial Communist strategy focussed on killing either Europeans or colonial collaborators, the site of punishment later shifted from the body to a place -- the estate or the mine.\(^4^6\) Initially, the Communists were said to carry out executions of collaborators publicly. The government accused the Communists of tying people to trees and bayoneting them to death (*Malaya*, 1952, p.7). Later the estates became the real nexus of the violence because as capitalist nodes, they were sites of Communist attacks. By focussing on the estates, the Communists achieved two aims: highlighting the estate as the symbol of their struggle against colonialism and capitalism; and more practically, affecting the colonial economy directly by slashing rubber trees and disrupting production. Early in
the Emergency, Communists took control of estates with absentee landlords as a way of obtaining much needed revenue. They also took control of estates in the state of Pahang after they had been abandoned by owners. Moreover, the Communists must have hoped that public attention would be directed to the anti-colonial struggle, but then, as with most attempts at revolution now, they lost the struggle to control the representation of the war. Officials portrayed the anti-colonial struggle as that of a deviant minority against a law-abiding majority. In reality, the important minority (in a numerical sense) was the commercial interests in Malaya who had considerable influence at the highest reaches of government in Malaya and Whitehall. This can be seen from the numerous meetings between the Colonial Secretary and the High Commissioner and rubber and tin interests. Among their demands was the certification of origin in the sale of rubber, registration of all movement of rubber, and prohibited movement between 6.30 pm to 6.30 am. The Communists circumvented surveillance by using old smuggling routes for rubber; they were not above using the capitalist network.

It was hardly surprising that estates became sites of resistance in response to their other role as sites of exploitation. Housing was inadequate, described as "frayed huts that look as if they were built of unrolled cigars" (O’ Donovan, 26 September 1948). In addition, the unequal racial relationship as well as the drain of capital out of the country all provided good reasons for rebelling. The reporter, Denis Warner (13 January 1953), suggested that local people may have cooperated with the Communists because they were scrupulous in paying for food, and that their 'terrorist' attacks by-passed the majority of the population since these were aimed at informers, police, troops and Europeans. The choice for execution sometimes took into account the views of the local people. For example, the Communists executed an unpopular resettlement officer named Landfords in Rawang, in northern Selangor. Estate labour, along with squatter farmers, provided a pool of recruits as well as material support for the Min Yuen, or the non-military supporters of the Communists. As the Emergency got underway and identification cards became mandatory, access to official identification documents, whether through theft or voluntary cooperation, was a key aspect of Communist survival. The Min Yuen also served as a source of identification cards from which to draw. When police guards vacated a rubber estate in Sepang, the Communists took all the identity cards from the local population (RGA, letter to UPM, 15 February 1951). Colonial Office bureaucrats in Britain and some members of the colonial government (O.H. Morris to the RGA, 30 January 1950) recognized the poor labour conditions. Morris wrote, "The conflict in Malaya is with communism and not just.
with 3,000 bandits, and speed in improving labour conditions on estates in the manner proposed is in his [High Commissioner] view vitally important." Morris also criticized the planters for treating government-sponsored unions with suspicion. After all, compliant unions provided the appearance of freedom without the threat of activism posed by robust unions. However, estate owners tended to see unions in general as bad news. Morris went on to write,

The High Commissioner fully understands that the lesson of experience demands vigilance, but the attitude on some estates in this manner is tantamount to playing straight into the hands of the Communists. He feels sure that your Association will wish to assist rather than hinder the growth of a sound trade union movement which with wise guidance, is one of the strongest anti-Communist weapons.  

Ironically, in the struggle to control production of rubber, the rubber industry proved a formidable competitor for labour that would otherwise have been available to the police as recruitment material. Since the price of rubber was high, wages for tappers were higher than wages for non-European policemen making it difficult for the colonial government to recruit local people for the armed forces.

We have seen that the difference in assigning the location of the theatre of war had to do with how each side viewed the cause of the struggle. But in the actual combat, where the lines were drawn to limit territory was blurred at the best since no one could say where the estate ended and the forest began. To the wealthy elite, it would seem that they had lost control, and the forest had reclaimed their estates for its own. (Figures 4.3 and 4.4). Many estates were so isolated that there was no road access. A police report that suggested installing wireless communications on all the estates to overcome the psychological isolation and risk of having telephone lines cut was vetoed by the telephone company (Maxwell, et al, 16 March 1951). Capitalist competition posed problems for the state even as it defended capital. Initial attempts to fence in the estates were soon abandoned as it was impossible to obtain sufficient barbed wire. Patrolling the perimeter of an estate or posting special constables as boundary markers were impractical given the scale of the project. Moreover, the special constables themselves risked ambush as long as the estate perimeter was open. As resettlement programs got underway and the police force expanded, estates found their pool of estate guards, known as special constables, depleted. These special constables had comprised a force of between 17,000 and 19,000-strong (Observer, 26 September 1948). Planters had to content themselves with creating safe spaces on the estates akin to fortresses through the use of the ubiquitous barbed wire, sandbags and searchlights. Barbed wire was so common in Malaya that it was only after leaving the country that I realized it was not part of the ecology of suburban gardens.
Figure 4.3 Abandoned hut on the edge of a plantation is quickly reclaimed by undergrowth. Source: Author.
Figure 4.4 Map of land use in Malaya circa 1954 depicting proximity of rubber plantations to forest. Source: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 1955, p.241.
The planter’s bungalow was probably the primary symbol of European presence in the rural areas. Patrick O’ Donovan (26 September 1948) described it thus; “It seems a bit withdrawn from the exuberance – as though recalling Woking and games of weekend golf and strenuous evenings spent mowing the lawn while the radio played loudly through the French windows.” In contrast, “there is a place beneath the bungalow for the night guard.”58 The estate, once the symbol of rational production and progress wrested from the primitive forest, could no longer disassociate itself from the forest. It was no longer an oasis of capitalist triumph. Instead, it had transformed into a site of violent contestation with the planter no longer the uncontested ruler of his realm. Planters went about armed and lived in houses behind sandbags amidst spot-lit grounds, with the sounds of gunfire interspersed between the usual night time noises of insects and animals.59 Travel in and out of estates required armoured vehicles.60 Security forces rang on an hourly basis to verify that lines had not been cut. Almost all the estates could furnish examples of a European killed on a neighbouring estate a few days earlier. Estates had become sites of siege and the trial ground in a war of nerves. Planters claimed that it was this war of nerves that drove them to retire rather than actual violence.61 Estates continued to be sites of contestations in the nineties. The Sime Darby oil palm estate enroute to Meru village outside the prosperous town of Kelang was put on hold for almost thirty years because water mains were continually sabotaged. Plans to lay mains were proposed at the start of my father’s working life in the fifties. They were finally brought to fruition when he retired over thirty years later. Admittedly, in the last few years the contestation took on the form of local political bickering.

Later in the Emergency, companies and sometimes even platoons were based on estates and housed in ‘tapper lines’ or the planter’s house, the latter presumably for the officers (Godfrey, 1978, p.6).62 Estates that were the sites of labour troubles made urgent claims for troops.63 Estates went from defensive positions to nodes of power from which the state launched its attacks. Firing plans were sometimes scheduled on the estates themselves such as the Changkat Salah estate at Sungai Sintang close to Ipoh. Relations between officers and planters were cordial and went beyond professional cooperation.64 Planters who wanted arms were issued with police weapons (Inward telegram E. Gent to Creech Jones 13 June 1948).65 No doubt the cooperation reflected in part a colonial attitude that the planters were in the frontline of the battle against communism (Figure 4.5). In this sense, plantations were the material manifestation of boundaries set by the discourses of race, class and gender. Plantations were the physical manifestations of divisions between labour and capital, Asians and Europeans, and men and women. During the Emergency, the estates came to
manifest a less obvious difference – between the European planters who stood and defended their territory for Empire and the Asian planters who either compromised with the Communists or abandoned the defence of their estates to others. The estates highlighted schisms along racial lines. For example, Asian estate owners had difficulty getting government protection compared to European estates and were sometimes forced to close because of this. Several Chinese mine owners admitted to Sir Henry Gurney that they were paying the Communists up to $10,000 a month to be left in peace. Another planter, Khaw Boon Pheng, of Penang, asked for police protection after Communists burnt down his smoke house, tractors, a truck and rubber treatment shed. He was told none was available but was chagrined to note that a neighbouring European-owned estate got six special constables. In response to this complaint, Templer argued that the criteria for protection were:

- economic importance of estates
- satisfactory proof of active co-operation of estate owners and managers
- resident manager resident on the estate to provide leadership.

He concluded that “inevitably” almost all European estates met such requirements, while most Asian ones did not. Templer’s remarks reinforced the racial cleavages that so influenced policy decisions in Malaya.

Figure 4.5 The planter on the frontline. Source: *Malaya: the facts behind the fighting*, 1952, p. 9.
Interestingly, despite a shortage of guards, estate managers refused to arm their largely Tamil workforce which they claimed were 'unsuitable' (Meeting between General Briggs and Commercial Interests 17 January 1951). This implies that either they felt that the Tamils were biologically unsuitable for combat duty, or else they feared that their workers were not entirely loyal, and arming them might be a temptation to use their arms against their exploiters. As one commentator described it, "the planter controls ... some thousand labourers, and some of them have already shown a steady desire to kill." Because planters felt that they could not depend on the loyalty of labour, re-housing labour on estates rather than at the forests' edge was being planned between the Colonial Office and Malaya as early as 1950. Certainly, Indian labour on estates, while they may not have been completely in accord with Communist aims, would have empathized with the Communists on issues such as wages and treatment of labour. In Chapter Three I described how Communist organizers within the Malayan Labour Congress recruited Former Indian National Army officers to organize unions among Indian labourers. Moreover, Indians, like the Chinese, as immigrants were discriminated against in terms of rights to residency in Malaya. To deny Communists support from estate labour, General Briggs proposed regrouping labour closer to the estate centre where their movements could be monitored. The boundary between estate and forest was seen as permeable as much for the psychological permeability as physical contiguity in that labourers were perceived by capital and the state as vectors through which the germs of communism penetrated the body of capital and the colonial state. After all, it must have been difficult to distinguish between labour and Communists (Figure 4.6). Eventually this was done by associating intent of violence with place – the forest. Accordingly, large groups were moved from the forest, and their movements were monitored and restricted through curfews.

If the estates were now the focus of Communist punishment, it must be remembered that the alternatives for negotiating better conditions disappeared with the repressive legislation to deregister unions. By 1948, only 200 unions were left with 160 still active (The Observer, 26 September 1948). In addition, planters were intransigent in their attitudes even towards the highly sympathetic colonial state. Despite official support, a delegation of planters meeting with the Secretary of State for the Colonies still complained that the Trade Union Adviser from the British Labour Congress, brought out to set up rival trade unions to the existing ones, was too antipathetic to the employers. Two years later they would bitterly protest Britain's recognition of Communist China. They also tried to persuade the Government to pay for the cost of regrouping their labourers. When the
colonial authorities considered retaining an academic to investigate absentee landlordism, the anthropologist Maurice Freedman who had worked in Singapore was disqualified because of his alleged sympathies towards communism. The British actually considered colonial experts from Africa rather than people with local experience who might be remotely biased in favour of labour or the squatters. Even with such concessions on the government’s part with respect to the planters’ sensibilities, colonial officials and estate owners continued to disagree on the treatment of estate labour. An example of dissent within class was a proposal whereby permanent title to land would be given to estate workers. The colonial authorities tried to keep negotiations quiet to avoid public dissent from commercial interests. At this point, the colonial Government may have felt that it was important to accommodate the local population in a minor way to ensure future support for an independent government friendly to British interests. Keeping an independent Malaya in the Commonwealth was crucial to keeping Malaya’s wealth in the common sterling pool. Chapter Six deals with this issue in detail.

Figure 4.6  Peasants or Communists? Print from a government propaganda document. Source: Malaya: The Facts Behind the Fighting, 1952, p.8.
We have seen so far that alliances during the Emergency fell along class and race lines although they sometimes cut across them owing to specific circumstances. Gender does not appear to have been an explicit category of difference in determining alliances during the Emergency. That women were involved in the Emergency is obvious, but it is more difficult to gauge the level of their involvement. Aside from the tendency to under-report women's involvement in military campaigns, gender would have been of minor interest in a class war where race quickly became the dominant trope.

Women participated in military campaigns and were taken prisoner, killed in firefights and executed. The difficulty is that with the exception of executions, I could not find any secondary accounts that give figures for women killed or taken prisoner separate from the total numbers. Women fought on the government side as well. And they took part in enough dangerous activities that the government devised a policy so that the families of women who died in the line of duty on behalf of the Colonial Government could not claim pensions unlike the families of servicemen under Emergency Regulations issued on 25 October 1949 (C0 717/167).

Women supported the communists in several ways: as armed fighters, couriers, and camp support (performing traditional women's work such as cooking, sewing and nursing), but the largest number helped as the Min Yuen providing supplies to the troops in the jungle. And of course, most domestic staff in wealthy households were women who could steal supplies and convey them to the communists. Working-class women were also more mobile as a function of their work than upper-class women whose movements were far more circumscribed by convention. For example, servants would shop where they could get the best deal for their employers. Even less wealthy women like my mother thought nothing of sending servants into the villages or less savoury parts of town where she herself would not go. Aside from social status, it was also a way of transferring risk to poorer women. This acceptance of risk as a daily part of life made it easier for working-class women to negotiate dangerous spaces.

In combination with class, another tactical advantage as a consequence of social erasure, this time due to colour, is that in contrast to European women and the known social circuits of European women, non-white working-class women were part of the landscape. But wealthy Asian women were confined to their homes, and due to the Malayan economy and land tenure systems, Malay women were also more restricted to their rural reserve lands, while poor Indian women were confined to the rubber and oil palm estates. Hence, it was mostly Chinese women who supported the Communists were in the best position to take advantage of their 'social invisibility'. Until the later stages of the
war, when Asians were brought in to help with Government strategy, skin colour meant erasure, and hence, conferred invisibility and with it the advantage of traversing space. It should be added here that non-white men also availed themselves of this advantage but it was useful to a lesser degree. It was the permutation of gender, colour and class, that gave these women the social invisibility and the accompanying relative freedom.

Women in the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) also held official positions. Captured documents give examples of women holding responsible positions at the district and state levels. The most important position in the organization held by a woman was undoubtedly as coordinator of the Communists' communications network. Communications were key to the Communists because of the mobile and scattered nature of their units especially after the British banned sales of transmitting and receiving equipment. An earlier delivery system failed because they relied on a single courier to convey the messages from one post to another. However, this was easily disrupted by frequent police searches. In 1949, the Secretary General of the MCP, Chin Peng, appointed a woman, twenty-four year-old Lee Meng, to reorganize the communications network. Lee Meng's decision to use a network of couriers who passed on messages over short distances, but who did not know the location of pick-up or drop off points other than the ones they used, proved to be very successful in evading government surveillance. Lee Meng also used the widely accepted female pastime of window-shopping as a means for her couriers to meet under innocent-looking circumstances to pass information to each other (Barber, 1971, p.165-166). In addition to the couriers recruited by Lee Meng, some women conveyed warnings and reports of government troop movements to the Communists in the forests. Women used their bodies, strapping food, medicine and messages to their breasts and thighs (Miller, 1972, p.99). Supplies were also hidden in humble, homely goods such as the false bottoms of buckets, in the hollow bamboo poles supporting these buckets, in bicycle pumps and tyre tubes, and in tins of talcum powder (Barber, 1971, p, 110; Han, 1976, pp35-37). Lee Meng's capture and trial became one of the most controversial episodes in the Emergency. I will discuss the trial in the next chapter as part of a larger examination of the legal system for coping with conflict bequeathed by the Emergency.

It is difficult to assess why women participated in these dangerous activities when there are no accounts of these women speaking accept for the fictionalized characters in Han Suyin's And the Rain My Drink. The common reason assumed by most commentators is loyalty to husbands and male family members, for the British believed that men joined out of conviction while women joined
because of emotional involvement. However, accounts of men communists who turned government agents when friends and leaders were executed by the Party, suggest that men may have been equally emotionally involved. At the same time, there were accounts of women who put personal issues aside in the pursuit of their political and military aims (Pye, 1956; H. Miller, 1972, pp.52-53 and pp.113-116). Double standards in adjudicating land tenure between men and women did prevail, but it is debatable how much this contributed to the Emergency. We do know this existed as is shown in the following example of a woman named Sa'amah who was not allowed to claim her estate in Rembau as it was assumed that she would not be able to live there since she would have to move to where her husband was.\(^86\) This criteria obviously did not apply in the case of the numerous absentee landlords.

Among the women involved on the Communist side, few were named except for Lee Kwan Yoke (at that time in jail), sister-in-law to Chin Peng, the Secretary General of the MCP.\(^87\) If anything, the references to women Communists give a better idea of why the men were involved: Lam Keung vice-Commander of 12 regiment lost his wife when she was deported. Toh Kah Lim, a Political Commissar of the 8th regiment MRLA lost his wife when she was deported in 1949. His son was still in Malaya. Yet another Political Commissar in the same regiment lost his wife to deportation in 1952.

The Communists seemed aware of schisms by gender and made attempts to overcome that. Captured documents show that the authors had taken the unusual step of using gender neutral language and outlining policies on women's involvement. An editorial entitled, "All women compatriots, get united" on the occasion of March 8, International Women's Day states that, "Irrespective of sex, we must all attach great importance to this day" and noted that women lived "under a double-pronged oppression".\(^88\) The Communists claimed that because women were doubly oppressed by the British imperialists and feudalism "women consequently are the most steadfast warriors in the revolutionary rank and file once they become awakened and once they get united," noting in particular, the women's role when fighting the Japanese. The Party also acknowledged that not enough had been done to recruit women, and that the revolution could not succeed without women's participation.\(^89\)

4.3 Controlling the Forest and its Peoples
4.3.1. Gridding and Girding the Forest

As the Emergency raged across Malaya, the colonial state tried to restrict the Communists to the forests, thus containing the violence in what the state had always claimed to be the theatre of war.
Once the Communists were contained within the forest, state forces then tried to isolate parts of the forests and eliminate or drive the Communists from the militarily delineated space, thus purifying it of contagion. Failing this, they hoped that the Communists would be forced deeper into the hostile forests to starve. This strategy of purifying delineated spaces of political contagion and then linking up the purified spaces became a central plank of the counter-insurgency model, the best-known attempt of which was in Vietnam. The language of counterinsurgency was taken from the idea of sanitation. Referring to the Chinese squatters who were suspected of helping the Communists, General Briggs said, "You can kill mosquitoes in your house with a spray gun, but they'll soon be replaced by reinforcements if you don't sterilize the stagnant water pools where they breed." (Malaya, 1952, p.11). Communists were 'flushed' out so that they could be captured by the police cordon around the patch of forest being bombarded. A harassing fire operation commenced with a general "delousing" of the area using a combination of light machine guns (Brownings), Saracens (light armoured vehicle), heavy armoured vehicles and Bren guns (‘S’ Troop RA, 1954-56, WO305/154).

One operation was called ‘Operation Termite’. At the political level, colonial propaganda referred to the possibility of a Communist Malaya as, "a centre of Communist infection right down among the East Indian islands." (Malaya, 1952, p.10). In some situations, the plan was simply to deny an area to the Communists while regiments and battalions were engaged elsewhere. For example, during a firefight between the First Malay regiment and the Communists, troops fired into a neighbouring area to prevent the Communists from escaping into that area (‘S’ Troop, RA 1954-1956). The pattern of a military engagement in Malaya was described in the following manner:

[A]n operation was mounted on the now classical Malayan pattern. Troops went deep in after the terrorists, other platoons scoured the jungle's farther fringes, 25-pounders shelled the area, and Vampire jets plastered it with rockets. Police 'stops' waited to catch the scattering terrorists on the outer tracks. 90

Although it was not mentioned above, all battle plans began by enclosing the forest on paper. A firing plan began by metaphorically enclosing a space on a map to outline the area of operation. This usually covered a grid 20 to 24 map squares. The choice of where to launch these attacks depended on where the threat was perceived to be the greatest. The Emergency in Malaya was an example of how swiftly definitions could be inverted to suit power. From battalion logs, it would appear that the government troops concentrated on areas such as Yong Peng and Segamat, both in Johore, that had once been sites of resistance to the Japanese occupying army. 91 Respected by local people, these were now seen by the reoccupation forces as trouble spots. Resistance was now redirected at another occupying army -- the British and their allies. In addition to visual delimitation,
maps served as recording devices for areas swept so that there would be no repetition of activities, and the results of the daily reconnaissance following up on tracks and pinpointing suspicious cultivated areas. The economic costs of the forest operations were high. The number of people involved in a forest operation varied, but an example towards the official end of the war gives an idea of the numbers involved in an operation: four companies, and nine platoons supported by the airforce and tracker teams. Another operation mounted in a different part of the country involved five companies, nine platoons, air support and tracker teams. On average, the Malayan campaign provided the statistics of 700 person-hours for every Communist killed (Cross, 1971).

The main activity of a firing plan was to shell the outlined area usually with a twenty-five pound gun. Firing would commence at a pre-agreed angle of 240 to 255 degrees and would continue non-stop for three days or more. One firing plan beginning on 17 October 1954 lasted 6 days (‘S’ Troop RA, 1954-1956). For example, in one typical firing plan covering a 100 map squares each square divided into nine portions lettered ‘A’ to ‘I’. One hundred rounds were fired three times a day engaging all the ‘Bs’ at 0600hrs or all the ‘Fs’ at 1500hrs. This meant that the whole area was covered evenly three times a day and after three days, any Communist would have experienced a round of shelling at least 150 yards away him or her. This was, presumably, the minimum distance required to un-nerve a human being. Another method of covering the area was to shell it along diagonal lines thus eventually covering the area with a criss-crossed grid. This system was worked out by TARAs or technical assistants, Royal Artillery (‘S’ Troop RA, 1954-1956). Science was used systematically to combat the chaotic primordial forest. The motivation behind shelling was supposedly more psychological than operational as a captured Communist personnel claimed that it caused few casualties. The shells usually exploded before they reached the ground (‘S’ Troop RA 1954-1956, 20 March 1955) because the trees broke the trajectory of the shells; another very practical example of the forest as a protecting screen. However, the shelling did accomplish the aim of immobilizing the Communists who were forced to shelter under large trees. The army also argued that it worked for psychological reasons as it forced Communists camps to move on or surrender after enduring prolonged shelling (‘S’ Troop RA 1954-1956, 31 October 1954). Night firing was also favoured as it was thought to be more stressful for the Communists who could not find cover in the dark.

Royal Air Force jets synchronized bombing runs and strafing with the firing plans. The selection of bombing targets was problematic because the Air Force targeted cultivated areas under the assumption that forest agriculture meant the presence of Communists. As can be seen from the map (Figure 4.7), this assumption was inaccurate as Orang Asli plots could not be distinguished
easily from those of the Communists. The criterion of ordered plots representing Communists and disordered plots belonging to the *Orang Asli* did not hold as the Communist soon abandoned the straight row cropping that gave away their plots from the air. This criterion also betrays the binary distinctions between what comprised agriculture. The *Orang Asli*, as people of nature, were not considered to possess a culture. Furthermore, as late as 1960, Communists and *Orang Asli* sometimes used the same campsites (Operation Bamboo, 13 September 1960, WO305/960). As the war progressed, the colonial government established forest forts to deny the Communists access to the *Orang Asli*. Forest forts were also important as secure supply drops (Godfrey, 1978, p.7). When a meeting of Communists was rumoured to be taking place around Tanah Hitam, shelling and strafing of the area commenced. The contest for territorial control frequently obscured the fact that the land was not empty. The impact of the military struggles must have been extremely stressful for the local population as the armed forces rarely knew the exact location of a target. A telling anecdote indicative of local response came from an officer who related the story of circus performer in Sungkai who fell off the tightrope twice during a performance because she was not used to the explosions.\(^{93}\)

Living amidst the bombing and shelling must have been the psychological equivalent of walking on a tightrope.

In contrast to the technical approach of firing plans, the armed forces also embarked on old-fashioned face-to-face encounters. The idea behind 'jungle' or 'ferret' patrols was to engage the Communists in face-to-face fighting, or 'force contact'. Some observers dismissed 'jungle bashing' as 'fruitless'.\(^{94}\) And it was debatable how useful jungle patrols were unless the patrol was based on immediate information. Even when based on information from captured or surrendered enemy personnel the time involved before the actual capture or killing could be a matter of weeks or months.\(^{95}\) Here is a description of the optimum situation for a forest patrol:

The best, and most gripping situation for a patrol commander to be in was if he was presented with a surrendered bandit who had deserted his unit and agreed with the police to lead a patrol back to his camp. It could be that his defection was still not known to his comrades, in which case there would be a real chance of returning to camp and finding it still occupied. Even in these near perfect circumstances, so watchful were the bandit [sic] sentries, so difficult and close was the country, and so noisy the jungle undergrowth that the patrol would be extremely lucky, however skillfully it surrounded the camp, to kill or capture more than 4 or 5 of the bandits in it. (Godfrey, 1978, p.7)
Figure 4.7  Approximate locations of Orang Asli and Communist agricultural plots used to pinpoint target bombing. Source: AIR 20/8735
Ferret patrols were disbanded as the police force was augmented by new recruits. Later in the war, the most common forest forays were to follow up on the numerous forest tracks along courier routes rather than searching out random armed contacts, a strategy that required enormous human resources. Fortunately, colonial Malaya could call upon troop reserves from the rest of the Empire. The imperial aspect of the Malayan Emergency was highlighted beyond the obvious struggle to preserve Empire and control of rubber and tin; it highlighted the dynamic interaction between different parts of the Empire to repress others, thus allowing the imperial centre to concentrate its might in one place when the need arose. In fact, this might be one of the definitive aspects of an empire.96

4.3.2 Rendering the Forest Visible
The ‘eye of science’ was also trained on the forest in an effort to render its secrets visible through bombing, cutting down the forests bordering the road, and spraying herbicides to defoliate the trees. I will spend some time discussing the defoliation program because of its subsequent importance in counter-insurgency models, and at a less direct level, to highlight the relationship between research scientists and power. The experiment using chemicals to clear the forests involved scientists from Oxford and Bristol Universities, Shell, ICI and the RRI.97 The Director of Forestry was made responsible for the spraying, and in November 1951 $1,400,000 was sanctioned by the British for this project.98 After July 1952, another $200,000 was allocated for the project.99 The initial mandate to clear undergrowth near ambush points and destroy terrorist crops was summed up as “[a] killing of all vegetation.”100 Options for accomplishing the vegetation destruction included sodium chlorate, sulphuric acid or flame throwers. Eventually, the project team settled on a spray combination of sodium trichloroacetate and trioxene mixed with an emulsion. Spraying was later abandoned because of lack of results and the inefficiency of the method since on average only 23.5 miles a month were sprayed.101 Ironically, the slowness was attributed to the difficulty of assigning military escorts to prevent ambushes, the very reason for destroying the vegetation in the first place. In a more detailed version of their report, Kearnes and Woodford expressed worries about the efficacy of the treatment and the lack of consideration given to the effects of killing all the vegetation as they saw evidence of landslips along the sprayed areas.102 But it is important to remember that these environmental concerns were not what killed the roadside spraying program; instead, it was economic efficiency. When roadside spraying did not work, scientists turned to aerial chemical bombardment. Moreover,
as the Communists were driven deeper into the forests, cultivation became an important part of their survival strategy. Subsequently, on 29 May 1953 colonial authorities decided to begin spraying of all crops thought to be cultivated by Communists (DEF.Y.68/15). Early communiqués set out one of its aims as "to achieve a thinning of vegetable cover for use in conjunction with visual and photo recce." The decision involved a concentrated effort by all available helicopters over specific areas rather than a dispersed effort, and was based on lists of cultivation areas suitable for spraying prepared by SWEC (State and Settlement War Executive Committee) and PCS (Planning Committee Staff). At the time it was assumed that there were 1000 Communist clearings (AIR20/8735). The difficulty of how they were going to distinguish between Orang Asli plots and Communists plots was never considered (Figure 4.7).

The scientists also visited sites where airborne chemical trails were being staged, but at that point, there was some debate over whether the very poisonous CMU or 2,4,5-T' should be used. One of the considerations against using either of these compounds was their ineffectualness with regard to tapioca, sweet potatoes and hill paddy (rice), the most common Communist-cultivated crops. While destroying the forest was never openly stated, the purpose of the spraying for "the defoliation and the exposure of the bush paths" brings to mind the American use of defoliants to destroy the forests in Vietnam to expose the Vietcong. Information on spraying was obtained from Camp Detrick in the United States. The Americans were said to be interested in press reports of "chemical warfare" in Malaya. During a meeting held in the War Office on the 21 January 1953 to discuss using CMU in aerial spraying, one of the scientists, G.E. Blackman, acknowledged that CMU was extremely toxic and that the smallness of holes in forest canopy made reaching the targets quite unlikely. Another concern voiced was the effects of drift damage which were severe. What is amazing is the degree of complicity of scientists who were aware of the toxicities of what they were recommending insofar as they insisted on insurance coverage for themselves in case of side effects from proximity to the chemicals. These private misgivings strongly contrasted with their public statements such as the following press statement by the Far East Air Force (14 April 1952, CO 1022/26) with regard to dropping hormone plant killers which it said was "harmless to human or animal life". It went on to state, "It had been established that they had their place as a weapon in the armoury of security forces." Stressing the benignity of herbicides humans and life forms, the statement went on to note "that scientists had tapped the inner secrets of plant life to develop hormone killers, primarily for use against weeds, which were harmless to humans and animals." RAF planes had
parachute-dropped drums of chemicals for security forces to apply by hand but complained, "We are handicapped, in a way, that we must always use chemicals that are non-toxic: you cannot spread even faintly poisonous chemicals from the air." The *Manchester Guardian* (29 April 1952) quoted the Defence Secretary as saying that roadside defoliation was "harmless to men or beasts: they suffer nothing whatever either from contact or from eating vegetation which has been affected by it." In an illustration of Malaya's place in international geopolitics the Indian press compared how eager Europeans and Americans were to discredit stories of the use of bacteriological warfare by Americans in Korea at the same time as the British were pursuing chemical warfare in Malaya (*Manchester Guardian*, 29 April 1952). Malaya's usefulness to geopolitical point-scoring in the early days of the Cold War will be examined in greater detail in Chapters Five and Six.

4.4 Ecology of War: Disciplined Space and Fragmented Society

Discipline is the political anatomy of detail. (Michel Foucault, 1977, p.139.) The idea that the forest was the theatre of war was replaced by the reality that the entire country had turned into a theatre of war. This section outlines the ways in which the drama of war was enacted on the stage of Malaya with the props of roadblocks, barbed wire, searchlights and concentration camps against the thudding overture of helicopters in the sky -- the electronic eyes of the state. I attempt to show how the state metaphorically constructed the forest as an alien space through its policy of segregating rural dwellers, mainly the Chinese, from the forest by resettling them in fenced-in compounds that were euphemistically described as New Villages. In time, the forest would come to be associated with hardship and violence rather than the daily lives of farming communities. Through a series of textual, visual and legislative practices, the forest and New Villages were delineated as moral representations. Second, I trace the foundations for the lack of civil society that characterizes contemporary Malaysia to the legislation enacted in tandem with the resettlement policies to immobilize and socially divide the population. Initially enacted to defend colonial control of Malaya's resource economy, the legislation stayed in place for over forty years without being challenged until the current political troubles forced some Malaysians to question its paramount status.

The two sides, the Communists and their sympathisers, and the British and theirs, competed to extend their networks across the landscape of Malaya. Each side tried to contain and enclose the other side while remaining mobile themselves. At the level of signs, this meant installing markers of their presence across the landscape. In the previous chapter I recounted how the Malayan
Communist Party flew the Party flag in small towns and villages across the country in the wake of the Japanese defeat. Markers of power, if their presence is obviously notable, usually signal an insecure power. It is only a secure sovereignty that can afford to be discreet in the matter of signalling its presence. Throughout the Emergency, the Malayan government was forcefully visible on the landscape to counteract its tenuous hold on public support. The Briggs Plan was the centrepiece of Malayan military and political strategy. The Plan depended on segregating the Communists from their main source of support, the squatters. But since this would channel the Communists onto the estates, estate labourers and Malay villagers also had to be regrouped as part of the strategy of isolating the Communists in the forests. Michel Foucault (1977, p.141) argued that discipline requires enclosing bodies in space. In this manner, those in authority can control distribution of bodies and break up potential collectivities. Foucault (1977, pp.143-144) went on to argue that because disciplinary space is partitioned into as many spaces as bodies, it allows easy visual surveillance of presences and absences. The difference in terminology between resettlement and regrouping appeared to be related to the degree of the lack of civil rights associated with the different terms. At a conceptual level, the colonial state's tactics could be seen as an attempt to purify space physically and control bodies. In the New Villages, individuals would be confined in their huts and village perimeter through different kinds of curfews for households and areas. Individuals would be marked and recorded through fingerprinting, photographing and issuing identification cards for anyone over twelve years. The practice of random checks trained the population in self-surveillance. A binary grading system of 'black' versus 'white' areas served to separate the bad from the good, at least by the definition of those in power. Thus, the extension of the physical purification process would continue imaginatively through these disciplinary and textual practices on the newly incarcerated population to mark the spaces of the colonial state. Michel Foucault (1977, p.138) argues that it is through a repetition of processes that overlap, imitate and support each other that a coherent method is built. During the Emergency in Malaya, the domains of application of disciplinary practices were different — roadblocks, individual households, concentration camps -- but they repeated and supported each other through numerous interventions in quotidian details to build to a coherent method of control that would become the mainstay of the post-colonial Malaysian state. The following pages provide examples of these disciplinary processes and interventions.

Earlier in the chapter, I recounted how the colonial state saw the Chinese squatters living on the edge of the forests as the main source of support for the Communists. In tandem with the
strategy to drive the Communists into the forest, was the attempt to isolate them from their source of support by containing, enclosing and fixing individuals in spaces where they could be watched.\textsuperscript{108} This containment strategy resulted in the construction of the New Villages as part of the Briggs Plan. Squatters were forcibly removed from their villages, and their homes, livestock and crops destroyed. They were then relocated to a new area where they had to rebuild their homes with a small allocation of money within a fenced compound where they were placed under surveillance. The design of the New Villages was regular and geometric to enhance visibility in contrast to the settlements at the forest edge (Figures 4.8a and 4.8b). The New Villages were examples of Foucault’s (1977, p.172) architecture “that would operate to transform individuals: to act on those it shelters, to provide a hold on their conduct, to carry the effects of power right to them, to make it possible to know them, to alter them”.

The villagers were supposed to be allocated land for cultivation, but this often did not materialize because of the difficulties of negotiating land settlements. However, ‘land for a life’ exchanges were sometimes available as a way around the predicament of landlessness and poverty. Templer admitted that he offered the villagers of Jabor Valley half an acre of land for every person who provided information leading to the capture or killing of a Communist.\textsuperscript{109} Within the camps, work was hard to come by because of the long hours of curfew and movement outside of curfew hours required permission from the police. The herding of people into the camps also questions the meaning of ‘geographic exposure’. From the perspective of the troops and the planters, they were exposed to hundreds of thousands of acres of forests harbouring Communists. But from the perspective of the people forced into the barbed wire surrounded villages, the centralized location exposed them to harassment from the troops and the police as well as making them the target of attacks by the increasingly desperate Communists. Nevertheless, resettlement was supported by the Government-backed Malayan Chinese Association (MCA).\textsuperscript{110}

Although the elite congratulated each other on their class solidarity, the issue of granting permanent land titles to the inhabitants of the 'new villages' as a bribe to soften the loss of livestock and homes from resettlement caused friction between the Colonial and the State Governments.\textsuperscript{111} The former, in attempting to bring more people on side for a neo-colonial Malaya, clashed with State Governments who resented giving up any property to the very people they perceived as interlopers. A major problem with the resettlement plan was the difficulty of finding suitable land.
Figure 4.8a. Squatter settlement at the forest's edge. Source: *Malaya: the facts behind the fighting*, 1952, p.7.

Figure 4.8b. Layout of a New Village – note the geometric arrangement for easy surveillance. Source: *Malaya: the facts behind the fighting*, 1952, p.13.
Not surprisingly, when casting about for land to resettle squatters from the edge of one forest, the colonial government sometimes excised forest reserves for resettlement purposes. Once the trees had been cut and the compound suitably fenced in with barbed wire, the land was deemed territorialized. An example of this was the Tampin Forest Reserve. But in many cases, lack of available and suitable land meant villagers were resettled in unsuitable locations such as the swampy Bedok village in Singapore. Well water was brackish resulting in insufficient water for drinking or agriculture. During high tide, huts were flooded and mosquitoes thrived increasing the danger of malaria and dengue. The Daily Worker (12 April 1952) reported that the Malaya Branch of the British Medical Association expressed concern at the "gross inadequacy of medical services in Malayan resettlement camps." They also described the camps as "threatening epidemics which may endanger not only camps but also the adjacent camps."

Meanwhile, labour regrouping on the estates, while promoted for safety reasons, had the consequence of making it easier to control labour movement and activities. The Anglo-Java Rubber Company reported that they had regrouped all their workers into two areas surrounded by barbed wire fences for 3300 yards and 1200 yards respectively. The Company was also in the process of illuminating these new housing areas. Emergency regulations forbade workers to take food out of estates which meant in effect they could not work after noon. The Straits Budget (10 April 1952) reported that 500 rubber tappers in the Tanjong Malim area were the hardest hit since they had to go out to work without eating and had no food until they returned. Local people resisted these oppressive conditions. At Mentakap, Pahang, tappers defied police orders not to take out food. When refused exit unless they left behind the food, they went on strike led by ten women, seven of whom the British later arrested. On another occasion, concentration camp residents attacked police who tried to beat up workers who exited the camp gates without being searched after the police had opened the gates late. Again, the villagers were supposed to have been led by a woman. Although two women and a youth were beaten up at the Chinese Chamber of Commerce as a reprisal, the gates were never again locked as late as 7.00 a.m. The Communists interpreted these acts of resistance as gestures of solidarity, but I suggest this shows everyday problems rather than political motivation. A more likely sympathetic action is that of the Kajang estate strikes by 4,000 tappers in 1951. The Korean War took place concurrently with labour regrouping. This coincidence meant that as the estates cashed in on the high price of rubber by expanding their plantations, labour regrouping proved a useful exercise in reorganizing a more docile labour force. Resettlement and
regrouping meant that the increasingly desperate Communists attempted to buy, or coerce, supplies from Malay villagers. Under these circumstances, Malay villagers were occasionally moved to new locations. By the end of the Emergency, the British had resettled almost 600,000 Chinese and another 150,000 Indians, the latter under the estate regrouping program. Together, these accounted for almost twenty five percent of the Malayan population and more than half the non-Malay population. In a country already spatially segregated by race through employment opportunities, the Briggs Plan further entrenched spatial segregation by race.

The Malayan Emergency lasted for twelve years. At its peak six thousand guerrillas engaged an armed force 300,000 strong (R. Jackson, 1991, p.115). To survive they had to have a network beyond actual arms-bearing troops. Again and again, one sees numerous references to the Communist troops in the forest not being able to survive without help from the local population.\textsuperscript{122} The Communists survival was predicated on the support of an ‘invisible’ group. For the majority of Malaya’s population, their presence was useful to exploit, but they could claim few political rights. Among the majority were those who supported the MCP not just positively in terms of providing food, shelter and communications but also by withholding information from the state. An important factor in the success of this form of resistance came from their subject positionality in the matrix of race, class and gender which rendered them beneath the notice of those in power. This conferred social ‘invisibility’ and their numbers brought sites of contestation everywhere. The frontier had come to the centre. Dangerous spaces, as sites of shared oppression, can also become sites of potential resistance (bell hooks, quoted in Rose, 1993, p.156). A frequent criticism of passive resistance has been that it accomplishes very little in terms of overturning the status quo. While I agree that on its own it can have little impact, guerrilla wars show the effectiveness of the combination of a small group of armed troops aided by a considerably larger group of willing supporters whose aid may be largely in the form of passive non-cooperation with the enemy.

The colonial state responded by fixing people in space through elaborate inventories to establish presences and absences, thereby eliminating uncontrolled disappearances -- unless the Government was responsible for the disappearances. Emergency regulations were put in place on 13 July 1948. Thereafter, finger-printing and identification cards became mandatory for anyone over twelve.\textsuperscript{123} Initially, these practices were put in place for the Chinese who had to go to the police stations to be fingerprinted and photographed.\textsuperscript{124} The practice of mandatory identity cards continues to this day. During the Emergency, household residents' inventories were pasted outside every house,
and random house-to-house searches by the police or army encouraged a self-disciplining society. Over fifty years later, when I was carrying out field work in Malaysia in 1995, identity card checks were used as an excuse to harass people who looked as though they might be Indonesians or Bangladeshis. During the Emergency, inventories of individuals were replicated at the level of collectivities as well. Presses, clubs and groups all had to be registered, and rallies or meetings were illegal. The Trade Union Ordinance of 1940 had already banned freedom of association between trade unions of Government workers and trade unions of non-government workers. Another aspect of this containment strategy is psychological through the withholding of information. This took the form of restricting publications, maps and radios. Maps with deliberate misinformation were a common practice that has had a long afterlife. Today, travel guides to Malaysia such as Lonely Planet routinely warn travellers of deliberate misinformation on maps that have outlasted their original intent and now confuse latter-day tourists.

Another government tactic to eliminate uncontrolled movement of people was to designate only certain routes into, and out of, towns and villages. Roadblocks multiplied across the landscape, and roads were designated ‘black’ or ‘white’ reflecting their status as off-limits or not. Being seen near the forest was deemed an implication of guilt. People seen at the forest edge were assumed to be Communists or their sympathisers. On 4 July 1960 three people spotted by Government troops 400 yards away at the forest edge launched a search operation with Orang Asli guides, wireless patrol and tracker dogs. The three people were later established to be Malay fishermen breaking the forest curfew. Forest and rural area curfews were still in practice in the late seventies, and continue in East Malaysia today.

Curfews of up to twenty-two hours literally fixed people in space. A curfew was a restriction on movement outdoors, although it could be modified to restrict people to, or keep them out of, certain areas. Curfews were also demeaning in a sense that people were fined $50.00 for going to the outhouse, this at a time when most homes had no indoor plumbing (Straits Budget, 10 April 1952). But I would suggest that humiliation was an important part of the punishment. Curfews were imposed to eliminate unmonitored presences, but increasingly they were used as a form of punishment for offences such as a perceived lack of cooperation with the state. Furthermore, the local population would have their already meagre food rations cut. Children suffered the most from food rationing due to the rigid formula used in the calculations. When people were allowed to purchase food, there were numerous restrictions on what they could buy. Moreover, as surplus rice
was removed from towns, the price of food soared. This coupled with a drop in income as people could not work due to restrictions on movement put a strain on the ability to purchase food. Unusually, the *Times* (7 July 1952) criticized the curfew policy as they noted that "whether the rice ration is adequate will soon be an academic question, for few people will have money to buy it."\(^{130}\) Shopkeepers were obliged to punch holes in the tinned food sold so that the food would have to be consumed within 24 hours since refrigeration was unavailable to most households. Science played an important role in justifying the rationing by normalizing the meagre amounts allocated. As a precaution against starvation occurring, a nutritionist from the School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine was asked to review the policy of ration-cutting and deemed it acceptable.\(^{131}\) The colonial government appeared anxious to avoid the public relations disaster of starvation, if not the ethical issue of starvation. Again, I suggest that the appearance of ethical behaviour was important because moral superiority was an important aspect of the justification for colonialism.

### 4.4.1. Moral Representations of Space

This section looks at the moral representation of space through the construction of spaces of vengeance, punishment and discipline. Punishment in Malaya was a combination of a Foucauldian approach to discipline and more traditional acts of state vengeance. Traditional punishment centred on the body such as the exhibition of dead Communists outside a police station. The corpse of a seventeen year old girl, Lim Saw Hoon, and a man named Subramaniam were exhibited outside the Kulim Police station.\(^{132}\) Two Communists killed by the Green Howards were exhibited outside Telok Anson (Manchester Guardian, 20 August 1952) The body of Liew Kon Kim (a prominent Communist) was taken around villages in southern Selangor (Manchester Guardian, 20 August 1952; Times of Malaya, 17 September 1953). All these practices harked back to the Japanese Occupation when exhibiting decapitated heads was a common means of instilling fear in the general population. The Japanese relied solely on a regime of fear, but then, they were a minority facing a majority. Other acts centred on the body were execution by hanging and the practice of government soldiers taking back the heads of Communists killed in the forests.\(^{133}\) The latter act caused one of the major controversies of the war. While the state designated the forest the theatre of war, to create successfully a regime of fear, the site of vengeance had to be visible. Hence, corpses were moved from the forest to the town. In the beginning, the Colonial Government defended the actions as reasonable.\(^{134}\) After taking legal counsel in England they were advised that under International Law
It was a war crime. The Colonial Government then tried arguing that International Law did not hold in time of revolt. When advised that this was not true, their strategy moved to playing down the story. The concern, after all, was not moral but from the adverse publicity. In a Colonial Office memorandum, T.C. Jerrom (12 May 1952) wrote:

"It seems to me that the specific instructions to Unit Commanders will be necessary and will have to lay emphasis on the extreme seriousness of the photographs from the propaganda point of view...".

Jerrom went on;

"This matter is not one in which we could safely take a high line without the risk of rejoinders -- critics can always fall back on the bandits' head story and other unsavoury episodes."

Maintaining the moral high line was an important part of the justificatory regime for this war. By this point in history, the justification for colonialism itself as a stage along the indefinite road to independence was taken for granted. But the war to prolong colonialism was justified as necessary to protect Malaya from falling into the hands of the Communists. Even more controversially, General Templer seems to have suggested in a letter that a regiment of Dyaks be used not just for tracking "but in their traditional fighting role as head-hunters". I could not verify the letter itself as it had been removed from the file in the archives. Not surprisingly, the Incorporated Society of Planters wanted the practice of taking the corpses of hanged terrorists around the villages regularized (Straits Budget, 13 August 1952). This practice was also approved by a prominent Malaysian politician, Ghazali Shafie (The Times, 15 February 1953) because "timid, illiterate and superstitious yokels need to be persuaded that the terrorist is dead." In addition, minor acts of punishment included whipping or caning (Federation of Malaya Gazette, No.10, 1948, CO 717/167). Like hanging, the practice of caning continues to this day. A common method of torture was stripping prisoners and making them lie on a bed of ice. In the seventies, two senior police officers, one in Intelligence and the other in the regular force, corroborated this story in conversations with my father, although the actual method of torture was described as making prisoners sit on a block of ice. Foucault's (1977) explanation that the transformation of the penal system happened under conditions when criminals could be portrayed as enemies of the majority do not really hold under revolutionary conditions. More than half the population of Malaya during the Emergency were treated as alien enemies. At the same time, contrary to the views of the Communists, the conditions for a popular revolution never existed because almost an equal portion of the population were allied with the colonialists even if they did not necessarily want colonialism to continue. In these circumstances, executions and exhibitions of their grisly results created a climate of fear and served as markers of state power.
More effective than the grisly exhibits in controlling large numbers of people were the moral representations of space constructed through a chequerboard of 'black' and 'white' spaces that had to be conquered and disciplined as part of the territory of the state. These moral representations also covered the people who dwelt within that space. Michel Foucault (1977, p.113) claims that numerous incidences of moral representations across space educated the populace through a series of repetitions that imprinted messages of what constituted good and bad behaviour in their minds. The most well-publicized incidence of curfew was the town of Tanjong Malim. The town was punished for not providing information to state forces on ambushes, strikes and derailments culminating in the murder of twelve men including two British -- the Assistant District Officer, Mr. Codner and a Public Works engineer, Mr. Fournis. A twenty-two hour curfew was imposed and rice rations were cut in half for their "cowardly silence".

An alternative interpretation to cowardice could be that the townspeople's willingness to put up with such draconian treatment may have had more to do with the courage to defy authority. Templer ordered the rice ration in Tanjong Malim cut from 3.5 katis per adult to 3 and 2.5 katis for each child up to twelve. In response to the concerns raised that children were the most severely hit by ration-cutting, Templer agreed saying; "there was a greater reduction in children's than in the adult ration since, prior to preventive measures taken, adults and children's rations had been equal." But he also argued that there were many instances of children under twelve years of age being used by terrorists to bring them supplies or act as messengers. Replying to a constituent of J.A Boyd, MP, the Minister of State stated:

[I]It was not practicable to exclude children from these restrictions. In fact any attempt to do so might have led to their being forced to carryout (sic) errands on behalf of the terrorists, as has happened before.

In an example of contagion through contiguity, the Manchester Guardian (16 August 1952) reported that a village close by was fined 500 pounds just for being there.

The result of all this human suffering was summarized by the Acting Director of Intelligence E. Leighton: six out of the 38 detained were on record as bandit contacts, but they were not arrested "because it was anticipated that surveillance might produce the tangible results which arrest could not." Of the six, three were parents of bandits. The remaining three were a school master suspected of holding Communist views, an Indian postman who was a member of the Indian Nationalist Association, and a member of the banned Malayan Nationalist Party. At this stage in the war, the Colonial Government was still equating nationalism with socialism. The police had nothing on record for the remaining 32 but arrested and interrogated them anyway. In the end, they found
evidence against only three of the detainees -- a Chinese widow, a subscription collector with a son in the forest and a daughter under detention, and his stepson. The last was suspected of putting up a Communist flag. The result of pursuing 20,000 people was the arrest of three sympathisers and "probably provided corroborative evidence against 6 already known suspects." Moreover, of the six suspects, the police could not judge if the information received was corroborative or not as it could all have come from the same source. This example illustrates the degree to which suspicion and rumour dictated the denial of civil rights to a large portion of the population. Curfews were an accepted part of growing up in Malaya. As a child, my sister and I were dismayed, but unsurprised, to find that our favourite picnic spot at a nearby waterfall had been designated a restricted zone and out of bounds.

A metaphorical extension of curfew was the designation of these civil-rights deprived areas as black, grey and white. An area would be designated 'black' as a form of hostage-taking, the hostages in this case being the civil rights of the population. The transformation into a 'white' area would be accomplished when the local population had proven themselves good colonial subjects by providing information, or better still, killing a few Communists themselves (Malaya, April 1960). Triang was the last area in South Central Malaya to remain 'black', the surrounding areas were redesignated 'white' after a six-man Communist band surrendered (Malaya, April, 1960, p.20). The Daily Worker (10 April 1952) shrewdly commented that the policy was to impose collective punishment until the government could induce individual betrayals. Among the punishments meted out to the residents of 'black' areas was to make them pay a fine, in some cases to pay for the forces billeted there, a severe hardship for already poor, landless peasants. The policy towards the landless peasants who were seen as the main supporters of the Communists was repatriation, resettlement in New Villages under government surveillance, or simply dispersal from their original homes where they were left to fend for themselves (Godfrey, 1978, p.4). Shelling 'black' areas was another drastic means of creating sites of punishment. For example, in retaliation for an ambush that killed eleven men and wounded eleven more, troops shelled a resettlement area in Selangor (Daily Herald, 2 November 1951). The mortar crew killed two Chinese, an eleven year old girl and a forty-four year old woman, and wounded three others (Daily Worker, 2 November 1951). I state the race of both victims and accused because almost all news reports and documents coming out of, or about, Malaya did so.
This strategy of taking sites of contestation and turning them into moral representations is exemplified by the village of Permatang Tinggi in the Bukit Mertajam district of Province Wellesley. Past incidents of rebellion by the villagers included the murder of a Chinese contractor to the Government, giving subscriptions, and allowing Communists to visit the Chinese temple just outside the village.\(^{149}\) When a Chinese Assistant Resettlement Officer, Teoh Boon Hoe was killed, sixty-two villagers were sent to detention camp and twenty-one deported from Permatang Tinggi.\(^{150}\) Of the villagers arrested, seventeen were British subjects and four were Federal citizens. Four children apparently 'asked' to be deported with their parents. In addition, the village was destroyed as a mark of state vengeance for the murder. Afterwards the Government told the villagers that the past would be forgotten and they could now prosper and be good citizens.\(^{151}\) The residents of Permatang Tinggi were also forced to pay a fine of $250 per shop and $150 per house under Emergency Regulation 17DA\(^{152}\) which amounted to $4650. The villagers' goods were confiscated and then publicly auctioned. Perhaps due to previous incidents, the British claimed that every policeman was searched before going on operation and coming off it, indicating that British were not confident in the impartiality of the police who carried out the confiscation. After all, given that the villagers' belongings were being treated like the spoils of war, it was understandable that the local police simply took the actions to their logical conclusion. Six months later the villagers were moved back to the old village and wired in. Several British unions protested to Anthony Eden then Minister for Foreign Affairs.\(^{153}\) They likened the policy to that which the British condemned the Germans for doing in the last war. In describing the destruction of the town of Jenderam which was punished for supposed collusion, the *Manchester Guardian* (20 February 1952) warned of making it as notorious as Lidice and Guernica. It would take My Lai for an Asian village to acquire such symbolic significance.

The 4000 inhabitants of Sungai Pelek were punished because a few villagers engineered an incident whereby sentries in the resettlement camp thought that they were being attacked, and in the ensuing commotion other villagers threw packets of food over the fence to waiting Communists. The authorities reaction was to extend the 7.30 pm to 6.00 am curfew to 6pm to 6 am, remove all surplus rice to Klang, cut rations and build a second perimeter fence. In addition to the twelve-hour house curfew, there was a twenty-hour perimeter curfew and the villagers were asked to pay the $55,000 it would cost to put up the second fence within three weeks.\(^{154}\) In other examples, rural areas outside Kuala Lumpur and Rawang had twenty-four hour house curfews imposed.\(^{155}\) The transformation of the symbolic significance of Rawang from site of rebellion during the Japanese Occupation to site of
punishment during the Emergency was ironic: the decapitated heads of insurgents had been exhibited by the Japanese in the Rawang town centre. Then, it was a cause for local pride that they resisted. The villages of Lo Kong and San Kong near Kajang were burned and people rounded up.

Mass detention was institutionalized in 1949 under Regulation 17(D). On 7 November 1951 the entire town of Tras, Pahang was detained for suspicion of having cooperated with the Communists who killed Sir Henry Gurney, the High Commissioner. Two thousand people, mostly old men, women and children were detained because five women and fifteen men were suspected of being involved in the killing of Sir Henry Gurney (Straits Times, 9 November 1951). Residents' belongings sold off brought in $3.5 million. Troops scoured the nearby forest while Brigand bombers roared overhead. Singling out Tras may have been related to the fact that British troops had fought in the village fifteen times to retake it from Communists. Even the conservative *Times* (8 November 1951, CO1022/135) reported that "Pras [sic] has long been known as a terrorized rather than a terrorist village." The Secretary of State for the Colonies argued that the main reason for the destruction was to evacuate a bad area rather than ‘punish’ the inhabitants. Afterwards, the ‘sheep’ were separated from the ‘goats’ and resettled. No criteria were given for differentiating between ‘sheep’ and ‘goats’. In an example of schisms among race by class, the Malayan Chinese Association aided in the ‘colour-coding’ of villagers and detainees as ‘black’, ‘grey’ or ‘white’. The point of describing the individual cases above is to show the degree of detail involved in punishing and disciplining the population. Punishment, while severe, in most cases did not result in death, thus depriving the victims of any moral upper-hand inherent in martyrdom. This was an important strategy on the part of the government to wean support from the Communists by whatever methods, but at the same time, avoid surrounding the Communists and their potential supporters with any aura of victimization. The coding of ‘bad’ attributes distributed in space was underpinned by a latent Orientalism in that spatial distributions of group characteristics were attributed to race – literally ‘colour-coded’. These conditions were then justified to the public as essential in preserving peace and freedom. Ultimately, these repressive measures became interwoven in the story of how Malaya became an independent nation-state. Thereafter, repression has been always justified in the name of the sovereignty of the nation-state. The question of why the measures to protect the privileges of the British colonialists should be conflated with the sovereignty of the nation-state of post-colonial Malaysia has rarely been raised; no doubt as a result of the censorship laws. I also hope that describing the racially-biased institutional practices and rhetorical strategies the state deployed in
dealing with dissent explains why social tensions are never far below the surface in contemporary Malaysia.

Perhaps the most widespread form of moral representations was the designation of 'black' and 'white' areas with corresponding degrees of curfew and deprivation of civil rights (Figure 4.9). From the point of view of the colonial state, their impact was mainly psychological rather than practical. Writing to R. W. Newsam, (3 August 1955, CO1030/1), M. L. Cahill notes:

[Although fewer police will be required in a 'White Area' to supervise curfews, food restrictions etc., at least as many will be required to keep an eye on possible MCP sympathisers to make sure that no food finds its way out of the 'White Area' to CTs in the 'Black Area.]

The declaration of Rembau and Port Dickson as 'white' allowed the British to emphasize that one in seven Malayans were now free (Observer, "More 'White Areas' in Malaya", 7 March 1954). Remarkably, no one commented that six out of seven Malayans were still living under extremely repressive conditions. Along with the curfew, residents of this area were restricted in the amount of goods they could buy, store, move and consume, and their movements by day and night and hours of business were circumscribed. Even after an area was redesignated ‘white’, it was still subject to surveillance. Tins of food purchased in shops continued to have holes punched in them, while area curfews persisted even if house curfews had been lifted. The publicity value to the world, rather than the practical value to the Malayan population, was such that the ‘freeing’ of 95 square miles in Malacca on 18 March 1954 (Reuters) was considered ‘news’. Not surprisingly, these designations also tended to correspond to the racial make-up of the site and proximity to the forest. For example, Pekan was only accessible by boat, and its population was almost entirely Malay with the exception of 1500 Orang Asli and a few Chinese shopkeepers. The designation of a ‘white’ area also highlighted the paucity of royal power as in the case of the royal town of Pekan and the neighbouring 2000 square miles being declared ‘free’. Mindful of the slight to his sovereign power, the Sultan pointed out in his speech that it was a mistake to say that the area had needed ‘freeing’ as it had always repelled Communists. The transformation of an area from 'black' to 'white' began at the coast and moved inland, or at micro-scale, began close to an urban area and moved towards the edge of the forest. In addition, as part of the punishment, the villages and livestock in the 'black' areas were destroyed by burning or bulldozing. This solved the earlier problem of villages being territorialized and deterritorialized; if a village could not be controlled, it simply ceased to exist.
Figure 4.9. Map of Malaya categorized by 'black' and 'white' areas. Source: CO 1030/1
When the area around the town of Muar was declared 'white', the colonial authorities resettled both Chinese and Malay peasants (Government Press Statement, 8 November 1954, CO1030/1). Finally, the strategy of areas being recategorized from 'black' to 'white' was a metaphorical equivalent of territorialization, and recategorizations were accompanied by maps of the area to fix the images in people's minds. Black areas redesignated 'White' were represented on maps as 'berseh' or 'clean' (CO1030/1). Maps and plans not only acted as charters of intervention, they also reified the characterization of the spaces they represented.

Despite the acclaim accompanying the redesignation of an area from 'black' to 'white' the government was concerned that the Communists would see the 'white' areas as a source of supplies now that the restrictions had been lifted. Certainly, the fanfare preceding the declaration of Klang and surrounding areas as 'white' (5 December 1954) was premature as the Communist underground organization was still strong. Perhaps the strongest admission of the ineffectualness of 'white' areas was the recommendation that estates and 'white' areas not abut the forest for fear of military and political contamination. Special Branch urged that "[W]henever possible, a 'white' area should not be extended to the edge of the jungle". Nevertheless, every occasion of a 'black' area recategorized as 'white' became important propaganda. By November 1954, the Government was reporting that 1.7 million people were living in 'White' areas, ignoring the remaining 4.3 million still living in 'black' and 'grey' areas. A curious note here is the insistence on exact number values as indicators of a rather intangible quality, 'freedom.' Government and press statements regularly quoted figures like 17,430 square miles out of 50,690 square miles as being 'white' areas, or 23 square miles including Mersing being declared 'white.' The symbolism of course lay in quantifying territorialization (Table 4.1) (CO1030/1).

Inherent in some varieties of modern colonialism was the need to make it appear welcomed. This fits in with the trope of "the white man's burden" since the colonialists were only taking over someone else's country at their request. In Malaya, much publicity was devoted to publicizing the 'new village' of Bentong which paid $10,000 to build a guard room for the Home Guard (Times, 12 December 1951). Earlier, I mentioned a situation where four children 'asked' to be deported. In another case, The Scotsman (11 November 1952) reported that villagers took it upon themselves to protect an informer. Yet, in private, the state seemed aware that local help would only be forthcoming if the government could prove that help would further the interest of the locals without much danger.
Table 4.1 White Areas, issued at Kuala Lumpur, November 8, 1954.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Square Miles</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MALACCA:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First White Area</td>
<td>632</td>
<td>160,000</td>
<td>Sept. 3, 1953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiang Dua Village (Central District)</td>
<td>427</td>
<td>160,000</td>
<td>oct. 23, 1953</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lubok China (Alor Gajah)</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>3,280</td>
<td>Jan. 7, 1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alor Gajah</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>27,000</td>
<td>Mar. 18, 1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taboh Naning</td>
<td>627</td>
<td>627</td>
<td>June 17, 1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TRENGGANU:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulu Trengganu,</td>
<td></td>
<td>150,555</td>
<td>Jan. 2, 1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuala Trengganu,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marang</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>KEDAH/PERLIS</strong></td>
<td>341,000</td>
<td></td>
<td>Feb. 20, 1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PROVINCE</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>PROVINCE</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WELLESLEY</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>103,000</td>
<td>Aug. 14, 1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUTH KEDAH</td>
<td></td>
<td>66,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NEGRI SEMBILAN</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>First White Area</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>41,000</td>
<td>Mar. 6, 1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second White Area</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9,500</td>
<td>Sept. 22, 1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PAHANG</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Pahang</td>
<td>1,300</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>April 15, 1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KELANTAN</strong></td>
<td>360,00</td>
<td></td>
<td>April 4, 1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>JOHORE</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mersing</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>22,000</td>
<td>May 14, 1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batu Pahat</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>108,000</td>
<td>July 7, 1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pontian</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>Aug. 20, 1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muar</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>117,000</td>
<td>Nov. 8, 1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PERAK</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Krian, Larut &amp; Matang</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>184,400</td>
<td>April 29, 1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bukit Gatang</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>Sept. 19, 1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL AREA</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>1,740,789</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CO 1030/1
4.4.2 Purifying the Body Politic

The final acts of purification were execution or deportation. The number sentenced to death in 1953 stood at 169. It is difficult to calculate exactly how many people were deported. Between 1949 and 1953, a total of 29,828 persons were detained. Of those deported, Chinese comprised 14,946, Indians comprised 1752, Ceylonese 12 and Indonesians 129. The Reuters press release (18 March 1953) reported that the Government responded to accusations of detaining people without sufficient evidence as misunderstanding the reasoning behind detention. In their view people had to be detained when they were known to have subversive sympathies; in other words, guilty until proven innocent. The Internal Security Act (ISA) imposed in 1960, which allows detention without trial, continues this practice till today. As recently as 24 October 1998, police dispersed a public forum organized to repeal the ISA (Index on Censorship, No.1, 1999, p.91). With regard to punishment by banishment, the state’s right to banish people was never questioned, only who should be subjected to banishment. The colonial government also saw deportation as a useful way of ridding the state of "persons rendered homeless or destitute who would otherwise be the present emergency measures". The Office of the Attorney General for the Federation of Malaya added that deportation would be a way of dealing with the destitute being looked after by the state who were mostly women and children. Under the Banishment Ordinance of 1948, the High Commissioner had permission to banish anyone other than Federal citizens and British subjects. The former category was included to placate the Straits-born Chinese who were mainly loyal to the British by virtue of class alliance, but who found themselves open to suspicion because of their race anyway. Moreover, the privilege of Federal citizenship was ignored in the case of Permatang Tinggi. The conditions under which detention took place also varied depending on race. The British were trying to maintain their alliance with the Malays, and thus, could not afford to treat Malays who defied them too badly. Instead they chose to regard Malay transgressors as ignorant or misunderstood. Therefore, preparations made for Malay detainees were more considerate. The first detention centre was in the seaside town of Morib and the 60 detainees sent there from the Ipoh camp were referred to as siswas or students. The policy of sending detainees to a camp far away from their original place of residence was common method of physically and psychologically isolating the individuals. The Centre focussed on vocational training such as tailoring, carpentry, and agricultural husbandry. Warders, staff and detainees lived in the same compound on twenty acres of grounds. The originally proposed site in Kelang became a transition centre for Malay deportees, probably Indonesians. Amid its current
economic woes, Malaysia has chosen a traditional method of dealing with the potential negative social fallout: it announced that it would deport one million Indonesians to ease potential unemployment problems (Manchester Guardian, 11 January 1998, p.12).

4.5 CONCLUSION

Central in any account of the Malayan Emergency is the assumption on the part of both the Communists and the colonial government that many local people supported the Communists. The colonial state found it necessary to separate and enclose more than one fifth of the Malayan population for fear of political contagion. The colonial authorities suggested that people supported the Communists because of greed or cowardice, the latter being the most common. In contrast, the Communists assumed it was support for the glorious revolution. Certainly, not having much stake in a society that they had fought for, and contributed to, many people would at least have listened to the message of anyone who offered to right the imbalance of access to rights and resources. Perhaps, as a few students of subaltern actions have suggested (in other circumstances), people may have had quite other reasons for their insurgent activities. For example, passively hindering the colonial government was safer than actively helping the Communists, while also allowing people an outlet for their resentment against the state. In the section ‘Ecology of War’ I recounted the oppressive conditions that many people had to live under without having any stake in their future with which to justify their misery. People had to cope with beatings, accidental deaths when caught in cross-fires or misfires, and in some cases, torture. The Communists ultimately lost the war because they never evolved a coherent strategy for alliance-making that would overcome racial suspicions. This was essential in a war where they faced an enemy with vastly superior resources. However, while the Emergency was officially declared over in 1960, low-level hostilities continued, and Chin Peng, the Secretary General of the MCP, only surrendered on 2 December 1989 (Far Eastern Economic Review, 7 December 1989).

The frontier is the space beyond the control of the state, that is, it is the limit of the state's writ. In a class war that was underpinned by a race war, the frontier was the location of the 'other' who was categorized as such by way of race, class and gender. This chapter described the construction of the forest as a space of fear and violence through the events of the Emergency. Much of the fighting took place in the rural areas. Thus, disassociation from the forest was the visible criterion of good or bad, and the struggle over land became recast as a moral struggle between good
(the state) and bad (the Communists). The resettlement of people away from the forest frontier isolated the communist in the forests, which in time was no longer associated with the everyday lives of rural people. In this process of demographic transformation involving almost a fifth of the Malayan population, the colonial state institutionalized much of the repressive legislation and sectarian political practices that continue to haunt Malaysia today. The public protests in 1998-1999 over the detention and conviction of former Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim surprised many observers used to a population that had five decades of subjection to regimented political conditions.

2Inward telegram, E. Gent to A. Creech-Jones, 17 June 1948, CO717/167. The Emergency was declared in three stages and completed by 18 June 1948. It was never officially referred to as a war because the British relied on insurance companies to compensate for the damage and loss of equipment which was eligible under civilian conditions but not in times of war. In fact, the Government's campaign was conducted through a series of committees such as the Federal War Council and at the state level, the War Executive committee.

2See Churchill (1950) "A Brief and Quite Unofficial Account". The town of Gua Musang will probably never cause the Malaysian government any more trouble as in the near future it will be submerged beneath the waters of the artificial lake of the dammed Pergau River.

3Jungle populations were always seen as uncontrollable; the British and later, the Malay-led governments regarded the Orang Asli with frustration because they could not claim their allegiance. The situation continues today in the current standoff between the Malaysian government and various indigenous groups in Sarawak.

4Memorandum from Director, Special Branch Singapore to Commissioner, Police Headquarters Singapore; internal file ref. SSB 4019/19-17 dated 1 April 1953. Translation of MCP bulletin Freedom News, No:34, 15 February 1953, CO 1022/46.

5Three comrades left for Sungai Pontian. See Memorandum from Director, Special Branch Singapore to Commissioner, Police Headquarters Singapore; internal file ref. SSB 4019/19-17 dated 1 April 1953. Translation of MCP bulletin Freedom News, No:34, 15 February 1953, CO 1022/46.

6While one can be sceptical as to the degree of exaggeration of the dismal conditions of Communists for the purposes of government propaganda, it is still worth mentioning that food shortages loomed large in many accounts of surrender. Communists around the Segamat area were supposed to have been reduced to eating snakes, lizards and dogs (Daily Telegraph, 14 January 1953).

7Memorandum from Director, Special Branch Singapore to Commissioner, Police Headquarters Singapore; internal file ref. SSB 4019/19-17 dated 1 April 1953. Translation of MCP bulletin Freedom News, No:34, 15 February 1953, CO 1022/46.

8Combined Intelligence Staff, "Review of Security Situation in Malaya", 19 August 1953; CO 1022/205. Cameron Highlands remained a stronghold of Communist support even at the beginning of the eighties. A Catholic priest, Father Antoine Pallier, noted that many of his parishioners openly decorated their homes with Communist posters and pamphlets (personal communication).


10A captured letter from Ah Fun to Fong Meng also noted insurbodination, including theft, by the rank and file. He also noted that they had only just managed to remove their tapioca crop from their farm outside Endau before surrendered SEPs led troops to destroy the plants. Memorandum from Director, Special Branch Singapore to Commissioner, Police Headquarters Singapore; internal file ref. SSB 4019/19-17 dated 1 April 1953, trans. from Freedom News, issue no.34, 15 February 1953, CO 1022/46.

11Memorandum from A.E.G. Blades, Director of Special Branch, Singapore, to Commissioner of Police, Singapore, 3 December 1953, Translation of Communist documents. File ref. SSB. 4019/19, CO1022/46.

12Translation of "Are they couriers or comrades?" included in memorandum from A.E.G. Blades, Director of Special Branch,
Singapore to Commissioner of Police, Singapore, 3 December 1953. File ref. SSB. 4019/19, CO1022/46.


15 "A brief and quite unofficial guide to the Emergency".


17 Contact is the term for armed confrontation. This particular contact took place on 12 June 1953. Memorandum from director Special Branch to Commissioner, police Headquarters (Singapore) internal file ref. SSB 4019/19-17 dated 18 May 1953 and 23 April 1953 (?) translated from Freedom News issue no.33, 15 January 1953, CO 1022/46.

18 Memorandum from director Special Branch to Commissioner, police Headquarters (Singapore) internal file ref. SSB 4019/19-17 dated 18 May 1953 and 23 April 1953 (?) translated from Freedom News issue no.33, 15 January 1953, CO 1022/46.


20 Memo from director Special Branch to Commissisoner, police Headquarters (both S'pore) internal file ref. SSB 4019/19-17 dated 1 April 1953, trans. by Tsing, "Carry out earnestly the work that our enemy fears most," Freedom News issue 34, 15 February 1953.

21 Meeting between Colonial Secretary and Commercial interests, 19 December 1950, report by Muggeridge, Donovan etc.


23 Federal government press statement (23 November 1951) claims that a bus was burnt in Sungai Siput area, and a lorry and latex shed were burnt in Batu Gajah area.


25 The descriptions in this paragraph are taken from Godfrey, F.A. (1978, pp.9-10). Catalogue written to accompany the exhibition at the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst.


28 Much of the following paragraph is taken from Godfrey (1978, p.8).

29 Most of this paragraph is taken from Godfrey, 1978, p.8.


31 Combined Intelligence Staff, "Review of the Emergency Situation on the Thai/Malaya Frontier", 19 August 1953.

32 Combined Intelligence Staff, "Review of the Emergency Situation on the Thai/Malaya Frontier", 19 August 1953.


34 Large-scale smuggling of rubber and drugs took place by sea. G.C. Gutteridge, Assistant Comptroller of Customs, "The Preventive Service, North Region," 1957. The Malayan Intelligence Service also acknowledged that the Communists were not involved in the opium trade because the Thai government had a monopoly on that. See Combined Intelligence Staff, "Review of the Emergency Situation on the Thai/Malaya Frontier", 19 August 1953, CO1022/205.

35 The most curious occurrence of racial solidarity between remnants of the Japanese army remaining in the forests cooperated with their erstwhile enemies, the Communists is probably a good example of a pragmatic arrangement. A note in an army log for 23 March 1955, 'S' Troop RA 1954-1956, WO 305/154, mentions killing a Japanese doctor on that day, one of the twelve doctors known to be working with the Communists.

36 Five girls and six boys.

37 Combined Intelligence Staff, "Review of the Emergency Situation on the Thai/Malaya Frontier", 19 August 1953, CO1022/205.

38 Combined Intelligence Staff, "Review of the Emergency Situation on the Thai/Malaya Frontier", 19 August 1953, CO1022/205. Appendix D contradicts this statement when it states that Kedah and Penang have good Malay support [for the Communists].

39 Combined Intelligence Staff, "The ‘White Area’ policy and the areas to which it has been extended," 2 June 1955, CO1030/1.

40 Combined Intelligence Staff, "Malay Participation in the Present Emergency," 19 August 1953, CO 1022/205.

41 Combined Intelligence Staff, "Malay Participation in the Present Emergency", 19 August 1953, CO 1022/205.

42 Many Marxists made the same assumption.
Memo from Director Special Branch (Singapore) to Commissioner, Police Headquarters (Singapore) internal file ref. SSB 4019/19-17 dated 17 January 1953, trans. issue nos. 30 and 31 of Freedom News assumed to have been edited by Eu Chooi Yip.

Barber (1971, p.14) refers to the jungle as the “battlefield for a strange and terrible war, as relentless and cruel as the jungle itself.”

All the statistics are from T. R. McHale (1967).

Period covered 1951 to 1953. Among the things damaged or destroyed were engine sheds, kongsi houses, tin-sheds, stores, railway stations, pumping stations, dumpers, police posts, lorries, excavators, conveyors, turbines, sub-stations, power lines, telephone removed and transmissions lines. By far the main category of killed and wounded were Chinese, “Report of the casualties and damage in the mining industry as a result of the Emergency in the Federation of Malaya,” CO 1022/205.

For example, the meeting between Commercial Interests and Secretary of State for the Colonies, 10 May 1950, the meeting between General Briggs and Commercial Interests, 17 January 1951; the meeting between Planters and the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 3 December 1951;

Rubber Control Legislation 3(i). Legislation planned at meeting between planters and miners, 7 November 1951.


Memo from director Special Branch to Commissioner, Police Headquarters (Singapore) internal file ref SSB 4019/19-17 dated 18 May 1953 Translation Freedom News issue no.35, 15 March 1953 published by Singapore Freedom Press. Han Suyin fictionalized this incident in her novel, "...And the rain my drink."

Letter 31 January 1952 from J.K. Swaine, Perak Rubber Plantations, Ltd. to A. Lennox-Boyd, MP.


Meeting between General Briggs and Commercial Interests, 17 January 1951.


Savingram from High Commissioner to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1 May 1952; CO 1022/44.


Patrick O’Donovan, Malayan Notebook: Jungle Home Guard, The Observer, 26 September 1948.

Patrick O’Donovan, Malayan Notebook: Jungle Home Guard, The Observer, 26 September 1948.


'S' Troop was moved from an estate in Rengam to Asahan, presumably, because Asahan was the site of labour conflict.

'S' Troop's site diary records the friendly relations between planters and troops at the Sungkai area estate. Some planters were co-opted to command irregular forces. Numerous books on the Emergency recount this relationship that went beyond professional protection.

The Anglo-Java Rubber Company Ltd. (11 February 1952) wrote to inform the Secretary of State for the Colonies that they were gratified at the presence of a jungle company at the Sungai Papan Estate. They pointed out that they were in the process of regrouping labour and wanted permission to mount Bren guns on armoured vehicles if those were under the direct command of European.

Complaint raised by Khoo Taik Ee, quoted in “Notes from the Meeting between Planters and the Secretary of State for the Colonies”, 3 December 1951.

Inward telegram H. Gurney, Governor to A. Creech Jones, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 25 January 1948, CO717/167. Gurney became High Commissioner with the inauguration of the Federation of Malaya on 1 February 1948.

Extract of letter from Mr. Khaw Boon Pheng of Penang to Mr. Henry Brook, MP, quoted by Secretary of State to Officer Administering the Government of the Federation of Malaya, CO 1022/44.

Inward telegram, G. Templer to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 10 April 1952, CO 1022/44.

O'Donovan, Malayan Notebook: Jungle Home Guard, The Observer, 26 September 1948.

Meeting with representatives URAM, FMS, Chamber of Mines, Chamber of Commerce, All Malaya Chinese Mining Association, MEOA, 11 January 1951.

When Oliver Lyttelton, the Colonial Secretary visited Malaya, a man was arrested with a bomb 300 yards away from Lyttelton during his visit to the town of Bentong. The man was said to be visiting an urban area to obtain medicines after three years in the forest (Daily Mail, 4 December 1951).
Trade Union Ordinance No. 12, 1946. At the time of this ordinance was promulgated, the National Council for Civil Liberties claimed 400,000 union members (Times of Malaya, 11 June 1946). Afterwards, even innocuous groups such as the Tricycle Trade Association had to register with the police as part of the comprehensive registration regulations.

Of these, 19 went into 'voluntary' liquidation, 28 were removed from the register for non-existence, two for unlawful activities and 61 for failure to file their annual reports.

Colonies Notes from the Meeting 3 December 1948, internal file ref. SSB. 4019/19. The Trade Union Adviser must have been held in high esteem and confidence by the colonial authorities if we are to judge by the documents that he was allowed access to. See Memorandum and attachment from A.E.G. Blades, Director of Special Branch, Singapore to Commissioner of Police, Singapore. 3 December 1953.

Memorandum of meeting between Commercial Interests and Secretary of State for the Colonies, 10 May 1950.

Memorandum, Joint Malayan Interests to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 15 November 1951.

Minute by E. M. Chilver, 28 February 1952, CO1022/398.

"Control of Estates in the Federation of Malaya," CO1022/398.

Inward telegram from G. Templer, High Commissioner to O. Lyttelton, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1 December 1953, CO1022/41 and 42.

The Malay Nationalist Party had a women's section known as AWAS.

Interestingly, unlike the Algerian Revolution, I found no discussion of rape as a systematic form of reprisal although Stubbs (1989, p.75) refers to incidences of rape.

In her 1980 autobiography, My House Has Two Doors, author Han Suyin describes how her grocery bills were mysteriously inflated every month. This led her to conclude that some of her supplies were going to the communists; her house was a meeting place for surrendered communists who may have still had links with their former comrades despite the fact that her English husband was a Special Branch (Intelligence) officer. Her experiences living and working as a doctor in Malaya over the course of ten years became the basis of her novel, And the Rain My Drink (London: Jonathan Cape, 1956), which follows her autobiography very closely.

Captured documents referred to Lau Hong's (Commander of 5th and 12th regiment) wife, an MCP district Commander in Cameron Highlands. Barber (1971, pp.162-176); and Miller, 1972, pp.52-53). Stubbs (1989,p.47) also mentions one woman organizer, Lee Kiu.

Details for this section taken taken from documents in file CO 1022/3.

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"Summary Report" by H.G. Kearns and E.K. Woodford, December 1952, CO 1022/26. All figures represent Malayan dollars; at that time approximately eight Malayan dollars to a British pound.

Minute by C. G. Eastwood, 17/1/51, CO 1022/26.


Secret memorandum from Advanced Headquarters Malaya to AHQ Rep for Airborne Chemicals Trial, 23 February 1953, AIR20/8735.


Minute by T.C. Jerrom, 12 May 1951.

Technical note 1/53 Operational Research Section (Malaya), "Crop Destruction by Chemicals", AIR20/8735.

Minute by A. Gann 21 November 1952; minute by A. M. Webster, 22 January 1952; G.E. Blackman to W. B. L. Monson, 16 October 1952 notes that it is known that trichloroacetates cause dermatitis. All documents archived in CO 1022/26.

Enclosures were not just to keep certain groups out but also to preserve certain groups within. This can be seen in the barbed wire and sandbagging around nodes of power such as estate houses and police stations. For example, the Wilkinson Process Rubber Company was designated a Protected Area on 19 February 1949 to keep people out.

Inward telegram, G. Templer, High Commissioner to O. Lyttelton, Secretary of State for the Colonies 1/12/53; CO1022/41 and CO1022/42. While Templer himself could not provide land, he could arrange for funds to be made available or persuade others to provide land.


J.S. Potter, State Executive Council Notes 1954 No.6. in NS Conf. 3/54 S.J. 17.

The following description of the Bedok camp comes from a Memorandum from the Director of Special Branch to Commissioner, Police Headquarters(Singapore) internal file ref. SSB 4019/19-17 dated 20 November 1952 translated from Freedom News issue 29, 15 September 1952, CO 1022/46.

Anglo-Java Rubber Company letter to O. Lyttelton, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 25 April 1952, CO1022/44.

Anglo-Java Rubber Company letter to O. Lyttelton, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 25 April 1952, CO1022/44.


Memorandum from director Special Branch to Commissioner, Police Headquarters (Singapore) internal file ref. SSB 4019/19-17, 18 May 1953; Translation of Freedom News issue no.35 15 March 1953 published by Singapore Freedom Press, CO 1022/46.

Memorandum from director Special Branch to Commissioner, Police Headquarters (both in Singapore) internal file ref. SSB 4019/19-17, 18 May 1953; translation of Freedom News issue no.35, 15 March 1953 published by Singapore Freedom Press, CO 1022/46.

Memorandum from director Special Branch to Commissioner, Police Headquarters (both in Singapore) internal file ref. SSB 4019/19-17, 18 May 1953; translation of Freedom News issue no.33, 15 January 1953 published by Singapore Freedom Press, CO 1022/46.

Memorandum from director Special Branch to Commissioner, Police Headquarters (both in Singapore) internal file ref. SSB 4019/19-17, 18 May 1953; translation of Freedom News issue no.33, 15 January 1953 published by Singapore Freedom Press, CO 1022/46.


Emergency Regulation Ordinance No.746, 30 September 1948, CO 717/167.'
This following section on curfew is taken largely from documents in file CO 1022/56. An indication of the degree of detail that preoccupied even senior government officials was Templer's personal response when questioned arose regarding fining people for going to the toilet, "People without indoor latrines had no difficulty in making suitable temporary arrangements inside their houses." Savingram, Templer to Secretary of State, 6 May 1952, CO1022/54. The Times, "Seeking facts in Malaya", 7 April 1952.

Sir T. Lloyd in England counseled them that decapitation was against International Law even during a revolt. He suggested they play down the matter so as not to invite attention. See T.C. Jerrom, South East Asia Dept., Colonial Office memorandum, 5 May 1952; CO 1022/45.

Caning was internationally highlighted when an American teenager, Michael Frayne was caned after being charged and convicted of public vandalism in Singapore.

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Memorandum from Director Special Branch (Singapore) to Commissioner, Police Headquarters (Singapore) internal file ref. SSB 4019/19-17 dated 18 May 1953 and 23 April 1953 translated from Freedom News issue no.33, 15 January 1953.

Daily Telegraph, "20,000 punished in Malaya for 'cowardly silence': rations cut; 22-hr," 28 November 1952.

A kati is approximately 1.3 pounds. Inward telegram G. Templer, High Commissioner, to O.Lyttelton, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 26 May 1952, CO 1022/56.

Inward telegram Templer to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 26 May 1952, CO 1022/56.

CO1022/54 Category Secret. Punishment of the town of Tanjong Malim in Malaya -- non-cooperation with authorities. Politicians in Britain colluded to the point of trying not to embarrass the government, for example, an internal memorandum from J.D. Higham to the Minister of State, 5 April 1952, referred to Lord Listowel's offer to withdraw questions regarding Tanjong Malim. But mindful of public relations, the Colonial Office supported the idea of a friendly politician bringing up the issue because it would give the impression of openness.

Extract of letter to G. Templer forwarded to Oliver Lyttelton, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 13 May 1952.

The suggestion to make the peasants pay for forces billeted in their village came up during an interview between A.S. Haynes and Clement Attlee, 19 April 1950.

The latter is a curious point highlighting the schism between official lines taken by both sides versus the reality, that is, Malayan Communists were not all aetheists.

I have taken the details of this case from Templer's Inward telegram to O. Lyttelton, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 7 February 1953.

Times, "Villagers' new start" 19 January 1953.

Templer's speech reproduced in telegram to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 20 August 1952.

Imposition of curfew in the Federation of Malaya, CO1022/56.

Sungai Pelek was said to be helping the bearded terror Liew Kon Kim whose corpse was later paraded around the villages of southern Selangor.

Punishment of the Town of Sungai-Pelak (sic) in Malaya for non-cooperation with authorities, CO1022/55.

"Extract translation from Norwegian newspaper, "The Evacuation and detention of the inhabitants of Tras under Emergency regulations of Malaya", CO 1022/135.

Prepared brief for the Secretary of State on the evacuation of Tras. "Imposition of curfew in the Federation of Malaya", CO1022/56.

Meeting between General Briggs and deputation of commercial interests, 17 January 1951. The leader of the MCA Tan Cheng Lock even criticized the possibility of a non-communally based political party for fear that it would not "favour a

158 Press statement for Northern Kelantan, 1 January 1954; Combined intelligence Staff, “The ‘White Area’ policy and the areas to which it has been extended,” 2 June 1955; both documents in CO1030/1.

159 Text of Abu Bakar, Sultan of Pahang’s speech on the occasion of the declaration of the town of Pekan as a ‘white’ area, 1/1/54, CO1030/1.

160 Combined Intelligence Staff, 2/6/55, "The "White Area" policy and the areas to which it has been extended;" CO1030/1.

161 As in their analysis of the Malacca population.

162 D.Inf.11/54/68 Emergency, CO1030/1.

163 The British assigned citizenship only to heads of families; the exact breakdown was given as the following: 714 Indians and 1038 dependants, 7 Ceylonese and 5 dependants, 62 Indonesians and 67 dependants. Certain more reactionary elements in Malaya even suggested repatriating the remaining 300,000 Chinese who had yet to be settled (interview between A.S. Haynes and Clement Attlee, 19 April 1950).

164 Memo from director Special Branch to Commissioner, Police Headquarters(Singapore) internal file ref. SSB 4019/19-17 23 April 1953 translated from Freedom News issue no.33, 15 January 1953.

165 Minutes of Commissioner General’s Meeting at Bukit Serene, 12 September 1948, CO 717/167.

166 Minutes of Commissioner General’s Meeting at Bukit Serene, 12 September 1948, CO 717/167.


168 Communism -- Malaya Rehabilitation of detainees, CO1022/151.
CHAPTER FIVE
THE SPACE OF THE NATION

How is freedom gained? It is taken: never given. To be free, you must first assume your right to freedom.

Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*

...at a border, someone else will always remember a different map.

Isabel Fonseca, *Bury Me Standing*

5.0 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter Four I argued that the attempts by the colonial government to subdue the communist-inspired insurgency in Malaya were implicated in producing the Malaysian rainforest as a violent and dangerous space. The Emergency in Malaya was a contest over the control of resources and a rich country, fought on the touchstone of race. Tactically, the British built on the earlier ‘divide and conquer’ strategy to reinforce racial cleavages among the Asian communities so as to deny the Communists potential anti-colonial allies. The colonial state’s military strategy consisted of driving the insurgents out of the urban areas into the forests and confining them there if they could not kill them. At the same time, to deny the insurgents access to the population, the state resettled more than 750,000 (out of a non-Malay population of three million) people away from the forest’s edge in closely watched settlements known as New Villages. The institutionalization of the practices that led to this demographic reconfiguration created the political landscape of contemporary Malaysia. The making of modern Malaya has been a reconfiguration towards a more disciplined space. The tandem strategies of physically disassociating the space of the Malayan rainforest from people's lives, accompanied by the imaginative association of the forest with violence in the course of the Emergency, concretized the forest as a place to be avoided or erased. In the last section of Chapter Four, I described the role of a significantly large number of the urban population as bringing the challenge to the state from the forests into the cities through their active and passive support of the Communist insurgents. If the forest was seen by the state and the elite as a frontier, a liminal space to be territorialized because it harboured an uncontrolled population, then the presence of this uncontrolled population in the urban core brought the frontier into the centre. The elite felt that they were not only fighting 'jungle bandits' but that "war had come to the jungle edges and cities". A new strategy had to be devised to territorialize this 'frontier' politically at the centre - nationalism.
To return to my objective, I want to trace a history of the Malaysian rainforest. But in doing so, I want to examine what this history tells us about the way contesting claims to rights and resources were framed and how these bear upon contemporary political and social struggles in Malaysia. In this chapter, I situate the narrative of the forest as violent ‘other’ evolved during the Emergency within the geopolitical contexts of the post-World War II period, which covers the Emergency and the early independent era. My objective in this chapter is to identify and trace the strands weaving the imaginaries of the Malaysian rainforest with the construction of a canonical narrative of identity of the post-colonial nation-state Malaya/Malaysia. Where Chapter Four focussed on the military conflict, Chapter Five examines the political contests and negotiations of that period that resulted in Malayan independence on 31 August 1957. The Malayan Emergency may have been a local affair that officially ended in 1960, but it had a long afterlife and, as an event, acquired a semiotic significance both locally and globally. In part, this was fleshed out by the insurgency that continued ‘unofficially’ to dominate Malayan political imaginaries. Overall, Chapter Five examines the construction of the official collective memory of the Emergency, and its translation in the process of stabilizing power for the new nation-state. The first section in Chapter Five examines why the Emergency or ‘jungle war’ became a watershed in modern Malayan history. Basically, I argue that essentially this was Malaya’s war of independence. The security apparatus for quelling anti-colonial dissent also institutionalized practices that continue to haunt the relations between the Malaysian state and its civil society. Moreover, as the elite who inherited power from the British as a reward for supporting them in quelling the anti-colonial rebellion, the independent government required a narrative that would redeem their role in Malaya’s war of independence. Together, these projects set up the parameters of citizenship in the new nation-state based on the principle of racial survival of the majority that still frames contemporary conflicts in Malaysia.

The second section examines the strength and longevity of the hold of the Emergency story. Globally, it was inserted into, and reinscribed through, the trope of the Cold War. Britain emphasized the link between the Emergency and the Cold War to garner American support for Britain’s colonial rule in Malaya. Immediately after World War II American support for European colonialism was low (see Chapter Three). The local Malayan elite stressed the same link to disguise their support for their colonial rulers and their economic interests against an anti-colonial insurgency. I suggest that it was this linking of a local narrative to the narrative of a larger geopolitical conflict that increased the credibility and extended the lifespan of the former. Within the context of the Cold War, Malaya’s ‘jungle war’, along with others in the Third World,
and most spectacularly in Vietnam, became reinscribed in a global trope of the struggle of the free world against the forces of evil. And the tropical rainforest became a repository of larger geopolitical anxieties. The theme of racial survival now became linked to the theme of species survival. I suggest that insurgencies and tropical forests are very much implicated in each other's fate because the forest is often the most tangible sign of Third World insurgencies. By couching the on-going low level Malayan insurgency within the larger existential narrative of good against evil, the Malayan government could justify continuing the repressive policies of the Emergency.

The last section turns to the challenge to national identity by examining the Malaysian-Indonesian military confrontation in the immediate wake of the creation of Malaysia out of the Federation of Malaya, Singapore and the British territories of Sabah and Sarawak in North Borneo on 16 September 1963. (Singapore was thrown out in 1965). The Konfrontasi destabilized the fragile narrative of national identity in Malaysia by challenging the presiding discourse of nationalism built on the elements of race, place and citizenship. As insurgents became less identifiable as Communist, conflating the Konfrontasi with other challenges to the state by stressing the location of the challenge as based in the forest allowed the Malaysian government to distract public attention from the Indonesian justification for aggression which challenged Malaysian identity. I suggest that it was the first overt appeal to the memory of the Emergency to unite the population behind the idea of the Malaysian nation-state. And this appeal to memory was done by linking the narratives of the Konfrontasi and the Emergency through the site of conflict - the forest. Once again, the forest was the frontier of the political entity - Malaysia in this case, rather than colonial Malaya. I then examine the strategy of basing racial identity on economic difference in order to overcome the Indonesian challenge.

5.1 CONSTRUCTING THE NATION FOR THE STATE

5.1.1 Empire in Transition

This first section attempts to understand the local significance of the Emergency by situating it within the general disintegration of the British Empire and the rise of Asian nationalisms. However much both the British and later the independent government denied it, the Emergency was Malaya's war of independence. The Emergency affected the Malayan economy, and in turn, threatened the British imperial economy. The discourse in the writing and discussion of the Emergency was a consequence of its deep embeddedness in the economic and cultural
institutions at the time (Said, 1979, p.6). So that whenever the Emergency was discussed, a “whole network of interests was inevitably brought to bear on” it (Said, 1979, p.3). The long afterlife of the Emergency was due to the unprecedented scale of the violence from which no one could stand apart. And the state's response to the Emergency transformed it into the most significant event of Malaysia's recent collective history because it became the lens through which all choices were seen, and the framework for defining who belonged and who did not. This version set the precedent for the narratives of subsequent dissent and repression. In this first section, I begin by charting the changing British position as it evolved from equating nationalism with socialism, to promoting nationalism as the safer alternative (in the British view) to socialism.

Malayan nationalism was born in Whitehall out of a policy decision that the only feasible path to ending the Emergency, while safeguarding British economic interests, was to grant Malaya political independence. But this decision raised a problem replicated in numerous postcolonial situations; how did the new government create a politically viable state from a territory without the tandem existence of a nation? This transition required a program to create a Malayan identity that was already compromised by the racial divisions of the ongoing military struggle. Moreover, constructing a single inclusive identity ran contrary to colonial policy of essentialized racial identity. The British had emphasized race to disguise their defence of their economic interests in the Malayan Emergency. Now the survival of their interests in Malaya became inextricably linked to constructing a new pan-identity that flew in the face of all their previous efforts to entrench racial divisions. Another dilemma for the new government was the problem of creating legitimacy for their rule when inheriting a system based on a racial hierarchy. Discourses are powerful, and this new Malayan identity was a fragile thing that was always threatening to disintegrate under the weight of its contradictions.

By 1954, the Communists were in retreat from the colonial state. If race was the preeminent marker of difference in the Colonial World, nevertheless, it was not the only marker. The British chose to emphasize racial divisions throughout the Emergency to disguise the struggle over the Malayan economy. The British positioned themselves as defenders of the Malays against everyone else, especially the Chinese. Moreover, they claimed that they would turn the country over to the Malays once they had thoroughly vanquished the Communists who were synonymous with Chinese. In Latourian (1987, pp.108) fashion, the British had succeeded in making the Malays see that their best hope of retaining some control of Malaya was to side with the British. This was not always the case. When the British reoccupied Malaya after World
War II, they appeared to view any kind of nationalist sentiment as synonymous with socialism. Richard Winstedt, a former British adviser and later, the best-known historian of Malaya, describes British members of the Malayan civil service as frustrated and dismayed by the threat to their careers from "Socialist talk of Malaya's early independence." Asian nationalist movements were referred to "as in the tradition of the European nationalist revolutions of the last century, but with a distinct socialist bias." The convention at the time was to assume that Malays had no interest in nationalism, and it was only the envious middle-class intelligentsia among the Chinese and the Indians who wanted it. Thus, colonialists dismissed Asians' desire for independence because it was supposedly associated with the ignoble aim of material greed rather than a desire for freedom. And as I have pointed out in Chapter Four, moral justifications for prolonging colonialism were important; in this case, how could the British turn over the country to people who only had self-interest at heart? A statement such as "the Malay ... had no long-standing interest in nationalism" was commonplace and published in government propaganda. The onset of the Emergency provided the perfect excuse for delaying independence; "a premature withdrawal would jeopardize the security, well-being and liberty of these people for whom Britain has responsibilities". Conversely, in Chapter Four, I showed that the Communists deluded themselves into believing that any nationalist expression meant support for them. These misconceptions, both by the British and the Communists, meant that each believed that an independent Malaya would be a Communist Malaya. Britain feared not only losing a colony, but if the example of Mainland China was replicated in Malaya, Britain would lose control of the resource economy as well. And Malaya's resource economy was a key factor in propping up the British currency in the post-World War II period.

This need to dampen Asian nationalist sentiment while not alienating the local Asian elite created internal policy contradictions between on the one hand punishing anyone who was not considered a hundred percent behind the British, and on the other, driving more people into supporting the various Asian nationalist movements. Rene Onraet, the Police Adviser, argued for amnesty for Indian nationalist supporters because,"[it] will be looked upon as a generous act made possible only by reason of secure rule." A number of these had come to Malaya to recruit, and more importantly, fundraise. Malaya appeared to have contributed more money to the Indian Nationalist Army than India. The Koumintang also sent agents to fundraise in Malaya before the Japanese Occupation. Fear of nominees sympathetic to other Asian nationalisms, never mind Malayan, in the non-elected Legislative Council made the British even more anxious to take over the nomination process themselves. This concern about the effect of
Asian nationalism on local politics sometimes had humorous consequences. Despite disapproving of Jawaharlal Nehru's activities in India, colonial authorities decided that they would rather host him during his Malayan visit than have him mingle with the local Indian elite putting ideas in their heads, or worse still, giving them prestige by association. Amitav Ghosh has suggested that Malaya's wealth gave it an importance to Asian nationalist movements that was out of proportion to its population.

One of the key illustrations that Malaya's resource economy was implicated in the political landscape that evolved, comes from the position of the Association of British Malaya (ABM) on Malayan independence. The ABM was forefront in lobbying Whitehall to delay independence or introduce ever more repressive measures in Malaya. Much like the current system of professional lobbyists in the US today, the ABM consisted of 200 companies (planting and mining), banks and insurance companies and 1700 individuals. The commercial lobby was especially outraged by Britain's recognition of Communist China and sought to have it reversed. Many were former senior civil servants like Rene Onraet, A.S. Haynes, W.F.N. Churchill, George Maxwell, Shenton Thomas and Richard Winstedt, and some were influential in the press like Harry Miller. Those who were not members of the press wrote in the press so regularly, as shown in my citations, that they must have had as significant an impact on public opinion as the journalists. The overlap between official and unofficial voices blurred the distinction between primary and secondary documents.

In 1946, the British released a White Paper on the prospect of Malayan Union. This attempt to give non-Malays a stake in the political voice of the country was doomed from the start in the face of denunciations by the Sultans and many colonial civil servants such as Maxwell, Winstedt and Shenton. The Sultan of Kedah complained that the Malayan Union would accord almost the same privileges to the Chinese and Indians. While there was no consensus among the British bureaucrats as to how to preserve power, not surprisingly, the colonial police formed the most conservative lobby in Malaya. These conflicting views highlight the multi-layered condition of the Malayan situation. Whitehall and the commercial interests saw the need to include some non-Malays politically because of their importance to the Malayan economy. Commercial interests also considered a few conciliatory gestures preferable to granting outright independence. This view was drowned out by the chorus of voices from the police and 'old Malaya hands' lobbies who were antagonistic to any form of political reconciliation. But even the commercial sector pushed for only a very limited form of political conciliation complaining that the Malayan government was not sympathetic enough to their
problems, and criticizing the High Commissioner, Sir Edward Gent, as "pro-left-wing". The RGA representative, Sir Sydney Palmer, argued that welfare policies would not work as Asiatics only understood force. Lord Milverton described nationhood in Malaya as a "deceptive label" because there was no such thing as a Malayan consciousness as a basis for loyalty. Lord Milverton went on to suggest that conditions be manipulated so that it looked as though Malaya was asking for Martial Law rather than having it imposed on them. Lord Milverton claimed that the Malays had a choice of union with China, India and Britain and that only Britain was a "natural" choice because the others were precluded by dislike on the part of one or the other partner. The first attempt at a Malayan Union began with an appointed Executive Council. Preparing for independence in 1955, the Legislative Council was to have 52 elected members and 46 representatives including racial minorities, planting and mining industries. Malaya's new government was set up with its commercial interests very much at its heart. When this proportion of elected to non-elected officials was opposed by the leading local politicians who wanted a sixty percent to forty percent proportion of elected to appointed, the Colonial Office dismissed their protests. The private hostility between the leading local political party, the Alliance, and the Colonial Office can be gleaned from archival documents. The Colonial Secretary, Oliver Lyttelton, mockingly described Tunku, the leader of the Alliance, and his colleagues as "worried little men". Alliance politicians wanted a larger number of elected members than appointed members as they knew that the accorded proportion would be used as propaganda by the Communists to discredit the Alliance. The British, who still did not see the Alliance on equal terms as representatives of the Malayan population either dismissed their protests or procrastinated in answering their queries. As we shall see in the next section, the British subsequently changed their tone owing to the specter of the communist threat.

Unfortunately, Rene Onraet, among others, saw that "The real problems in Malaya, as is the case with the real problems of the British, Eurasians and Malays, depends on the exercise by the government of an intelligent and rightful control over the Chinese population." While he agreed it was a good idea to "enlist the better classes" he stressed that the main trouble was 99.9% Chinese describing them as "tainted". Onraet voiced a fear among the British that unfortunately succeeded in infecting the Malays when he said that, "Self-government of the Asians of Malaya by the Asians is an invitation to domination by the Chinese through China or to the formation of a greater Indonesia as the only hope for survival .... There is no future for Malaya without the British." George Maxwell echoed this opinion when he wrote that the Malays had to rally behind the British because any talk of new allegiance would "lead to
subjugation of the Malay population by Chinese Communists.”36 The Malayan Post (26 January 1946), commenting on protests over the Malayan Union, reported that banners read; "China for the Chinese, India for the Indians, Malaya for the Malays." A.S. Haynes, a pre-war Inspector General of Police exemplified the suspicions of the time that all Chinese were Communists when he claimed that the Malays were "fighting for the administration against the Communist Chinese," thus, conflating Chinese with Communist. Writing to Anthony Eden, the Foreign Secretary, Haynes (21 November 1951) claimed that as far back as 1896, the Chinese had a map showing the Malay Peninsular [sic] as part of China. Perhaps there was the unintended irony that most of the globe at that point was under British rule. Writing to Colonial Secretary James Griffiths just before he left for Malaya, Haynes (13 May 1950) warned him that, "[T]o make Malaya the 19th province of China has been the secret political aim of China for many years. With a Communist China, the danger is increased." The Chinese population in Malaya was referred to as Moscow's and Peking's "Sudetenlender [sic] for the absorption of Malaya and through Malaya, all of South-east Asia".38

Two points are important in the above passage. First, the civil servants’ lobby group was prominent in the press. Second, the British saw the real threat to their power as coming from the Chinese. Certainly, the British routinely encouraged indigenous fears of immigrant populations elsewhere in their Empire, the better to rule a divided population. But the Malayan Emergency was also taking place against the backdrop of two major geopolitical events: the waning of the British Empire in the wake of World War II, and the triumph of the Communists in China. I suggest that the anxieties and resentments generated by these two occurrences coalesced in the British response to the Emergency in the form of racial demonization that characterized the state’s propaganda war. After all, despite attempts to link the uprising in Malaya to a worldwide communist conspiracy, even the paranoid Onraet admitted that there was no evidence of directions from either the USSR or China.39 Nor did Colonel Young, Inspector General of the Police, believe that there were any instructions from Moscow or Peking.40 This was corroborated by Special Branch (intelligence).41 Communist documents also corroborate that they were not receiving help from abroad.42 Instead, defending the lack of material aid from the Soviets, the local Communists argued that the Soviet Union was an example of what other countries could be like: "The Soviet Union today symbolizes the Malaya of tomorrow."43 The Malayan Communists viewed the national liberation struggles in Burma, Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam, Iran, Morocco, Egypt and Tunisia as socialist struggles. An alternative explanation may be that these anti-colonial struggles were never socialist struggles to begin with, but that socialism was
adopted because powerful socialist countries were anti-colonial and the governments-in-waiting needed their support.

Anti-colonial movements in Malaya developed along sectarian lines taking their cues from other nationalist movements in India, Indonesia and China rather than cooperating with each other. It is worth pointing out that cooperation between the Malayan elite in support of the British was a result of an alliance against the Communists. At this point in the early fifties, the British did not substantively differentiate between nationalist and socialist liberation movements. However, in practical terms, they did not feel threatened by the pan-Malayan or Pan-Islamic movements. These were inspired by Ibrahim bin Haji Yaacob, leader of the Malayan Independence Union (MIU), and author of *Sedjarah dan Perjuangan Di-Malaya*. Ibrahim stressed Malaya’s racial affinity with Indonesia and recruited his followers from Malay youths educated in Muslim countries abroad such as Egypt and India and locally at the Sultan Idris College.44 The Malayan Special Branch dismissed Ibrahim’s movement as a response to the local Kuomintang organization and argued that where the Malays were concerned the emphasis was always on race and religion, which they still did not see as a major threat.45 If they were concerned at all, it was that unlike the Communists, the pan-Islamists were anti-colonial rather than anti-imperial (their distinction), that is, they opposed Britain, France and Holland, rather than the USA and Russia. As such, the potential for playing off the Americans against the British was greater.46 In sum, the British saw a threat to their control of Malaya as coming from the Chinese, in part, because of their experience against the Japanese, and, in part, because of British anxieties over Mainland China going communist.

Not much considered in previous historical writing on Malaya has been the role of the Emergency in putting pressure on the British to grant Malaya political independence as the lesser of two evils. By the time of the assassination of Henry Gurney, the High Commissioner, on 6 October 1951 (Stockwell, 1995, Vol. I, p.xxix) Whitehall was galvanized into thinking that they had to get the Malayan population onside if they were to defeat the Communists. Accordingly, by the time General Templer was sent out to Malaya he arrived with the message, "The policy of the British Government is that Malaya should in due course become a self-governing nation."47 But as late as 1955, Anthony Eden and the Colonial Office were congratulating themselves on the fact that Malayan politicians understood the need to delay self-government until the end of the Emergency.48

In June 1955, the Communists changed the terms of reference dramatically by offering a cease-fire. They sent the letter (1 May 1955, CO 1030/319) to the United Planters of Malaya
Association (UPAM), and to senior members of the MCA -- S.H. Lee, Leong Yew Koh and Tan Siew Sin -- and the Malay newspaper, Utusan Melayu. Although it went unremarked at the time, the decision to send the letter to the UPAM as the representative of the colonial government highlights the capital-state collaboration that was so much at the heart of the Emergency. This first offer was rejected. But after the Alliance, a coalition of local politicians, won the elections on 27 July 1955 to represent Malayan interests, Tunku Abdul Rahman, the Chief Minister, made two significant moves. He wrote to the Secretary of State to inform him that Malaya wanted an early date set for independence (22 August 1955, CO1030/70 no.35). And he offered an amnesty to the Communists on 8 September 1955 (FO371/116941, no. 67/9). A perusal of documents from that period shows the British watching with consternation as Tunku appeared determined to end the Emergency, if that was what it took to obtain independence from Britain.\(^{49}\) The High Commissioner, Sir Donald MacGillivray, worried that in the negotiations Chin Peng, the Secretary General of the Malayan Communist Party would insist that the British provide a fixed date for independence.\(^{50}\) Even the appearance of negotiations between Chin Peng and Tunku horrified the British, who did not want Tunku to gain in prestige by negotiating with such an important foe. Finally, as a bribe to prevent Tunku from opening negotiations for independence with the Communists, one month before the start of the Baling Talks, Britain announced that the end of the Emergency was no longer a pre-requisite to self-government, thus opening the way to setting a date for independence.\(^{51}\) The importance of the Communist threat in obtaining concessions from the British can be seen in a secret inward telegram from Sir D. MacGillivray, the High Commissioner, to the Secretary of State for the Colonies (9 January 1956, CO 1030/73):

> [I]f the Alliance should be dissatisfied with the outcome of the London Conference they will not return to Malaya with the determination to rally the country in an all out effort against Communist terrorism and are more likely to seek a settlement with the Communists on terms which might in the end constitute a new and greater threat to internal security.

During the 24 hours before leaving Kuala Lumpur, Abdul Rahman [future Prime Minister] twice stated publicly that her Majesty's Government had already agreed in principle that the elected Ministers should be responsible for internal security and that the Alliance was going to London merely to work out the details. He must be aware that this advance was not being achieved on account of Chin Peng's conditional offer but had been obtained by the Alliance before the Chin Peng meeting took place. He would not wish it to appear that he was beholden to the Communists for this achievement or to allow them to get a measure of credit for it.

In his 7 January 1956 (CO 1030/73) reply to High Commissioner MacGillivray, the Secretary of State for the Colonies wrote that the Alliance would argue:
that a self-governing Malaya could deal more successfully with the communists than a Colonial regime running a country anxious to be rid of it. Acceptance of the Alliance view on this [self-government] might help to secure satisfactory agreements on defence and other important issues [emphasis mine; see Chapter Six for details] while refusal to go far enough with them on the question of self-government would not only seriously prejudice the chance of getting such agreements but also probably lead to refusal to cooperate in the administration of the government and to a serious deterioration in internal security. The sympathies of nearly all local members of the public service and police, the great majority of whom are Malays, would lie with the Chief Minister and his colleagues. Faced with a hostile public, we should soon have to concede in the most unhappy circumstances what we could earlier have granted with an air of generosity, the support of world opinion and the promise of loyal co-operation.52

The above passages show the importance of the Communists as a bargaining device by both the local elites and the colonial authorities. The local elites could threaten to throw their support behind the Communists, while the colonial authorities had to hope that the fear of yielding the advantage to the Communists would prevent the local elites from abandoning their alliance with the British. In essence, the Emergency became Malaya’s war of independence.

5.1.2 Written in (the) Blood

By the mid-fifties, the racial cleavages that divided the country had obscured the economic basis of the Emergency. Nicholas Thomas (1994, p.2) has argued that colonialism was never just about economics and politics but a cultural process. In Malaya, a war that started over the control of economic resources was fought almost primarily around the racist discourse of Orientalism that ultimately determined citizenship in the new nation-state. Traits from Orientalist stereotypes translated into criteria for citizenship. Since any government of Malaya needed to unite enough of the population to maintain control of the country, the conflict in Malaya now centred on the controversy over whom to accord citizenship rather than who would rule the country.53 The obvious solution, so deeply dreaded only a few years ago, was to create a Malayan identity -- a tall order in a political climate where the military strategy was to divide and ostracize groups based on race. Despite the public pronouncements on eligibility based on some kind of inherent trait, policy documents show that the British were quite aware that they would have to devise a strategy for forging a Malayan identity.54 The intellectual and political sophistication that undergirded the colonial right to rule was left relatively secure in the face of a continuing relationship in which an independent Malayan government would serve as the junior partner in the neo-colonial project after independence. Cultural hegemony appeared to have persuaded both
the colonizers and the colonized of the former's right to leadership. The important step then, was to exclude groups that might not comply with a neo-colonial future.

The strategy to define who belonged to the new nation-state was a process based on an absence: attributing certain traits to the Communists; those not possessing those traits would be technically eligible for citizenship. Orientalist stereotypes used to attribute blame and punishment in the Emergency crystallized in the identity being constructed for the future nation-state. In the manner of colonial discourse, these traits were seen as proof of moral inferiority, itself an ontological trait, thereby eliminating almost half the population for consideration of citizenship eligibility. More significantly, by focussing on an ontological basis for citizenship, the colonial authorities set the stage for a race-based political identity, that is, a state that is an essentialized domain of sovereignty (Partha Chatterjee, 1993). The political repercussions of this strategy of racial essentialism in creating national identity reverberate to this day. While the official criterion for citizenship rarely articulates essentialism, I am interested in the unspoken, but everpresent racial essentialism that undergirds the official criteria and frames any discussion on access to rights. I now discuss three overlapping Orientalist stereotypes that became embedded in the discourse of citizenship in Malaya.

Chief among the stereotypes was loyalty, or lack of it. The suspicion among the British and Malays was that the Chinese and Indians would never be loyal to Malaya. More subtly, the colonial authorities also tried to highlight the question of whether the Chinese could be loyal to anyone. An aspect of counter-insurgency that was important, and emphasized for more than its practical effectiveness, was the financial inducement to surrender or to turn Communists in. The testimonies of surrendered enemy personnel (SEPs) and captured enemy personnel (CEPs) were important in convicting other Communists; many cooperated in return for reduced sentences or immunity.55 Other than the timeliness of the information provided which led to increased effectiveness of forest operations, the key significance was the ability to sow dissent and insecurity between the Communist troops in the forest and their supporters outside. In practical terms, it created a socially fragmented population where people were rewarded for betraying each other. Perhaps the other message underlying these betrayals is that any cause that cannot induce sufficient loyalty to risk one's life for cannot be worth much. At a deeper level, crudely played up by the media, the acts of betrayal were used as propaganda to emphasize the innate untrustworthiness of Chinese, and by extension, Asians. By extension, many contemporary post-colonial governments still doubt the loyalty of the descendants of the 19th century immigrants. The message underlying the propaganda of the betrayals was that the Communists were not
fighting for freedom but for self-gain. Moral justification was an important part of justifying colonial rule as well as denying rights to the disempowered. In colonial Malaya, the undertone of moral inferiority was the main factor in implying that these were not people who deserved to rule. Political imperatives were therefore based on the much more fundamental moral imperative.

A natural quality that became the benchmark for citizenship eligibility in the new nation was courage, presumably in case the need ever arose for citizens to defend the homeland. When the High Commissioner, Gerald Templer, addressed the town of Tanjong Malim on 27 March 1952 to bully the inhabitants into providing information on the Communists, he said, "Have some guts and shoulder the responsibility of citizenship". This was addressed to a country of over a million stateless people. However, courage, in this context meant a submission to authority. When they did cooperate, the village representatives were described as "the six timid-looking representatives of the town [of Tanjong Malim]" (Straits Budget, 10 April 1952). On the one hand, courage for Asians in a colonial context meant submission to authority, on the other hand, submission only justified colonial contempt. In the face of technological superiority against the Communists, the moral superiority that undergirded the colonialists' right to rule made the rhetoric of courage the most hotly contested one in the battle for the minds and hearts of people. Moreover, depriving the opponents of fundamental civil rights made morality as a basis for rule even shakier and required rhetorical compensation. Destroying the reputation of the Communists for courage, and manipulating representation of motivations behind their deeds, became important in the re-presentation of Communists as enemies of the people rather than freedom fighters against colonialism and capitalism. Unfortunately for the British, under an earlier checklist of what constituted courage, many Communists were courageous beyond question during the Japanese Occupation. Several members, including the leader of the Malayan Communist Party, Chin Peng, were awarded the OBE after the war. As the most visible resistance to the Japanese, they could justifiably claim a right to rule themselves in the advent of the Japanese defeat. The state's propaganda organs argued that Communist activity during the Japanese Occupation was very minor. This disagrees with the memories of the local population and contrasted with the following private statement: "The Malaya [sic] Communist Party, ...comported themselves with courage and devotion to duty." At the same time A. H. Dickinson, the former Inspector General of Police, described the Malays as generally "unreliable". Dickinson assumed that the Chinese were pro-British during the war although it is more likely that they were anti-Japanese. In contrast, as I have shown in Chapter Three, the perceived unreliability of the Malays can be attributed to their perception that an alliance with
the Japanese was the best hope for freeing themselves from British rule. On the part of the British, denigrating the Malays reinforced the British belief that the Malays did not deserve to rule themselves.

I suggest that just as important in a war where state forces so vastly outnumbered the Communists in terms of weaponry and bodies, was to show that state forces were equally as courageous as their numerically and technically overwhelmed enemy. Courage, and its morally superior connotations, were an important part of the justificatory regime of waging and winning the war, and ultimately, Malaya. Moral superiority, rather than brute force, was also one of the arguments for colonialism, even if control did rest in the last instance on force. I make two arguments. First, citizenship, as defined by access to rights vis-a-vis the state, depends on the ability to defend spaces bounded to notions of self or community identity – what Irving Goffman, cited in David Ludden (1996, p.259) described as “territories of self”. Successful defence forces the state to accept the legitimacy of that identity. But where the boundaries of these territories of self lay depended on the subject’s race, class and gender. Second, I argue that whether the subjects physically defended or circumvented attacks on the boundaries of their territory was central to the inferences drawn as to whether their actions were courageous or criminal. In the colonial world scholars such as Ashis Nandy (1983, pp. 107-112) have claimed martial valour defined the right to rule, and thus, became the primary way for a subject population to redeem the honour lost through colonization. Martial valour, as I use it here, is defined by the courage to stand and defend one's territory of self. In turn, the distinction between courage and criminality was crucial as to whether a group was deemed worthy of the privileges of citizenship or not. During the peak decolonization period after WWII, colonial authorities were faced with many guerrilla insurgencies, which were outside their experience of the conventional battles Western armies excelled at. The hit and run tactics of anti-colonial guerrillas were deemed cowardly, and thus criminal. These criminal tactics were considered unworthy of any group aspiring to rule in the place of the colonialists. By the same token, women insurgents who ‘penetrated’ enemy lines rather than forced a breach in a battlefront were viewed with special abhorrence. The criteria for the courage of an action depended very much upon the subject’s identity.

Finally, it is also worth remembering that the British tried to impugn criminal, rather than political, aims to the Communists. In his study on criminality, Michel Foucault (1977, p.83) argued that those in power needed to destroy the perception of criminals as champions of the people so that the crime was seen not as a popular act, but as a transgression against the social
body. In Malaya, where once the Communists were seen as champions of the people during the Japanese Occupation, through government bribery and propaganda during the Emergency, they lost their place in a schema of glorification and blame. The struggle against property rights and lack of political rights was recast as a crime against the majority. And as Michel Foucault (1977, p.90) argues, by posing the criminal against the entire social body, punishment [of the criminal] becomes a defence of each individual. In Malaya, by conflating political dissenters with criminals, the colonial state argued that punishing or killing Communists and their supporters were legitimate actions to defend the majority. The Banishment Ordinance, initially enacted for criminal rather than political activities, was soon used on anyone suspected of being a Communist. The decision to refer to the Communists as CTs or Communist Terrorists, and the continued use of the unofficial term ‘bandit’, reflected the need to distance the Communists from any kind of political intent, especially anti-colonial intent. In fact, early strategies tried to link the Communists to Tongs, although there is nothing in the archives to suggest that this was ever the case: "Chinese S.S. [secret societies] date from the middle ages & are criminal, the remarkable thing is that the communists have not used them."63 Spencer Chapman, the British war hero and author of The Jungle is Neutral (1949), also made the distinction between the politically motivated Communists who fought with him against the Japanese and the Chinese bandit gangs that existed during the war. Recategorizing rebels as criminals was common across the Empire this negative form of rehabilitation was carried out as swiftly as in Malaya. Moreover, the punishment for Communist supporters such as burning villages, killing livestock and deportation, while harsh, generally stopped short of execution. By making the hardship economic, the colonial state voided the endurance of punishment of the romance of martyrdom. Criminalizing political dissent continues to plague postcolonial societies, most spectacularly in Argentina and Chile in recent times. Malaysia’s former deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim was convicted, and is facing further charges, of sexual misconduct and corruption because of a political conflict with Prime Minister Mahathir. Once again, the representation of political dissent as criminal, and therefore, immoral, deprives the act of legitimacy in the eyes of the public.

In trying to create a nationalist sentiment, the colonial authorities and the local elite were self-defeated at the start because certain sectors of the population had been singled out as troublemakers and essentially 'othered'; they were not part of natural/national heritage. This fear of each 'other' acquired greater resonance through the press and the state stressing the Emergency as part of the larger scheme in Communist China's conspiracy to take over Asia. But the strength
of the representation came from its foundation in earlier colonial discourses and the assumptions of Asian familiarity and acceptance of it. As Edward Said (1979, p.41) argued, Orientalism provided the vocabulary with which Europeans could discuss Asians with confidence. By late Empire, many Asians appeared to accept the same vocabulary. A more intriguing question would be to ask why these discourses had such a hegemonic hold on Asians themselves. Unfortunately, contemporary Malaysian politics suggests that the assumption of cultural hegemony was not misplaced. In Malaya, the hardening of national territorial boundaries combined with race-based criteria for citizenship became, to use Isabel Fonseca's (1996, p.218) expression, a kind of "cartographic incarceration" for millions of people. Victor Purcell (1954) in vain argued that Chinese opposition to their lack of rights in Malaya was not the same as support for the Communists. In contrast, Richard Winstedt (The Times, 9 September 1948) argued that treaties had been signed with the Malays, and not anyone else; therefore, only the Malays were eligible for citizenship in this new political entity. Winstedt is the author of the history of Malaya most often consulted. The central question in Malaya at the close of the Empire was not how to accommodate anyone other than the dominant group but whether they should even try. As early as 1946 the BMA suggested a three-fold policy: ten-year residency; assessment that the candidate had resigned all connections with other countries followed by the issue of a certificate of citizenship status. The difficulty lay in how the authorities would go about operationalizing the second criteria. But then, even today, few countries in the world know how to deal with the overlapping, and sometimes conflicting, loyalties of immigrants.

5.1.3 Constructing an uncivil society

Until now, I have talked about the social impact of colonialism in terms of the racial cleavages within Malaya and how this influenced the discourse of citizenship. Now I want to address the problems of the state-civil society relationship in a nation-state born under the repressive conditions of the Emergency. Where Chapter Four dealt with the obvious physical curtailment of freedom, I now discuss constitutional and legislative practices used by the colonial state to represent the repressive conditions as positive steps on the part of the state to maintain control. These practices resulted in two of the most important steps in stunting the creation of civil rights in Malaysia. Carol Breckenridge (1993, p.2) describes the task of postcolonial scholars as one of addressing the continuities across the political divide of independence. The colonial double-standard that prescribed one set of rules for the colonized and another for the colonizers based on racial traits continues in the social prescriptions that governments of many post-colonial
countries' deem mandatory for the functioning of their countries. This double-standard has survived the official end of colonialism as indigenous governments the world over embrace the stereotype that their people cannot be trusted with civil rights. The lack of freedom of speech in colonial Malaya was justified by arguing that unlimited freedom of speech as was the practice in England, in Malaya would result in triads and trade unions dominated by Communists. This suspicion was exemplified by the remark that they "definitely want to keep politics out of trade unionism". The British claimed that they did not ban the socialist paper the *Daily Worker* because it was ineffectual. However, like the *Malayan Monitor*, the *Socialist Worker* was also published in Britain, which made it difficult to apply the same censorship rules.

Templer coined the phrase "Battle for the Hearts and Minds" to emphasize that public relations were a key factor in the survival of the status quo. The objective of the media to further the agenda of the state sometimes led to Orwellian comedy as in the case of the three principles governing the preparation of talks that went on the air:

1) We are a government department and exist for the purpose of furthering the interests of the government and the policies laid down by governments ... or suggest that Radio Malaya or it's [sic] commentators do not fully support government's policy.
2) Must not appear biased whatever views we hold
3) Do not express our own opinions.

Contrary to the radio broadcasting agency Rediffusion's claims that it was not biased, its pro-government bias meant that workers with alleged connections to the Labour Party were dismissed. If we believe public opinion to be shaped by the media then not only was media reportage biased, but additionally, colonial civil servants wrote for and to the press on a regular basis. The Colonial Office acknowledged that most local papers, including the *Straits Times*, simply published what the Government gave them. They still do. The *Straits Times* (20 January 1950) justified the Government's faith by demanding that the British Government imprison the authors of the *Daily Worker* since in Malaya they would have been. When local politicians disagreed with the colonial authorities over the proportion of elected to appointed members of the legislature, the *Straits Times* obligingly left out embarrassing questions asked of the colonial government. The newspaper simply shifted its allegiance to the new government after independence. Local left-wing papers such as *Nan Chao Jit Pao* and *Mayfair News* were banned. The editor of the *Ming Sheng Pao* was arrested. Despite this evidence, it was still reported in Britain that there was no press censorship in Malaya. It is important to realize that this dissertation could not have been written in Malaya under the British, nor could it have been written today in Malaysia. The contemporary media collusion with the government deviates
little from the pattern of its behaviour at its inception. Current media repression by the government has extended to the Internet and satellite transmissions. During the protests over Anwar’s sacking and subsequent arrest, government programmers jammed satellite transmissions out of the country.\textsuperscript{73}

Silencing the opposition was an important part of the state-civil society relationship in Malaya and continues to this day. But it was also important to show the inherent fairness of the state to its critics. Hence, contemporary political detainees such as former deputy Prime Minister Anwar find themselves being tried on charges other than the obvious reason of falling out with a more powerful politician, the Prime Minister, in this case. The Communists understood the importance the colonial state attached to the appearance of fair play. Colonialism, as Nicholas Thomas (1994, p.2) has argued, was always energized by "a play of signs, metaphors and narratives." Maintaining the appearance of fair play was important in keeping up with the message of the moral imperative that marked the colonial right to rule. The Communists knew that the colonial authorities would sentence a person to death for opposing their rule but would first make a big display of the trial before hand. Thus, the Communists attempted to draw attention to the procedures available to political detainees to appeal their convictions. Defence counsels for the detainees were not allowed to put forward evidence for the detainee or cross-examine special service personnel who were giving evidence against them. Also, the Special Services Chief rather than a civilian directed the proceedings.\textsuperscript{74} The Internal Security Act introduced in 1960, and still in use today in Malaysia, allows detention without trial.

The best example of the use of the legal system to mask the colonial double standard of injustice at work remains the trial of Lee Teng Tai or Lee Meng the 'Grenade Girl'. The twenty-four year old Lee Meng was the communications coordinator for the MCP, an important position given the isolation of the various units (see Chapter Four). Her trial and subsequent conviction by the British judge rested on two things: her identification by surrendered Communists who were awaiting clemency as a function of their cooperation with the colonial authorities; and whether she was in possession of a grenade between 15 July 1948 and 30 September 1951.\textsuperscript{75} It is worth noting that in the recent Anwar Ibrahim trial, two of the state’s witnesses agreed to testify in return for clemency. The colonial Malayan judicial system meant that two assessors would try her and advise the judge on their decision. In the first trial, the two Asian assessors threw out the case. The judge ordered a retrial, and in the retrial the Asian assessor again found her innocent while the British assessor found her guilty. And the judge could have gone on ordering a retrial.
until he obtained the verdict that he wanted.\textsuperscript{76} Even the very conservative MCA pleaded for clemency.\textsuperscript{77} Despite the almost farcical miscarriage of justice, the colonial government insisted on going through the charade of a trial. But not by jury -- the High Commissioner claimed, "[a] shortage of suitable jurors with sufficient knowledge of English and a sufficient degree of responsibility."\textsuperscript{78} Robert Asprey (1992, p.572) commenting on Malaya in his global survey of guerrilla warfare, argues that although the repressive laws in Malaya "defied the principles of Western jurisprudence, they were needed." Why? The institutionalization of identity cards, seen as a positive step in Malaya towards controlling the population, was never abolished. In comparison, the move to abolish identity cards in Britain was described thus, "the passion with which this step has been urged, and the universal pleasure with which it will now be welcomed, are a healthy sign of the value we attach to freedom for its own sake" \textit{(Daily Telegraph, 22 February 1952)}. The idea on the part of colonial authorities, much like the current legal system in Malaysia and Singapore, rests on the appearance of justice rather than its provision; a system put in place to counteract the 'law of the jungle'. Perhaps what is more troubling is the widespread acceptance that this colonial system is still needed. The colonial legal system continues without being acknowledged as such, just as the Emergency, a watershed in Malaya's political life, carries with it the contradiction of not being acknowledged as Malaya's War of Independence.

5.2 MALAYA IN THE COLD WAR: TRANSLATING A NARRATIVE OF LOCAL STRUGGLE INTO A GLOBAL SIGN

The formal division of the globe into the two camps of the Cold War provided the perfect opportunity to reframe the Emergency in a heroic narrative favourable to the Malayan state. The Cold War provided a narrative of freedom-fighting that was all the more attractive because it was the position of the powerful West. Integrating one's nationalist myth into the trope of the Cold War allowed one to become a junior member of a powerful network that had many economic benefits to confer. But the point about any narrative is why it takes root when others do not. In this section I examine the use of narrative links between the Emergency and the Cold War to justify a domestic policy of repression of civil rights through the reference to a global communist threat.

5.2.1 Malaya as the Key Domino in the Free World

Despite America's birth in revolution and the iconic status attached to freedom-fighting, the revolutionary defiance in the Third World was not seen in quite the same favourable light.
Towards the middle of the Emergency, the British understood that the sceptre of imperial power was going to pass on to the new superpower. Since the Americans were seen as the most powerful player, they had to be made interested in the Emergency. As Bruno Latour (1987, p.113) argues, allies are recruited by showing them how one’s aims are necessary to the achievement of theirs. Latour (1987, p.115) described this recruitment strategy as “displacing” the goals of potential allies to come up with a common goal. This was done in the Malayan case by situating the British position within the network against Communism. The British struggle against the Malayan Communists was recast as the fight against Moscow and Peking (Beijing), and Malaya became the domino that must not fall if the rest of the world is to be safe from communism. As early as 1948 Washington had approved of arms shipments to Malaya to augment the fight against the Communists (Terrorists in Malaya, The Times, 27 August 1948). In attempting to reassure the commercial interests in Malaya that the Americans viewed Malaya as a high priority geopolitically, General Briggs said that Malaya had been put on the same priority as Korea. After all, Malayan rubber and tin were crucial factors in the Korean War and were the saving factors for the British in the Malayan Emergency in two ways. First, rubber and tin were essential to helping Britain pay off debts to the US. Second, the importance of rubber and tin to American industry helped Britain argue its case for American support in the Emergency. For the Malayan elite, the Cold War was a fortunate conjunction of events that allowed them to disguise their unusual situation of fighting on the side of the colonial rulers to suppress an anti-colonial uprising. Malaya began in the Cold War as a key domino, and one that did not fall. Because of this victory, its counter-insurgency tactics became adopted as a general model of counter-insurgency. Over time, even as insurgency waned in Malaysia, the state continued to justify its repressive regime through the generalized narrative of counter-insurgency that urged all states to be on the alert for the global menace of communism regardless of the context of simmering tensions such as race, religion or regionalism.

The MCP was not only aware of the opposing camps of the US and USSR, but they were also assessing the power struggle between old and new imperial powers. They showed a good grasp of geopolitics in their observations about Anglo-American rivalry in the form of parallel markets and the decline of earlier imperial powers and hoped for internal dissent within the Western camp. There was support for this view from the American journalist Edna Du Pree Nelson (Tin Soldiers of Malaya, Sunday Gazette, 22 January 1950). Du Pree Nelson argued that it was in the interests of the Colonial Government to institute some form of justice to the tin miners to prevent them from supporting the Communists. The context of the article was the
importance of tin to the Americans and why they should interest themselves in the conditions of its production. Du Pree Nelson can be seen as a liberal reformist rather than a Communist sympathiser, and I suggest that her article, while pro-capital, was challenging the colonial basis of managing such important commodities. Her article can be seen as a precursor of the new empire on the rise and the tensions between the aims of the new and old empires. The time lag between the replacement of one imperial power by the next meant that the two hierarchies were periodically in conflict over specific policies on the non-Western world although united in appearance against the communist threat.

In 1952, John Foster Dulles, US Secretary of Defence, arrived in Malaya to discuss the insurgency with Malcolm MacDonald, the Commissioner General for Southeast Asia (Daily Telegraph, 31 November 1952). The Americans were far more interested in Korea, and later Vietnam, but they too, saw Malaya as part of the grand strategy of China and the Soviet Union. In arguing for escalating the war in Korea, General James Van Fleet argued:

Unless the Chinese Reds will go away - unless they really mean peace for all Asia - we will only be postponing the casualty lists. So far I have seen no signs that the Reds have changed; I think they want to get out of the Korean War to build up their strength and shift their attack to places like Indochina and Malaya. This would only mean we would have to fight again some day against a stronger enemy in a place more to his advantage.  

(See Figure 5.1 Map of communist lines in Asia).

Donald Mackay's book, The Domino that Stood (1997), sums up the British policy at the time that sought to place Malaya's military struggle in the forefront of the war against communism on the grounds that if Malaya was lost, the rest of Asia would go communist. Malcolm Muggeridge (1952), in a series of articles about the Emergency, put the case succinctly:

Communist terrorism in Malaya is not an isolated phenomenon. It is part of a general Communist strategy, and directly related to the Korean War, the conflict in Indo-China and attempts to infiltrate Burma, India and Siam.

And later,

Thus it is not just a question of holding or losing Malaya, but of suffering a serious defeat in the global struggle between the free West and the enslaved East. Malaya is an integral part of the Western defensive system. If the dyke bursts, it will be more difficult to hold back the flood elsewhere.

The Colonial Secretary addressing the Federal Executive Council, K.L. on 1 September 1955, argued against the transfer of responsibility for defence to the independent government, saying that Malaya was "a key point in the free world's defence against the spread of Communism." In contrast, the Chief Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman argued that details of the internal arrangements should be determined locally by an elected Government with the minimum
of interference from outside. The position of Malaya, seen in the ancient world as a crossroads in Asia, was portrayed in government propaganda as the threat of a communist Malaya "across one of the world's main highways". It was also seen as the last barrier before the eastern hordes got to Australia and New Zealand; “Australia and New Zealand are directly menaced.” The Australians did not share this view. In private, the Australian cabinet voiced serious doubts that an insurgency of the Malayan sort could ever be quelled with troops. But the Australian government were drawn into an involvement with the Emergency in Malaya as a way of deflecting American criticism over their withdrawal from Occupied Japan. Finally, the outbreak of the Korean War forced the Australians into making a gesture of solidarity with the West in the form of sending troops to Malaya.

During the Cold War, many Asian countries, once seen as securely territorialized by the colonial powers, now once again became new territories to be colonized, as frontiers between the West and Communist Russia and China. A new imperium was being mapped onto the globe, and these recently independent countries constituted a danger zone because they were a transitional space between the two global powers (US and USSR). The insurgent campaigns were not only a threat in themselves but seen as part of a larger take-over conspiracy by the Communists powers. Third World forest-based insurgencies became the symbol of this unterritorialized world. The discourse of the Cold War in Asia was a transparent translation of the discourse of colonialism in that Asia was a space, real and imaginary, that had to be territorialized by a Western power. The US Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, on a visit to Malaysia and Singapore to discuss troop pull-out from Vietnam, said, "Were we not to remain steady on course, the world situation could disintegrate into the law of the jungle and utter chaos." Interestingly, where the Americans saw the Russians behind every challenge to their hegemony, the British in Malaya, if not at Whitehall, saw the Chinese behind every challenge. Communists in Malaya were no longer just bandits, they were servants of Moscow and Peking, and the evil was on the scale of a global conspiracy rather than a local challenge to power. In many post-colonial countries, claims to rights by disempowered groups would be conveniently elided behind the theory of a global communist conspiracy. In the final section of this chapter, I look at how the media addressed the problem of conflating all contests and conflicts in the nested narratives of the Jungle War within the Cold War.
Figure 5.1  General Van Fleet's projection of Communist bases in Asia. Source: *Daily Telegraph*, 19 June 1953.
5.2.2 Independence and Postcolonial Dilemmas

We became a state without the pre-requisites of a nation -- a common language, common loyalties and a common psychological make-up -- to bring about that unity which we all desire. (Yang di Pertuan Negara, Singapore Affairs, *Malaya*, February 1960, p.15)

Malaya became an independent country on 31 August 1957 even though the state was still at war with the Communists. The governing political party in Malaya was a multiracial coalition, the Alliance Party, as opposed to a single multiracial party. It was led by the ruling Malay organization UMNO with a proportion of cabinet seats reserved for the other two parties representing certain sectors of the Chinese and Indian populations. (Today less than a quarter of cabinet positions are reserved for the MCA and MIC.) In 1960, the British unilaterally declared the Emergency over although a relatively low-level insurgency continued into the 1980s. The official version of the twelve-year Emergency was the event that demarcated the colonial from the post-colonial era. The stereotypes that were used to determine which Asians were reliable and which were not were transposed to a framework for deciding who belonged in the new country and who did not. Malaya's path to independence and its consequences illustrate many of the dilemmas of post-colonial nation-states. The Government that inherited power from the British had the distinction of fighting with their colonizers against the anti-colonialists. It is worth noting that many of the conditions the Communists fought for came into being as blood money paid out to bribe the population to support the Government. In some cases, documented in Chapter Four, it was literally blood money, as peasants were bribed into betraying the Communists in return for cash or land. I have also shown in this chapter that Britain was forced into agreeing to independence before the cessation of fighting with the Communists because of the fear of the Alliance, the nationalist party, deserting them in favour of the Communists. Yet because the life of a nation is always anchored in its past, so important an event had to be reinscribed into the master narrative of nationalism. Postcolonial nation-states always face the difficulty of how to write about their recent historical past. This is usually done through a heroic narrative of freedom fighting. The same option was not available in Malaya as elite mobilization was behind their colonial rulers rather than against them. In addition, their position was undermined by the fear that what was given could be taken away. Malaya's defence continued to be in the hands of Commonwealth troops and the British constructed detailed battle plans to unseat governments that did not fall in line with the West.

In the event of newly independent states not cooperating with their former colonial rulers, Britain had plans to overthrow the government. The Ministry of Defence suggested that the British consider "suspending the Constitution". This operational plan was code-named
CHARLIE, envisaged "widespread disturbances and general strikes with locally enlisted personnel in the armed Forces and the Police unreliable for all duties." CHARLIE provided three scenarios with different degrees of non-cooperation by the local population including the government in power. The degree of cooperation as with all colonial scenarios was considered to be related to race. In an interesting correlation between race and alliance, the British assumed that the Eurasian population would fall in line with them rather than the Asian population. The British were also planning for different launching stages for their attacks on Malaya and/or Singapore because the usual standby of Ceylon was no longer an option. The Ceylonese government were angered by the British use of Ceylon to launch their attacks on Egypt during the Suez debacle in 1956. Henceforth, Ceylon would only agree to the use of their bases as a launch pad for attacking another country if the country in question asked for British help.

Newly independent governments inherit institutions but not the basis of legitimacy. Moreover, inheriting the institutions of governance without the enunciating capacity for legitimacy has been a central problematic of postcolonial governments. They could no longer depend on racial superiority as the grounds for governance, worse still, they were trying to gain legitimacy in the teeth of a hundred years of racial discourse that denigrated them. In other words, they would have to write a history to authorize their power to govern. How does one go about erasing the "dreadful secondariness" as Edward Said (1989, p.207) describes it, that colonized cultures were stigmatized with? Somehow, the new Malayan leaders had to rewrite the Emergency as a story of their sacrifice, their resistance and their leadership. The advent of the Cold War gave the Malayan state a global trope within which they could frame the Emergency in a light favourable to them. As Shahid Amin (1995) pointed out, in the wake of victory, competing interpretations of the past fade in public discourse – such was the case of the Malayan Emergency and the Cold War.

5.2.3 Malaysia as a Model of Counter-Insurgency
Before discussing Malaya's role as a counter-insurgency model, I need to state what I mean by insurgency in the Cold war. An insurgency can consist of civil disobedience and disturbances supported by an armed guerrilla campaign with the objective of overthrowing the government in power. Both Thompson (1966) and Sarkesian (1975) stress the importance of the presence of a powerful external ally. It has been suggested that until the experience of the Malayan Emergency, authoritative works on the structure and dynamics of insurgency had always been written by the insurgents (Paget, 1967, p.8). Yet Paget's own model of the three phases of a
counter-insurgency campaign is actually a reverse reading of Mao Tse Tung's (Johnson, 1975, p.359) three stages of insurgency: the period of the enemy's strategic offensive, the period of the enemy's strategic defensive, and the insurgents' counter-offensive. Stages one and two were the periods of guerrilla warfare and attrition, whereas stage three was the final assault (by then open warfare). Mao's strategy was premised on the notion that the enemy would always be materially and professionally superior. But with intelligence based on the cultivation of the peasant allies, it was possible to mitigate the handicaps through the element of surprise in ambushes, concentrating superior numbers at selected points while avoiding unfavourable engagements. The fundamental problem with this strategy was how to create the network of intelligence required, and it was here that Mao conceived the idea of the population as the intelligence-collecting network. Mao identified seven potentially exploitable issues for creating mass support and selected the contradictions inherent in an agrarian society as the best hope in the Chinese context (Johnson, 1975, p.360).

Malaya was an example of a Communist-inspired insurgency, but what appears to have made it the model of counter-insurgencies is that it would be the last time after World War II that the West would have such an unqualified victory. By the same token, Chalmers Johnson (1975, p.357) in his essay, "The Third Generation of Guerrilla Warfare", omits the Malayan and Philippines examples because he felt that as defeats of the insurgents, they contributed negatively to the theory of guerrilla warfare. Sarkesian (1975, p.375) claimed that it was a unique example in recent times of a colonial power defeating an insurgency. The subsequent chequered economic history of the Philippines meant that it was unpersuasive as an example of an unqualified victory. And victory breeds its own narrative. What is the most striking is the way victors are remembered. Because the British defeated the insurgents in Malaya, even a commentator as liberal as John Ralston Saul (1992, pp. 217-218) can cite the example of the New Villages in Malaya as a successful counterpoint to the American attempts in Vietnam. In time, a local example became bound up in a narrative of anti-communism that allowed governments to justify repressive domestic policies as a preventive security measure.

It is worth recounting again the reasons why the Communists lost in Malaya. The most significant reason for their defeat is that they were a racially-based movement in a racially divided country. Thus, they were never supported by the majority of the population and never got to the second stage of Mao's model. They were fighting in a small country and lacked a neighbouring country that supported them. Thailand's initial neutral stance switched to a hostile one with the advent of the Cold War and American aid. The above reasons have been
cited by various commentators—Thompson (1966), Paget (1967), Sarkesian (1975), Asprey (1992)—but I would add the additional factor of timing. The Vietnam War coincided with the civil rights movement—it could be argued that it had a synergistic relationship with the movement—and in part, it put pressure on American elites to withdraw forces from Vietnam. The Communists in Malaya had no such powerful ally in the West to plead their case, and external moral support can be crucial in the case of a small country mounting an insurgent war. Throughout the chapters, I have listed isolated unions and individuals who protested the treatment of the Malayan population as a matter of conscience, but there was no systematically organized protest. In any case, the Malayan campaign survived imaginatively to become the model used in Vietnam, and less significantly, by the British in Kenya and Cyprus (Paget, 1967,p.78). The Kenyan campaign drew on the same strategy to set up new villages, but it was marked by a different racialized discourse in which the Mau Mau were seen as sub-human enemies. The popular novel from that period *The Hunt for Kimathi* (1958) describes the Mau Mau as cunning, vicious and given to mutilating their victims. In a letter to the *Daily Telegraph* Elspeth Huxley (1 November 1952), the author of the *The Flame Trees of Thika* (1957) wrote, "Jomo Kenyatta, it seems to me, is in some respects a small-scale African Hitler. I do not say that his evil genius is as great as Hitler's (or that the Kikuyu can compare with the Germans); it is, however, of the same order." She went on to say, "He [Kenyatta] differs in one respect: Hitler was an ascetic, Kenyatta was not." By a bizarre extension of racial logic, the man who exterminated six million Jews and caused the death of millions of other people was seen in a more favorable light than a man and a people who simply wanted rights in their own country. In the same manner, Paget’s (1967) analysis of Britain’s campaign in Cyprus is marked by a differently nuanced racial discourse. He argues that Britain had a more difficult time there because they were faced by a "sophisticated European insurgent force" (Paget, 1967, p.142). While I do not agree with Paget’s subtly racist claim that Cypriots were worthier opponents because they were European, I suggest that race made a difference in the claims the insurgent force, as Europeans, could make on the sympathy of the Western public, thus, allowing for a more effective public relations campaign for the insurgents’ point of view.

The counter-insurgent war is distinguished from conventional war by the sporadic nature of the fighting as a function of the terrain. The key role of terrain in insurgency made tropical forests easily identifiable with insurgencies. The Emergency in Malaya provided the model for a counter-insurgency campaign achieving prominence because it was copied by the Americans in Vietnam. In time, the Malayan experience translated through the experience of the Vietnam War
(in both cases from the perspective of the West and its client governments) returned to Malaysia as the generalized counter-insurgency model used to justify government repression. I will now address the three areas of the counter-insurgency model that most affected state-civil society relations:

- A comprehensive and integrated intelligence and propaganda apparatus including psychological warfare
- Defence of strategic hamlets
- The use of forest aboriginal populations as vigilantes for the state

As long as dissent existed, many governments from South Vietnam to Argentina would use one or all of the above counter-insurgent tactics.

5.2.3.1 Intelligence and Counter-insurgency

The Federation will face a serious subversive threat, stemming not so much from a defeated and exposed Malayan Communist Party as from China itself. This threat is already mounting (e.g. in the Chinese schools), and the intelligence machine must be ready to switch on to the new target as affairs develop. Plans for intelligence to find a permanent role in structure of counter-insurgency for which government must start to build up coordinating machinery.

The inevitable interlocking of defence, internal security and external affairs means that intelligence service in effect serves all three sides of government such as Thai-Malay border problem, communist activities outside Malaya which comes into the intelligence machine and has a bearing on local affairs. Hence the need to begin transfer of responsibility to mean as little change and to secure Her Majesty's interest with regard to defence and external affairs. 99

In fact, the armed forces remained responsible to the High Commissioner and the Secretary of Defence rather than the Federation Government, a situation that was to influence the context of Malaya's next political struggle – the Konfrontasi with Indonesia. I have already devoted some space to describing the colonial government's intelligence and propaganda apparatus in Malaya in Chapter Four. It must be said here that the Communists in Malaya would have lost the propaganda war even if they had access to a wider readership due to the turgidity of their prose. 100 But less frequently considered in the annals of counter-insurgency history is the function of psychological profiles that got its start with the American psychologist Lucien Pye. He arrived in Malaya in 1952 sponsored by the US State Department to carry out what became considered by counter-insurgency experts as his path-breaking study on the psychology of the insurgent. 101 Pye felt that his interviews of surrendered Communists would be valuable for "understanding more about the appeal for Communism for a Chinese audience but also in studying the pattern of thought that Chinese employ in approaching politics in general." 102 Pye's
subsequent essentialist conclusions conflated ideology with morality and lacked even a simple consideration of geopolitics. Perhaps, in the end, the psychologist's study said more about the psychologist than his research subjects. It may also be symptomatic of the reasons for American failure in Vietnam if this was part of their model of a counter-insurgency. Pye’s failure to understand even Whitehall’s hardly progressive position on independence is breathtaking in the light of the objectives of his study, that is, to shed light on why people were revolting. Pye said that “he came away with the very strong impression that the greatest pressure for any form of Malayan Independence comes from London, and that this pressure is rather embarrassing to all Asian elements of significance.”

Pye went on to suggest that the Chinese train of reasoning saw that if Britain withdrew, they were in the best position to take over because of their economic strength. The Indians wanted independence because, with their better education, they would be in line for high level posts, and the Malays wanted independence so that they could expel the Chinese. Pye’s lack of neutrality and his total identification with the British can be best described in his own words:

[T]he very warm reception I received has led me to identify myself with all the activities and problems of Government, and I find that it has even influenced my language to the extent that I am constantly using the term "we" when discussing Government operations.

Pye’s bias would simply be commonplace for the colonial period were it not for the importance of his work to future counter-insurgency operations. Robert Thompson (1966) in the monograph now considered a classic by counter-insurgent experts described Pye’s work as a classic and a key to understanding the mind of the (Chinese) insurgent. He subsequently went on to author numerous works explaining various Asian mindsets to the West and has been honoured for his work in international relations theory.

Examples of the way he essentialized the characteristics he observed as based on race can be seen in such works as The Spirit of Chinese Politics, Chinese Negotiating Style and Asian power and politics: the cultural dimensions of authority. The sociologist Irene Gendzier, who studied the influence of social scientists in America’s foreign policy in the Third World, cites Pye as one of the key figures. She also makes the broader argument that Pye’s essentializing of Asians impacted on development policies imposed on the Third World, a subject I discuss in greater detail in Chapter Six. These essentialized profiles of Asians, a latter-day form of Orientalism embedded in development policy, became part of the corporate identity of the Third World as seen by the First. Pye’s work should be seen as part of the overall build-up of the intelligence network during the Emergency which became a standard aspect of counter-insurgency operations everywhere: it might also be
added, the symbol of most repressive regimes. J.P. Cross (1971) shows the impact of Lucien Pye's research when he argues that before the Second World War, the main aim of war was territory; afterwards it was the hearts and minds of men.\textsuperscript{108}

5.2.3.2 Rural populations and strategic hamlets

If Mao developed the classic insurgent warfare model, most counter-insurgent sources cite Robert Thompson's *Defeating Communist Insurgency* (1966) as the classic counter strategy model. Thompson developed his model from his experience in the Malayan Emergency where he was Director of Intelligence. In Thompson's model, the 'victim' country invites a friendly power to help it suppress the insurgents. First, a small area is seized, held and cleansed. The cleansing operation is known as depth penetration and involves going after real (or imagined) insurgents and destroying them. Chapter Four described this as spatial purification. This area then becomes the springboard for expanding into other areas. Insurgents can be grouped into three categories: village guerrillas; regional soldier, half soldier and half civilian; main force soldier, that is, regular fighting force. The last is battle hardened, but because he [sic] easily blends into the local population out of uniform, being ethnically of the same group, identification becomes a problem. Sarkesian (1975, p.17) has provocatively argued that Malaya's rural areas were not unterritorialized from the state's point of view because of the extensive pro-government estate system and its highly controlled population. By eventually forcing the Communists into the forests, the government created a siege situation in the forests with the New Villages/strategic hamlets under guard. In Thompson's model of counter-insurgency, rural populations needed 'pacification' not justice.

Inherent in Thompson's model is the role of racial difference to distinguish between the insurgent and counter-insurgent. This dimension combined with the Maoist strategy of creating bases in the rural areas because that is where the power of the state would be weakest (in Mao's formulation of an agrarian context). Not surprisingly, rural populations automatically were treated as insurgents.\textsuperscript{109} Additionally, the half-soldier half-civilian category has been used to justify the treatment of rural populations as potential enemies of the state until proven innocent (see Chapter Four, Section 3.4). As understood by counter-insurgent experts, the core of the insurgent model lies in establishing the main force units and bases in inaccessible terrain. The area is considered 'lost' when the insurgents cannot be dislodged from the area; in other words, they have seized power and are no longer insurgents. Since insurgencies were as much political
as well as military operations, they needed people to achieve their goals. J.P.Cross (1971, p.323) described a forest-dweller in the following terms:

Nobody in his senses would live in the jungle for [sic] choice. Those who live there do so for a good reason. Either they are there because there is nowhere else to go, and in this category I class the flotsam and jetsam of migratory civilizations such as the aborigines in north Malaysia, or they are there because of certain pressures that operate against them living in a normal village. But for whatever reason people live in the jungle, these are the people who are used by our enemy in their unrelenting struggle against us, against law, against order.

Third World governments and their Western advisers tended to treat rural populations, especially if a racial difference existed, as ‘other’ to the citizen of the nation-state. The anxieties of Western powers and their indigenous client governments during the Cold War were displaced onto tropical forests as the sites of insurgency. It is important to stress here that the power base of the insurgents had to be in populated areas, even if it was rural. Forests could provide refuge but not support.

5.2.2.3 Forest Aboriginal Populations

Finally, the counter-insurgency concept of controlling indigenous forest populations was seen as key to obtaining intelligence on training camps and supply dumps. In the late stages of the counter-insurgency, aboriginal populations were to be used as a permanent surveillance screen at the frontier to harass the Communists who had been driven into the forests (Thompson, 1966). Early in the Emergency in Malaya, the colonial authorities tried moving aboriginal populations out of the forests. The result was disastrous. Almost five thousand out of a population of, at the most, fifty thousand died of various minor contagious diseases (Harper, 1997). The colonial authorities then moved the Orang Asli back into the forest and constructed forts deep in the forest to keep the Communists out. Troops were also stationed in the forts as a defensive measure. Initially, both the Communists and the state used Orang Asli trackers to guide them in the forest (Noone, 1972; Leary, 1989). The relationship between the Orang Asli and the state was, and still is, a contentious and complex one. The British Adviser on Aborigines, as the Orang Asli were then called, Major P.D.R Williams-Hunt, created a scandal when he criticized the colonial government for the way they used the aboriginal populations as pawns in their power struggle. He also documented various cases of abuse of tribal peoples by both Malay and British troops. In contrast, Williams-Hunt suggested that the Communists paid fairly for what they took from the Orang Asli. His criticism infuriated both the Malay elite and the colonial
authorities that were already suspicious of his allegiance. (Williams-Hunt was married to a Temiar woman.) The historian Tim Harper (1997) has argued provocatively that the cooperation between the Orang Asli and the Malaysian state is more important in appearance than in substance. In a political situation where citizenship and territorial ownership depend on race, the Malaysian state was eager to claim the Orang Asli, as the most obvious indigenes, for its side. The Malaysian state is eager to appropriate any symbols of an originary discourse for their side. Today, the Orang Asli are counted in the category of bumiputera, or ‘sons of the soil’, alongside the Malays.

Certainly, although Thompson and the Americans in Vietnam have attempted to use forest tribal populations as agents of the state, the efficacy of this strategy has rarely been proven. And the various vicious backlashes against tribal groups that have sided with the losers provide sobering evidence that tribal groups should beware of throwing in their lot with unstable governments. By using aboriginal groups as pawns in national power struggles, the state frequently set up a process of nested ‘othering’, whereby the aboriginals are the ‘other’ to settled rural populations that may be contesting the state’s right to control their resources. In Malaysia, the descendants of the Orang Asli who once aided the state in their struggle against the Communists are now embroiled with the state in a new conflict over the control of forest resources in East Malaysia. Unfortunately, the Malaysian state is imposing the same strategy perfected during the Emergency to quell dissent. This includes news blackouts and arrest without trial on the grounds that forest resources are an issue of sovereignty that brooks no debate.

5.3 KONFRONTASI AND THE POLITICS OF MEMORY

I have tried to show that the military struggles that took place in the Malaysian rainforest were implicated in Malaya/Malaysia's struggles to achieve a postcolonial identity. Yet, while its insurgent threats were logically harboured in the forest, there were times when it became convenient to use the forest to link other threats to Malaysia’s sovereignty by virtue of a common location. This was the case of the political and military confrontation with Indonesia between 1963-65 over the formation of Malaysia. So far I have examined the state’s efforts to construct, translate and transmit an official version of the Emergency. This section examines the first large-scale attempt by the state to appeal to a collective memory of the Emergency to unite the Malaysian population in the face of an external challenge to the foundation of the Malaysian nation-state. I then discuss how the state manipulated memories of the Emergency to flesh out
their propaganda to rally opposition to the Indonesian challenge, in large measure by emphasizing the site of the military struggle – the forest. In particular, I address how the narrative of Malaysian nationalism was reconstituted in the face of contesting and overlapping claims to identity in the context of the post-colonial period. The Konfrontasi, as it was referred to, highlighted the problem that frequently arises in the case of teleology of national inheritance associated with absolute space. Since nations are imagined communities, there are bound to be overlapping claims to the space associated with different nations (Boyarin, 1995, p.17). Isabel Fonseca (1996, p.217) has pointed out that “at a border, somebody will always remember a different map.” Sovereignty, as we have seen in the last chapter, is not a unilateral process. It requires recognition from others.\(^{112}\)

5.3.1 A War of Minor Differences

Malaysia came into being on 16 September 1963 comprising Peninsular Malaya, Singapore and British North Borneo, that is, the territories of Sabah and Sarawak (see Figure 1.1, p.3). The British considered it a logical step because they had ruled all the above territories (including Brunei) under a similar administrative framework (Malaysia: The New Nation, 1963). Trade, commerce, industry, political and military organization was developed along similar lines in all five territories. In the first section of this chapter, we saw how the British recognized that with colonialism in retreat globally, the pragmatic step would be for the British to leave voluntarily rather than jeopardize their trade and investments in the region in an unpopular protracted struggle against local nationalists. Official British withdrawal from Malaya in 1957 had taken away a major platform of the Communist cause by leaving the governance of the country in the hands of an indigenous pro-Western Government.\(^{113}\) The British reasoning behind the creation of Malaysia was to create a nation-state large enough to fill the power vacuum left by their departure. (Brunei opted out of this arrangement.) This policy coincided with the aspirations of Malay nationalists who harked back to a romanticized past of the Malay Malacca Sultanate in the 15th and 16th century (Malaysia: The New Nation, 1963).\(^{114}\) And by the same rationale of romanticizing a racially united past, Singapore was excluded from the new nation-state of Malaysia in 1965 to preserve the Malay majority.\(^{115}\) Malaysian propaganda described the rationale for the merger thus:

The territories of Malaysia constitute one natural [italics mine] homeland. The physical contiguity of the territories is fairly reasonable although a stretch of sea separates the Malay peninsula from the Borneo territories. Borneo lies some 450 miles to the East of Singapore.
They do not have the climatic range and variation of the United States of America or the U.S.S.R. In fact they all share a common equatorial hot-wet climate, a soil rich in mineral wealth and a terrain covered with equatorial virgin jungle where man's labour has not converted it for the cultivation of tropical crops like rubber, pepper, coconut and rice. The natural resources of the Malaysian territories are happily complementary to one another for the needs of a great state which has ambitions of taking off into modern industry and an advanced economy. Malaysia produces some of the foremost sinews of modern industry -- rubber, tin and oil. *(Malaysia: The New Nation Battle, 1963)*

In the wake of Malaysia's creation, Indonesia's President Sukarno immediately announced his disapproval of this new political entity and manifested his disapproval by a military campaign and economic boycott. On the Malaysian side, Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman stated that the objective of Malaysia was to "be an example to the rest of the world, in that so many men of so many racial origins can live at peace and goodwill with one another. And not only that, but we can work together and build a happy and prosperous and peaceful country." **President Sukarno, on the other hand, in stating his opposition to the creation of Malaysia, justified his opposition by arguing that "Malaysia was created by the British to encircle Indonesia" and thus, was "endangering the Indonesian revolution."** There was some justification to his fears because Allied forces had used Japanese prisoners of war to suppress Indonesian nationalists *(Poulgrain, 1998, p.63)*. Greg Poulgrain *(1998)* argues that Malaya and Britain had indeed provoked Indonesia. His thesis rests on two complex arguments that I will try to summarize. His first argument is that because the Communist-dominated Sarawak People's Party (SPP) was in danger of winning any vote in Sarawak, the British deliberately instigated a rebellion in Brunei so that the violence would spill over into Sarawak. This would give them an excuse for suppressing the SPP. Although it might seem doubtful that the British would risk unrest in its prize possession, Brunei, in fact, given the size of Brunei, it would not have been difficult to quell unrest there. Second, Poulgrain claims that the British supported an early coup against Sukarno. In both cases, the British intent was to topple Sukarno, or at least, isolate him from potential left-wing allies such as the SPP.**

The issue of who was defending Malaysia, and for whom, was at the centre of Indonesia's justification for aggression. Indonesia's position was that its military incursions were not a violation of sovereignty because the real issue was whether Malaysia was independent or not. If not, then there was no sovereignty to violate. Underlying the accusations on both sides were two things. First, Indonesia claimed that Malays in Malaysia and Indonesia were of the same racial group, and hence the territories of both ought to belong to one country (based on early Malay and British claims that Malaya was for Malays). And Dr. Dato Ismail, the Malaysian Minister for
Home Affairs and Justice, had stated that, "Indonesia is the home of our ethnic, religious and cultural kin" (Mezerik, 1965, p.5). Sukarno went on to argue, "I myself am convinced that the people of Malaya feel themselves as Indonesians, belonging to Indonesia and as one of us" (Mezerik, 1965, p.10). Second, the subtext to the dispute over sovereignty lay in the way the two countries had achieved independence. Here, Malaysia's particular dilemma of having actually supported their colonial rulers against an anti-colonialist struggle made their position a delicate one. The Malaysian Government, faced with Sukarno's challenge to the relationship between racial identity and territorial space, took the high road in their public response to the Indonesian confrontation. The language used in Malaysia's defence continually stressed their patience and restraint when being baited by the Indonesians. Given the Malaysian claims of an ontological relationship between race, nation and territory, the Indonesian claims posed more of a challenge to Malaysia's self-defined identity than the Communists, and philosophically, needed more explanation to refute.

5.3.2 Narrating the Konfrontasi

In September 1964, Malaysia formally complained to the UN of Indonesia's aggression in the light of paratrooper landings northeast of the town of Labis in the state of Johore (Figure 5.2). These had followed numerous incidents of aggression by Indonesia. Prior to the Labis incident, Indonesian paratroopers landed at Kukup, Pontian Kechil and near Benut on August 17, 1964 (Indonesia's National Day). The choice of the date was no doubt meant to reflect on the substance of Indonesia's challenge to Malaysia's independent nation-state status. Twenty-seven of the force of 108 were said to be Malaysian Communist Chinese. The plan was for the Indonesian paratroopers to rendezvous in the forest on Gunong Pulai to establish a guerrilla training camp for dissident Malaysians. They were then to move on to the forests of Gunong Blumut in Central Johore. During the firefight with Malaysian security forces, the Indonesians escaped into the forest losing their pursuers. The Labis landing also took place in the forest, in this case in North Johore. The Malaysian government emphasized that Labis was a "trouble spot" during the Emergency, and it was believed that Labis was chosen for that reason. They also stressed that of the 75 troops landed, 21 were Malaysian Communist Chinese. The Indonesian force that was supposed to land at Labis crashed at take-off. The second attempt successfully dropped its human cargo but not its cargo of supplies needed by Indonesian troops to survive. One cargo was dropped close to an estate manager's house and quickly captured, the second was dropped so deep in the forest it was never found. Moreover, many of the paratroopers were injured hampering the achievement of their military objectives. The attempts by the Pontian and Labis forces to rendezvous were unsuccessful as they were killed as they
emerged from the forest looking for food. The Malaysian government reported: "Vigilantes did much to ease the work of security forces." Government propaganda emphasized the support of vigilante groups to show that the Malaysian population was behind their government. Another group of Indonesians attempting to land in West Johore was killed when they were impeded in their escape by the dense mangrove swamps east of the Kukup Peninsula. Captured Indonesians later said that that had been their fourth attempt to land in Malaysia. The Indonesians made another attempt on 24 December 1964 to set up a training camp in forests of northern Perak. The Indonesian incursions appeared to be poorly planned with little thought given to the survival needs of the force once they landed. Moreover, paratroop drops were often accompanied by injuries that pointed to poor training.

Figure 5.2 Sites of major Indonesian incursions on Malaysian territory. Modified from *Indonesian Aggression against Malaysia*, 1965.
Indonesia attempted numerous incursions over the next two years. Most land incursions in Peninsular Malaysia took place in urban areas although with echoes of the Emergency, caches of arms and explosives were supposedly found on a rubber estate near Pontian. The frontier between Kalimantan and the British-supported territories is almost 1450 km long enveloped in dense forests, and the real concentration of fighting took place along this frontier. Again, thick foliage made it hard to sight the enemy. In the days following the declaration of Malaysia out of the union of Malaya, Sabah and Sarawak, Indonesian incursions across the disputed border increased. Incursions in the disputed regions of Sabah and Sarawak, especially the latter, were far more numerous, although far less publicly obvious, than in Peninsular Malaysia. Enemy groups that successfully penetrated the Malaysian side were sometimes captured or killed as they wandered lost in the forests trying to find their way back into Kalimantan, such as groups operating outside Tawau and Serudong in Sabah. Their poor condition was frequently exacerbated by lack of food. Commonwealth troops also planned routine, extended and expensive forest patrols to promote the idea of occupation by the Malaysian state. General Walker, the commanding officer in East Malaysia boasted, "The jungle belonged to us. We owned it -- we dominated it -- we conquered it" (James and Sheil-Small, 1971, p.130).

The towns at greatest risk of being 'invaded' were the ones on the border of Sabah and Sarawak such as Long Pasia, in Sabah, which was surrounded by forest and only ten kilometres from the Indonesian border. Captured Indonesians were said to have been recruited on pain of imprisonment. Malaysian security forces were then sent to live in these remote towns and villages such as Pa Bangar in Sarawak which had been attacked by Indonesians in retaliation for the destruction of an Indonesian machine gun post. A Chinese village outside Merutai was robbed to provide supplies for the Indonesians. In areas where territorial control is uncertain, psychological markers of power take on added significance. So for example, the northern east-west highway in Peninsular Malaysia has checkpoints and searchlights trained from the lonely outposts strung along the mountain roads, tenuous markers of state power. East Malaysia also has roadblocks that no longer exist in West Malaysia, although they were common when I was growing up. Borderlands are bufferlands: areas where no one is quite certain where the power of one state ends and another begins. In Chapter Four, I argued that the incipient Malayan state had to contend with the vast internal borderlands of the rainforests where their control was inconsistent. The frontier was now imaginatively relocated to East Malaysia. In the contest over the borderlands with Indonesia, the political border and the rainforests coincided to create a
shadowy frontier that was the apposite physical backdrop to a war of unstable identities and minor differences.

Much of the descriptions of fighting in the forests of Borneo are similar to those described in Chapter Four and for that reason will not be repeated here. But in the next few pages I want to show how a narrative link is built between the Konfrontasi and the Emergency to fit in with the state’s political agenda. Security depended on each individual and had to be high at all times because "in jungle warfare there can be no front in the accepted sense" (James and Sheil-Small, 1971, p.130). Again, the scenario of an intangible frontline and shadowy enemy was seen as a function of fighting in the forest. The link seemed apparent even to commentators on the Indonesian side such as J.A.C. Mackie (1974, p.263) who described the Konfrontasi as an atmosphere of “emergency”. Almost all the reports of contacts between Indonesians and security forces fighting for Malaysia report exchange of fire for only a few minutes usually between 15-20 minutes. The longest fight seems to have gone on for two hours. Unlike the Emergency, where books on the subject referred to the forest fighting but rarely described it in detail, the three books written on the Konfrontasi from a Western perspective are painstaking in their recreation of the conditions of jungle warfare. In contrast, descriptions of forest fighting during the Emergency used in Chapter Four were taken from archival sources. In retrospect, military engagements in Borneo may have seemed only a forest affair because urban centres were far away. Moreover, unlike West Malaysia, much of the fighting took place in not just forested, but very mountainous, terrain at times reaching up to 13,000 feet above sea level. Far smaller numbers of local civilians were embroiled in the fighting.

The Emergency in Malaya had been a good training ground for the logistics of launching forest operations. Air cover and aerial reconnaissance played a more prominent role in the fighting, and thanks to the superiority of RAF interception of Indonesian air cover, eventually, Indonesian attacks took place without air cover (R. Jackson, 1991, p.127). Meanwhile, aerial photo mapping produced the large-scale tactical maps that were lacking up till then. In one operation in Peninsular Malaysia, the RAF sent out fourteen sorties to bomb an area almost 1000 square yards in an effort to capture 96 paratroopers north of Labis. This pattern of intense bombing to accompany a flushing operation followed the model perfected during the Emergency.

The Konfrontasi was fought as a technologically sophisticated war against a shadowy enemy – the forest. In East Malaysia the Indonesians had established a chain of forest bases just inside the Kalimantan border, so Security Forces asked London for permission to undertake
pursuit across the border. This was eventually granted for 10,000 yards although R. Jackson (1991, p.130) says that strictest control was taken to ensure that these operations did not become general knowledge. The significant point here is that it was London, not Kuala Lumpur, which granted permission. It highlights the point often downplayed that Commonwealth troops did most of Malaya's fighting with orders from London. I suggest that both the Malaysian and British Governments were anxious to downplay the position of who was fighting to defend Malaysia. The tortuous politics of the situation meant that the Malaysian government privately asked for Australian help but publicly denounced the arrival of Australian troops (Dennis and Grey, 1997). Less openly, but quite obviously, Malaysia repeatedly attempted to show that the Indonesians and the Chinese in Malaysia were in league to destroy Malaysia. While the fighting was on, they associated the Indonesians with the Communists as a convenient way of identifying the Indonesians as enemies. This was made easier through association of the location of the fighting in the forests, and by highlighting Sukarno's left-wing rhetoric. Although Malaysia's own reports of military attacks show that Chinese peasants were more likely a target of violence, (Ministry of External Affairs) in an example of the strength of master narratives, the UN report claims that Indonesian infiltration was planned for areas where "Chinese and others in the disparate population make-up can be aroused to anti-Malaysian feelings" (Mezerik, 1965, p.39).

In contrast to the reported cooperation between the Iban and security forces, the East Malaysian Chinese, notwithstanding their situation as victims of robberies and casualties, were described as traitorous and helpful to Indonesia to the extent of helping to set up ambushes and hiding weapons. Chinese villagers were said to "be aware of the presence of the enemy group and had deliberately trapped the members of Security Forces into entering the house."\(^{130}\) Chinese killed in firefights were always reported by race, and Chinese booklets on guerrilla warfare were reported to have been found in captured supplies.\(^{131}\) The "mainly" Chinese village of Kampong Sekati was reported to have connived with Indonesians to hide arms in the nearby forest.\(^{132}\) The issue here is not whether the Indonesians really planned to use the Chinese as a fifth column, but the lack of commentary.

Malaysia had to defend its position without imperilling the myth of racial solidarity, and it did so by criticizing Indonesia's economic record and accusing Sukarno of mounting an overseas military operation to distract his population from the local economic chaos. The Malaysian government had to be careful in how they portrayed the Indonesians so their criticism focused on Sukarno, whose left-wing rhetoric, if not actions, had already earned him hostility in the West. Malaysian restraint, on the other hand, was portrayed as a function of their recognition
that Indonesian soldiers were misguided yet still Malay brothers, led astray by their socialist leader. (Malay fraternity seems to have been given a short shrift when it comes to the treatment of Indonesian labour in contemporary Malaysia.) What the Malaysian government tried to do, less subtly, was stress the incompetence of the Indonesian invasion forces. The above description of Indonesian incursions is a catalogue of Indonesians lost in the forest, their repeated unsuccessful attempts to land, lack of backup supplies or lost supplies, and the poor condition of the troops. Together, the Malaysian state tried to build a coherent story of Malaysia's right to exist because of its superior competence – much like earlier colonial claims to rule Malaya. This defence, ultimately more powerful than the military one, can be seen in the propaganda documents that the Malaysian government claimed had been written by a captured Indonesian soldier. The Indonesian testified that he was well-treated and fed by his Malaysian captors, and that he was amazed at how prosperous Malaysians were compared to their compatriots in Indonesia: “Malaysians are brotherly like good Muslims should be. They are happy and have plenty to eat. We are given more to eat than we used to get while we were in Indonesia.” These banal sentences allowed the Malaysian government to retain claims to racial brotherhood with the Indonesians, while showing that a difference actually existed through the level of economic development. At the time of the Konfrontasi, Malaysia's GDP was four times that of Indonesia's.¹³⁴

Both Malaysia and Indonesia competed for support among the other developing countries with Indonesia winning the first round when it managed to get Malaysia barred from attending the non-aligned meeting in Cairo in 1964.¹³⁵ Interestingly, on an international level, both Malaysians and Indonesians were denied agency as the former were seen as stooges of the West while the latter were considered pawns of Moscow and Peking. At the start of this chapter, I suggested that Malaysia did not just live with contradictions; it survived because of contradictions. Charles Tilly (1995, p.247) stated that contention can be viewed as a form of structuring political opportunity, whereby one round of claim-making alters the conditions for the next. That is, shared memories of a group frame what is permissible or possible the next time round. Territorial claims in Malaysia based on historical claims or racial solidarity (at times, the two have been conflated) have always been fragile because of the existence of Indonesia. The Konfrontasi not only marked the state’s appeal to a collective memory of the Emergency to unite the population, it also marked the beginning of the post-colonial state’s attempt to construct a national identity based on economic difference. Scientific racism had been imported into Malaya along with capitalism. Now capitalism would provide the proof of racial difference through
national position on the global hierarchy of economic ranking. I deal with the subject of race and economic ranking in further detail in Chapter Six.

5.3.3 Rumours of Danger

The enunciative capacity of the forest as originary was not an option for postcolonial countries facing insurgencies based in the forests. Simon Schama's *Landscape and Memory* (1995) superbly describes the evolution of nature conservation as national heritage conservation in the American context. However, raising tropical rainforests to iconic status was not feasible at a time when the challenges to the legitimacy of the new nation-state governments were coming from the West (latent) and from the forest (manifest). Forest wars became convenient substitutes for displaced anxieties regarding the legitimacy and stability of new nation-states. In Malaysia, both the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister continued to refer to the Emergency and *Konfrontasi* in public speeches whenever the need arose to talk about national unity (New Year Speeches 1970, reported in *The Straits Times*, p.1). It is also noteworthy that many parts of Sarawak continued under 24-hour curfews even in the 1970's years after the end of the *Konfrontasi* with Indonesia ("24-hour curfew," *The Straits Times*, 10/1/70, p.24). Border areas with Thailand had varying degrees of curfew imposed upon them with security forces on a twenty-four hour alert. In northern Perak, miners were not allowed to keep more than a day's rations and timber workers still had to obtain curfew permits and report their departures and returns to the police. A report in the *Malay Mail* (4 May 1967, p.6) claimed that, "So long as there is a single armed terrorist ... the work of the security forces will not be complete." It went on to say; "And even after the total subsidence of armed revolt, there will need to be continuing vigilance against subversion." In a further example of conflating criminal and political activities, the *Straits Times* ("24-hour curfew clamp in Grik and Kroh", 6 June 1969, p.1) reported that, "tension was still apparent in the more sensitive areas because of rumours and activities of secret society members and undesirable elements." The last were blamed for masquerading as security forces by dressing in jungle green.

In Malaysia, the concept of the 'undesirable' or 'subversive' element entered everyday vocabulary to describe anyone the government did not approve of. This notion of subversion was also conveniently place-centred in the forest. Not surprisingly, villagers were warned against wearing jungle green and going out at night in case of 'accidents'. The ban against wearing army camouflage still holds today, and backpacking tourists to Malaysia are still warned of this regulation in guidebooks such as the *Lonely Planet* series. Headlines such as "Reds step
up war along Malaysian-Thai border" (*The Straits Times*, 4 June 1969), and "Seven Reds, one woman, captured by security forces in Serian sweep" (*The Straits Times*, 4 June 1969), helped keep public attention focussed on the Communists in the forests instead of the more obvious violence in the urban areas following the 13 May 1969 urban race riots. In the aftermath of the urban riots, hardly any information appeared in the newspaper. Instead, there were reports on faraway forest enemies. For example, the Mentri Besar (Chief Minister) of the border state of Perlis warned locals to ignore radio propaganda by the Communists and reminded them of recent bombings of the bridge at Kok Mak and the police station at Padang Besar ("Notes," *The Straits Times*, 1 January 1970). The front page story on the 17 January 1970 issue of *The Straits Times* reported that six Thai provinces bordering Peninsular Malaya had been infiltrated, and that the Communists were planning a major offensive. In response, the Governor of Setul province, Nai Charn Phancharoen, said that "Communism is not only the enemy of two countries but also the greatest foe of the whole free world" ("Setul's pledge on border reds," *The Straits Times*, 19 January 1970). Local newspapers continued to report on rural residents in the border areas being arrested for 'subversive' activities, communist 'sightings' and continuing discoveries of caches of arms, uniforms and other paraphernalia possibly associated with the Communists. The new year was heralded by reports of the number of Communists killed in Sarawak in the previous year (66 for 1969). Challenges to the state continued with only a rumour reaching the public although the public would be warned of simulated troop exercises. These served as useful reminders of the ever-present danger from the forest.

I want to end this section with one last story from the archives. Early, in the new year in 1970, the Secretary General of the de-registered Malayan Estate Workers Union was arrested in an army swoop on a forest camp. The men arrested argued that they had gone into the forest because they could not get work in the towns due to restrictions on their movements. No longer able to afford living in town, and threatened with starvation, they had gone into the forest to avoid the shame of starving ("Union man among 13 held in swoop" *The Straits Times*, 5 January 1970). During my research in the archives, I was haunted by the countless tales of people whose lives had been destroyed by the repressive legislation obscured under the rhetoric of protecting the world from the evils of Communism. My research also recalled the memory of a woman and her son who came to live with my family after her husband had been deported for allegedly harbouring Communist sympathies. These were not the great tragedies of literature but the real tragedies of everyday hardships of living in a society without any social safety net that so easily took away someone's ability to make a living and punished them for protesting.
5.4 CONCLUSION

The security aftershocks of the Emergency continued to affect people’s lives in less disastrous, but equally important ways. Charged with supervising the building of reservoirs and laying pipelines to the FELDA estates in the seventies, my father frequently ran afoul of the changing curfew schedules. Engineering work became inadvertently dangerous because there was no systematic way of obtaining information on curfews and restricted zones. News blackouts, curfews and restrictions on daily activities maintained a siege environment through the sixties and seventies and recurred in the late eighties when serious political differences arose within the ruling UMNO. These same restrictions apply in parts of East Malaysia today where indigenous groups are contesting the government’s right to proceed with development without local input.

The state’s measures to cope with the Emergency can be seen to build along boundaries of difference long in place before the Emergency. Now the boundaries were simply rigidified and concretized in a million quotidian details. In the process, it created a culture in which people were rewarded for betraying each other, encouraged to view each other as enemies based on physical appearances or place of domicile, and in which people learnt not to see out of fear or complicity and voices of protest were silenced. The shared imaginings in the name of a nation-state are intended to define its territory; in other words, to ‘flesh’ out its outline. But if strangers become citizens through a shared imagining, Malaysia was beginning on very shaky foundations in a climate of social rupturedness. Like many postcolonial societies, it had to turn fragments into a nation. The privileging power of a master narrative reified who was a citizen and not, what was territory and not. The master narrative of national identity would receive a great boost to its coherence through the global narrative of development. I discuss this in the next chapter.

1 Meeting between the Commercial Interests with the Secretary of State, 19 December 1950, BAM II/6.
2 I use the term ‘trope’ to refer to a pattern that emerges through repetition (Spurr, 1996, p.8). Spurr, after Paul de Man, argued that a trope revealed a “vast thematic and semiotic network” that structured the entire narrative.
3 I have used the term Free World as defined by the US Council on Foreign Relations: “The ‘free world’ is often used to describe the entire area not controlled in its basic foreign policy by Moscow or Peiping and will be so used in this report. These peoples live under all sorts of institutions. But they are all free (including Communist Yugoslavia) of Soviet or Chinese Communist domination.” See Basic Aims of United States Foreign Policy (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1959, p.5).
4 The British used this term themselves, see for example Rene Onraet, The Malayan Emergency, Truth (7 December 1951) p.618; and Robert Thompson, Defeating Communist Insurgency (London: Chatto and Windus, 1966) p.16.
6 War in Malaya, British Survey (1952) 139: 6.
7 War in Malaya, British Survey (1952) 139:1-23.
8 In an ironic turnaround, certain Asian leaders at the close of this century have taken to accusing Westerners of self-interest in contrast to the collective interests espoused by Asians in the name of “Asian values”.
9 Handbook to Malaya (Federation of Malaya and the Colony of Singapore) and the Emergency (Singapore:
Regional Information Office for the United Kingdom in South East Asia, 1952).

10 *Handbook to Malaya (Federation of Malaya and the Colony of Singapore) and the Emergency* (Singapore: Regional Information Office for the United Kingdom in South East Asia, 1952).

11 Rene Onraet, Police Adviser, comments on the Chief Civil Affairs Officer’s memorandum “Trial of Collaborators”, 16 November 1945, BAM V.

12 Rene Onraet, Police Adviser, comments on Chief Civil Affairs Officer’s memorandum "Trial of Collaborators", 16 November 1945, BAM V.

13 Rene Onraet, Police Adviser, comments on Chief Civil Affairs Officer’s memorandum “Trial of Collaborators”, 16 November 1945, BAM V.

14 Rene Onraet, Police Adviser, comments on Chief Civil Affairs Officer’s memorandum “Trial of Collaborators”, 16 November 1945, BAM V.

15 Rene Onraet, memorandum "Indian Members of Legislative Council" 27 February 1946, BAM V. He also suggested the same thing be done for other 'nationalities'.

16 Rene Onraet, memorandum on "Pandit Nehru" 7 March 1946, BAM V. The initial plan had been to officially ignore Nehru’s visit.


18 Record of meeting between Commercial Interests and High Commissioner at King's House, Kuala Lumpur, 1 January 1951, BAM II/6.

19 Respectively, the former Secretary to the Federated Malay States, British Adviser to Negri Sembilan, Governor of Singapore.

20 Sultan of Kedah to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 11 February 1946, BAM Collection.

21 W.L.Blythe to Hugh (Bryson?), 2 September 1970, comments that J.C. Barry, Rene Onraet and Wynne "...would have dearly loved to introduce a Police State." BAM Addenda.

22 Meeting with Hugh Fraser, 8 December 1951, BAM II/6.

23 Record of private meeting between Commercial Interests and the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 19 December 1950, BAM II/6.

24 Letter to the Daily Telegraph, 5 March 1952.

25 Record of Private Meeting between commercial interests and the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 19 December 1950, BAM II/6.

26 Joint Malayan Interests to Colonial Office, 15 January 1951, BAM II/6.


28 Letter to the Times, 27 August 1948.


32 Telegram [re: Alliance delegation to London], O. Lyttelton, Secretary of State for the Colonies to G. Templer, High Commissioner, 15 May 1954, CO 1030/309, no. 53.

33 Onraet to OC MSS, comments on report "Indian Political Trends in Malaya" by Major R.B. Coridon, 16 March 1946, BAM V.


36 Letter to Malay Mail 4 March 1952.

37 Letter to the Times, 27 August 1948.

"However, this doc. [sic] does emphasize the independence of the M.C.P. from foreign communist parties (eg. x\& y) to a certain extent". Comment by A.S. Melville on Memorandum and Attachment from Director of Special Branch, Singapore, A.E.G. Blades, to Commissioner of Police, Singapore, 3 December 1953, internal file ref. SSB. 4019/19, CO1022/46.

The leadership of the MCP had to defend their support of the Soviet Union when the Soviets were not offering help in return. They argued that Soviet interests were inseparable from other peace lovers, that gratitude was due to the Soviet Union for its defeat of Japan and Germany. Finally, they argued that the Soviet Union would only help when aid was for over all world liberation rather than localized wars. Memorandum and attachment from A.E.G. Blades, Director of Special Branch, Singapore, to Commissioner of Police, Singapore, 3 December 1953, trans. "An outline of studies of the international problem," no.3, 15 July 1954, Singapore Freedom Press, pp.4-5, CO1022/46.


Ibrahim bin Haji Yaacob, Sedjarah dan Perjuangan Di-Malaya (Jogjakarta: Nusantara Press); published in Malaya by the Malayan Independence Union (MIU). Ibrahim referred to the British return to Malaya as re-imposition of colonialism not liberation (pp.113-127) Memo from director Special Branch to Commissioner, Police Headquarters (Singapore) internal file ref. SSB 4019/19-17, 20 November 1952, Freedom News issue 29, 15 September 1952. Blades also noted that Dr. Burhanuddin, a former colonial civil servant was arrested for his part in the Hertogh riots. However, the British still felt that the riots were motivated by religious and racial reasons.

W. H. Ingrams, minute, 16 July 1953, CO 1022/205, shows that the Colonial Office did make the distinction between anti-imperialist communists and nationalistic Islamists but felt that there was little fear of a united front from the two groups.

W.H. Ingrams, minute, 16 July 1953, CO 1022/205.

Commentators as conservative as Julian Paget (p.76) and Sarkesian (p.17) also suggested that the promise of independence took the wind out of the sails of the insurgency in particular, the only appeal it would ever have had for the Malays.


See Telegram [re. Amnesty talks with Communists], Sir D. MacGillivray, High Commissioner, to A. Lennox-Boy, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 20 October 1955, FO371/116941, no. 67/9; telegram [re. Amnesty talks with Communists], A. Lennox-Boy to D. MacGillivray, FO371/116941 no.69; Lord Reading, "Report on political situation in Singapore and Malaya", 24 October 1955, FO371/116941 no. 76; telegram [re: amnesty talks], R. Scott to A. Eden, 23 October 1955, CO1030/27 no. 1; Telegram [re:risks to British interests in Malaya and Singapore], R. Scott to A. Eden, 23 October 1955, CO1030/27 no. 2; Colonial Office, draft memorandum "Talks between Chief Ministers of the Federation of Malaya and Singapore and Chin Peng," December 1955, CO1030/27 no. 13; MacGillivray's senior officials, memorandum on consequences of a break [with the Alliance], December 1955, CO1030/27, no.21; Colonial Office Far Eastern Department, Memorandum on "Federation of Malaya and Constitutional Conference," 22 December 1955, CO1030/75, no. 2; D. MacGillivray to A.M. Mackintosh [re:alliance demands], 29 December 1955, CO1030/75; no.7; Cabinet Colonial Policy Committee, minutes on forthcoming talks between Tunku Abdul Rahman and the Communists, 28 October 1955, CAB 134/1201 CA2(55)1. A key document is D.C. Watherston "The London talks: Alliance demands and the extent to which they might be met," November 1955, CO1030/75, no. 4.


Three paragraphs taken from telegram, D. MacGillivray to A. Lennox-Boy, 9 January 1956, CO1030/73.

A commentator as conservative as Malcolm Muggeridge wrote, "There is little sense in appealing to Chinese to stand in the way of self-government, 30 November 1955, CAB 134/1201 CA2(55)1. A key document is D.C. Watherston "The London talks: Alliance demands and the extent to which they might be met," November 1955, CO1030/75, no. 4.

The most obvious strategy would be to integrate the school system. See Minutes on meeting between A. Creech Jones, Secretary of State for the Colonies, and Commercial Interests on 19 February 1950. The idea of a standardized school system across the country would be nodes of power extending the feelers of their network across the space of the nation. Although they realized that a whole generation educated in Malayan-ness was a luxury that they could not hope for.
the Malayan system in as much as the function of the assessors therein is purely consultative, the judge is under no
(minute, 11 October 1952, CO1022/3) commented, "The Indian system, as I may call it, is infinitely preferable to
the disagreement between the assessors, the British judicial expert Sir Sydney Abraham
77 Many women, both individually and collectively, albeit all in Britain rather than Malaya, wrote to ask for
clemency. In remarking on the disagreement between the assessors, the British judicial expert Sir Sydney Abraham
75 "Representations against sentence of death passed on Lee Ten Tai (Lee Meng) in Emergencies [sic]," CO 1022/3.
COl030/65 no.3, Letter from Sir Don MacGillivray to Sir John Martin on constitutional problems.
56 I have taken my criteria for courage from Douglas Walton's 1986 book Courage (Berkeley: University of
California Press). The criteria are: deliberate action on principle; difficult, dangerous and painful conditions; action
for someone else's benefit.
57 “Punishment of the town of Tanjong Malim in Malaya -- non-cooperation with authorities”, 27 March 1952,
CO1022/54.
58 In an exhibition of the Malayan Emergency at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, the catalogue notes explain
that the confrontations between the battalions and the MLRA units developed a personal aspect (F.A. Godfrey, 1978, p.1).
59 In 1945 Brigadier Sir Patrick Archibald McKerron gave the funeral oration on the steps of the Victoria Memorial
Hall at the funeral of Lim Boh Seng the war hero who was tortured to death by the Japanese. Lim had organized the
civil defence committee which was the only relief body functioning during the Japanese bombardment of Singapore.
He also recruited guerrillas for the resistance. BAM Photo Collection 17/4.
60 War in Malaya, British Survey (1952)139: p.5. In private, the British acknowledged that the some Malaya
cooperated with the Japanese, but by then, it was no longer diplomatic to acknowledge this.
61 Handbook to Malaya (Federation of Malaya and the Colony of Singapore) and the Emergency. 1952. Singapore:
Regional Information Office for the United Kingdom in South East Asia.
63 Government of the United Kingdom, Ministry of Defence, Information Department, Circular “Proposal that
64 C.J.J.T. Barton, minute commenting on “Situation on the Thai-Malayan frontier,” June or July (?) 1953,
CO1022/205.
65 Malayan Union Government, Summary of the Report of the Working Committee appointed by a Conference of his
Excellency the Governor of the Malayan Union, Their Highnesses the Rulers of the Malay States and the
Representatives of the United Malys National Organization (Kuala Lumpur: Malayan Union Government Press, 19
December 1946).
66 Michael Smee, Script for broadcasts over Radio Malaya Blue Network on the second day's meeting of the
Singapore Legislative Council, 20 February 1954, BAM 1/14. Smee's mild observation on the radio that the Members' refusal to support a Labour Party candidate's motion to alter a repressive ordinance sounded “ashamed”
brought on the criticism from his superiors that he was not unquestioningly supporting the government line.
68 A. Creech Jones, Secretary of State for the Colonies, to ABM [response to letter on seditious propaganda], 3
March 1950, BAM II/6.
69 CO1030/65 no.3, Letter from Sir Don MacGillivray to Sir John Martin on constitutional problems.
70 Memorandum from director Special Branch to Commissioner, Police Headquarters (Singapore) internal file ref.
71 Inward telegram [re: declaration of Emergency] from E. Gent, High Commissioner, to A. Creech Jones, Secretary
72 War in Malaya, British Survey, (1952) 139: p.10.
73 Nick Hopkins, gw-international@guardian.co.uk, 22 September, 1998.
74 Memorandum from director Special Branch to Commissioner, Police Headquarters (Singapore) internal file ref.
SSB 4019/19-17, 17 January 1953, issues 30 and 31 Freedom News assumed to have been edited by Eu Chooi Yip.
75 Sir Leslie Plummer, MP, letter to Statesman, 20 February 1953. Of the nine witnesses, one had been pardoned, the
others had not. Although this evidence was directed by the judge to require corroboration, corroboration came from
a photo. It was difficult to see if it was undeniably Lee Meng in the photograph which was found months before her
arrest. The evidence of the police inspector was based on one sighting of her three years earlier from a distance.
76 “Representations against sentence of death passed on Lee Ten Tai (Lee Meng) in Emergencies [sic]," CO 1022/3.
77 Many women, both individually and collectively, albeit all in Britain rather than Malaya, wrote to ask for
clemency. In remarking on the disagreement between the assessors, the British judicial expert Sir Sydney Abraham
(minute, 11 October 1952, CO1022/3) commented, "The Indian system, as I may call it, is infinitely preferable to
the Malayan system in as much as the function of the assessors therein is purely consultative, the judge is under no
obligation to accept or in any way be influenced by their opinions, and in giving judgement he must give his reasons in writing. In this way justice is more secure; it is not to be defeated by the perversity or stupidity of the assessors, and the judge's reasons can be canvassed by the whole world, and must satisfy a Court of Appeal that they are sound in law and fact. For the jury system or the Malayan assessor system to operate satisfactorily, the persons composing the tribunal must have a sense of civic responsibility which can resist the influences of racial, religious, family or communal partisanship, or of fear. My own experiences overseas have been so unfortunate that I have come to the conclusion that the only safe system is the Indian system." Other examples of race alliances include the Communist decision to back the Chinese merchants' efforts to set up a Chinese University. See memorandum from Director Special Branch to Commissioner, Police Headquarters(Singapore) internal file ref. SSB 4019/19-17, 18 May 1953, translation of Freedom News issue no.35, 15 March 1953, CO1022/46.

78 Savingram G. Templer, High Commissioner to O. Lyttelton, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 15 October 1952, CO 1022/3.

79 Memo and attachment from A.E.G. Blades, Director of Special Branch, Singapore to Commissioner of Police, Singapore, 3 December 1953, Category: Restricted. internal file ref. SSB. 4019/19; CO1022/46. The importance of rubber to the communist as well as the British can be seen in the MCPs counter-argument that falling price of rubber was not due to uses for rubber decreasing but because theirs was captive market of suppliers. In other words, they could only sell to Americans and Europeans and not the Chinese and Russians who also needed rubber. See MCP document entitled "An outline of studies of the international political problem," no.3, 15 July 1954, published by Singapore Freedom Press.


81 "The Last Chance in Malaya -- IV: Only a Fresh Start can Save a Crucial Position," Daily Telegraph, 22 February 1952.

82 Defence aspects of constitutional development in Federation of Malaya orig.FED 36/1/07, CO1030/71.


86 Pull-out of troops will be orderly, Malay Mail, 2 May 1967, p.1. Malaysia also benefited from the Vietnam War because US servicemen were spending about $2 million ringgit in Malaysia ("US servicemen in Vietnam spend $2 million in Malaysia every month," Malay Mail, 1 May 1967, p.7)

87 Ministry of Defence to Chiefs of Staff Committee Maintenance of Law and Order and Essential Services -- Singapore, Far Eastern Dept. 1957-1959 "Internal Threat to Malaya and Singapore", 7 May 1959, CO1030/655.


89 Ministry of Defence to Chiefs of Staff Committee Maintenance of Law and Order and Essential Services -- Singapore, Far Eastern Dept. 1957-1959, "Internal Threat to Malaya and Singapore," 7 May 1959, CO1030/655. Also, see letter by Colonel H. G. Croly to Chiefs of Staff Planning Committee, 9 October 1957, CO 1033/655.

90 Report by Joint Planning Staff Reinforcement of Singapore Revision of Joint Planning instructions, Far Eastern Dept. 1957-1959, "Internal Threat to Malaya and Singapore", 11 February 1957, p.4, CO1030/655. The actual text read, "Recent events in the Middle East have immeasurably heightened the sensitivity of the Ceylonese to the use of their airfields for any operation of which they do not approve." Later "We consider that the Ceylon Government are unlikely to approve the reinforcement of Singapore unless it is at the request of the Chief Minister of Singapore."

91 Robert Thompson, Defeating Communist Insurgency (London: Chatto and Windus, 1966) and Sam Sarkesian, "Revolutionary guerrilla warfare: an introduction" in Sam Sarkesian (ed.) Revolutionary Guerrilla Warfare (Chicago: Precedent Publishing Inc., 1975). Sarkesian (p.5) also distinguishes insurgencies from civil war in that the former is a struggle from the bottom up while the latter is a horizontal struggle.


93 James Patterson, Grand Expectations. (New York, Oxford University Press, 1996). Patterson's book provides an interesting link between the emotional impetus behind both the civil rights and anti-war movements.

94 Christopher Hitchens, Cyprus (London: Quartet Book, 1984). This is not the theme of Hitchens' book, but his description of the publicity campaign mounted by the insurgents can be contrasted with the insurgents in Malaya.

95 The function of terrain has changed as insurgent wars become urban affairs.
The British were aware of this handicap. In perusing captured documents they commented that Eu Chooi Yip was the one writer whose articles might capture a wider audience because he succeeded in going beyond dogma. Memorandum from Director Special Branch, Singapore to Commissioner, Police Headquarters, Singapore; internal file ref. SSB 4019/19-17, 17 January 1953, issues 30 and 31 of Freedom News assumed to have been edited by Eu Chooi Yip.

His results were published in *Guerrilla Communism in Malaya* (1956).


The function of terrain has changed as insurgent wars become urban affairs.

The phrase 'hearts and minds' was coined by Gerald Templer. But Pye turned them into a strategic battleground.

The best-known contemporary example is the peasant rebellion in Chiapas, Mexico.

FSY1889/A/49, 17 January 1951. Many of Williams-Hunt's points were repeated in a Times article "The Aborigenes", 20 February 1952.

His son continues his father's quixotic relationship with the present Malaysian government over indigenous rights.

Such as Malaysia's current denunciation of East Timorese aspirations to autonomy.

The Malayans were well aware, despite of British denials to the contrary, that Britain's position was made untenable by the pincer circumstances of nationalism on the one hand and communism on the other. See *Battle for Malaysia* p.4.

The actual document cites the Malacca Sultanate as dating back to 14th century; it was founded in 1403. Nor did the Malacca Sultanate ever extend to Borneo.

Tun Razak, later Prime Minister of Malaysia, joked to Sir Robert Thompson, the British Adviser to both him and Tunku Abdul Rahman, that the only job he wanted in Singapore was Military Governor (*Make for the Hills*, London, Leo Cooper, 1989) p.117.


Poulgrain's (1998, p.63) fascinating account traces British-Indonesian hostility to the immediate aftermath of WWII when Britain withheld 19,000 carats of diamonds and three tonnes of bullion mined by the Japanese from Indonesian territory.

Much of this following paragraph summarizing the claims and counter-claims by Malaysia and Indonesia was derived from A.G. Mezerik (1965) *Malaysia-Indonesia Conflict*. International Review Service, UN Bureau.

I have retained the spelling used in the document although I realize that due to changes in Bahasa Malaysia to conform with Indonesian spelling, most of these names , although technically unchanged, would be spelt differently.


Description of ambush at Kuala Sekambul, Sarawak.


Most African and Asian nation-states expressed the feeling that Indonesian aggression had occurred while not commenting on the issue of whether Malaysia was a neo-colony.

*Straits Times,* 7 January 1970, p.22.

CHAPTER SIX
THE SECOND FRONTIER

It is the narrative of capital that can turn the violence of war ... into a story of universal progress...

Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*

Markets are instruments, not values.

Khilnani, *The Idea of India*

6.0 INTRODUCTION

It should be clear by now that deforestation in Malaysia was never just about cutting down trees for export. The causes of the destruction of the forests were bounded with a complex web of meanings about nature and society; specifically with issues of race, resource definition, international geopolitics, and the construction of a Malaysian nation-state. Recall that Chapter Four examined the competing attempts to territorialize the forest between the British colonialists and the Malayan Communist Party for the control of Malaya in the aftermath of the Second World War. And Chapter 5 extended the military and political implications of the struggle in the forests of Malaya to the metaphorical place of the forest as the menacing, opposing 'other' in international struggles for decolonization. First, I showed that the forest came to represent struggles between the colonialists and their indigenous urban elite allies against the rural peasantry. More generally, the two chapters show how the forest was constructed as a place of violence and death within military and geopolitical contexts. Second, in tracing the 'biography' of the Malaysian rainforest, I have also tried to weave its narrative into the larger narrative of the birth of the Malaysian nation-state. The history of the contests in and over the rainforest, the material resolutions as well as the imaginative framing of the contests, reflect on the construction of the contemporary Malaysian political landscape through the institutional arrangements governing political representation and managing dissent.

In this chapter I examine how the rainforest became devalued in the context of the economic development associated with colonialism and post-colonialism in Malaysia. Like other environmental problems today, deforestation in Malaysia reflected how nature was valued, or devalued, in the national development narratives of progress. So the basic premise of this chapter is that one sort of space, the forest, became devalued and eradicated because of the rise of another space, the plantation as the plantation was the main cause of deforestation in Peninsular Malaysia. The forest was routinely materially and socially edited out because its value came to be seen in its eradication; that is, its
absence realized the valuable potential of the space it occupied. Chapter Two took up this premise by describing the introduction of plantation agriculture, and with it, the scientific concepts of planned, standardized growth and the accompanying social transformations to accommodate this system of agriculture. In this chapter, I pick up again this thread of the economic narrative.

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first section discusses the importance of Malaya's plantation economy as it was inflected through a negative balance of payments that evolved between Britain and the US in the aftermath of World War II. This became the basis of Britain's struggle against the Communist-led insurgency that officially lasted between 1948-1960. The second section looks at the development paradigm as an economic strategy in Cold War geopolitics. This Western model of development posited the creation of a market-driven economy as a pre-requisite for the evolution of democracy. It played a central role in promoting export-oriented agriculture in many post-colonial states through its strong advocation by international financial institutions such as the World Bank, and more specifically for Asia, the Colombo Plan. For many governments of new nation-states, economic development would legitimate them in the face of otherwise insecure political conditions. The Malaysian elite, too, assumed the goal of development as the collective will of the nation. The third section then discusses state-sponsored plantation agriculture in post-colonial Malaysia as a strategy to legitimate government. In particular, this last section looks at the race riots in 1969 and the government's decision to speed up development programs to facilitate wealth transfer across racial lines. The policy changes enacted as a result of the race riots saw Malaysia embark on the third and most ambitious phase of expanding the export-led plantation system. The rhetoric accompanying this third moment predicated the survival of the nation on the success of its development program where, in turn, the success of the program was predicated on the eradication of the forest. In this phase, plantations came to represent the 'nature' of the nation because they were cultivated by Malay settlers, the bumiputera or 'sons of the earth', as they referred to themselves, as part of the government strategy to address inter-racial disparity. While the first two sections deal with Malaysia's place in the global political economy, the last section looks at the internal political economy. Throughout the three sections, I highlight the continuities in assumptions and policies across Malaysia's colonial and post-colonial divide.
6.1 RUBBER AND GLOBAL CAPITAL

6.1.1 Rubber and the Malayan Economy

The British fought an expensive twelve-year war, at one time fielding 300,000 security personnel because of the importance of Malaya's resources to the imperial economy (J. Jackson, 1991, p.115). In Chapter 4, I argued that while the forests were cast as the site of the war by the colonial state, the estates were sites of Communist attacks during the Emergency. The assigning of the forest as the battlefield had less to do with it as the site of violence than the use of the forests to camouflage the Communists. On the other hand, the estates as the sites and symbols of capitalist exploitation were targets for Communist attacks. Rubber contributed significantly to the Malayan coffers. Recall that during the Emergency rubber accounted for 30-40 percent of government revenues, 25 percent of the gross national product, and 50-70 percent of net export income. Although the mainly European-owned estates accounted for only 57 percent of the output during that period, compared to the Asian-owned smallholdings, it was the estates rather than the smallholdings that bore the brunt of the Communists attacks.

We have seen in the previous chapters that the commercial interests of Malaya, mainly rubber and tin, had a major influence on the colonial government's policy in Malaya. We have seen in Chapter Five that the Legislative Council of Malaya had members appointed from the ranks of rubber and mining interests. Not only were commercial interests adamant that no nationalization take place, as I recounted in Chapter Five, they continually urged the government to take stronger legislative action against both workers and the general population to prevent them from protesting conditions in a Malaya that was already essentially a police state. Concern regarding the nationalization of rubber was also echoed in the British Parliament (Hansard Vol. 490, 25 July 1951). As we have seen in the previous chapters, the colonial government generally accommodated the estate owners in formulating policies on a range of issues from agriculture, to security, to resettlement. For example, while the colonial government was concerned that rubber replanting continue unabated after the war, permission to replant or extend rubber acreage was restricted to estates. Peasants and smallholders requesting permission were turned down under an Emergency ordinance that restricted planting of rubber and tapioca. This was because the authorities believed that smallholders might co-operate with the Communists. And even if they did not, they could not be relied upon to withstand coercion. Therefore, while rubber as a resource was privileged above others such as food crops and fisheries, its value as a resource depended on controlling it.
At the same time, colonial officials and commercial interests did not always agree on rubber policy. Their views diverged when it came to the role of rubber in the imperial economy as manifested in the disagreement over payments from the cess fund. The cess fund was a common pool of money collected from rubber growers. They were taxed based on 4.5% of their total revenue provided the price of rubber did not fall below 80 cents a pound. The chief disagreements between government and the estate owners, represented by the Rubber Producers Council (RPC), centred on the control and collection of the cess, and the uses to which the funds would be put. The RPC insisted that estate owners control the fund, and that the money be used only for replanting rather than research. In addition, the RPC argued that the fund should only go to estates, and not necessarily to smallholders who would nevertheless be forced into paying into the cess fund. Smallholders, for their part, opposed individual assessment of production. This was because the estate lobby calculated how much each smallholder could produce based on acreage using a set formula. Thus, estates could accuse high-producing smallholders of stealing the extra rubber beyond their calculated production capabilities. And even if smallholders were not accused of theft, estates could lobby the government to impose ceiling quotas of rubber sold per plantation in the case of falling prices. The government quite accurately discerned that the estates saw the smallholders as rivals. The government feared that the anti-inflationary potential of the cess would be seriously impaired if they had no control of the cess. By increasing the amount of money collected for the cess fund during periods of high income from rubber, the colonial government could restrict currency circulation, thereby dampening inflation. More seriously, the government's concern for the smallholders may have been linked to their concern that export earnings from rubber not be impaired. They believed that rubber production on smallholdings was less likely to be affected by the Emergency than production on estates, as the Communists did not attack smallholdings. The uninterrupted production of rubber was extremely important to Britain's coffers. Thus, the expansion of plantations, and concomitant deforestation, depended on the negotiated outcome of these conflicting concerns between imperial and capitalist interests.

6.1.2 Malaya in the Sterling Area

Conflicting imperial and capitalist aims notwithstanding, colonial discourse at the time argued that exports did not belong to the colonies themselves simply because of geographical serendipity; "Nature is notoriously deficient in providing capital and technical services" (quoted in Polk, 1956, p.187). In
other words, nature’s bounty belonged to those who possessed the technology to transform it into commodities useful within Western commercial and industrial systems. David Spurr (1996, p.30) and Michael Adas (1989) have both argued that colonial discourse claimed reward on the basis of technical sophistication; itself seen as an inherent trait. This trope is echoed in current debates over biotechnology derived from biodiversity (Shiva, 1997, 1994). In this case, industry argues that the countries and tribes who own the germplasm do not deserve financial reimbursement because it is Western technology that transforms the plants, seed and animal cells into chemical compounds that can be reproduced in large-scale, standardized quantities. Thus, to return to colonial Malaya, the British considered Malayan rubber and tin as ‘natural’ imperial assets, and these, fortuitously, were also key components in maintaining the strength of the sterling currency.

The importance of Malayan exports, mainly rubber and tin, to the sterling area, that is, countries that either used sterling or had their currencies pegged to sterling, has to be viewed in light of the adverse balance of payments (BOP) situation that had developed between Britain and the US after World War II (Gardner, 1969; Strange, 1971). In 1943, the US changed its wartime financial arrangement with Britain whereby industrial equipment was loaned to Britain and its allies. From 1943 onwards, the US insisted that equipment be paid for. Under these new terms, Britain developed a considerable deficit vis-à-vis the US that continued after the war (Kunze, 1991, Strange, 1971). On the other hand, Malaya was one of the few countries in the sterling area with a positive BOP with the US (Polk, 1956, pp.190-202). As we can see from the Tables 6.1 and 6.2, Britain had a negative BOP with the US but a positive BOP with the sterling area including Malaya. Malaya's dollar earnings were then exchanged on the London market for sterling reserves.

**Table 6.1** UK Balance of payments on current account (£ million)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>With the Sterling Area</th>
<th>With the Dollar Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>-28</td>
<td>-301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>+127</td>
<td>-510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>+254</td>
<td>-252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>+293</td>
<td>-296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>+287</td>
<td>-88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>+343</td>
<td>-431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>+367</td>
<td>-172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>+179</td>
<td>-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+1822</td>
<td>-2054</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Polk, 1956, p. 112
Table 6.2 Malayan area balance of payments on current account (£ million)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>With Sterling Area</th>
<th>With Other Area</th>
<th>Net Surplus</th>
<th>British Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>-59</td>
<td>+150</td>
<td>+91</td>
<td>+155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>-29</td>
<td>+151</td>
<td>+122</td>
<td>+179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>-55</td>
<td>+80</td>
<td>+25</td>
<td>+137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>-55</td>
<td>+30</td>
<td>-25</td>
<td>+110</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled from Polk, 1956, pp. 190-191

In the crucial post-war years, Malaya was the major dollar earner in the sterling area. At the same time as keeping their reserves in sterling, Malaya and other sterling area countries formed a discriminatory block against dollar imports, opting to buy manufactured goods and services from Britain to prevent a capital outflow from the sterling area. This of course could not be done without the informal agreement of the US. I will return to this point later in this section. In addition, the European Payment Fund for recovery programs in Western Europe allowed Britain to borrow on the basis of the economic performance of the sterling area, which meant mainly the performance of Malaya (Strange, 1971, p. 89). Other European countries were extended credit on the basis of the country’s economic performance. The former governor of Singapore, Sir Shenton Thomas wrote to the Times (28 August 1948) to point out that Malaya’s export /import ratio with the US was sometimes as great as a factor of 25.

The British were in a delicate position with regard to the benefits derived from controlling Malaya. On the one hand the British Government used the importance of rubber and tin to persuade voters in Britain and the US that Malaya was worth fighting for, on the other hand, they downplayed the fact that economically Britain needed Malaya more than Malaya needed Britain. Playing down the colonizer’s dependence on the colonized was an important aspect of colonial discourse of the “white man’s burden” in which the colonies are seen as weak and needing rescuing, while the colonizers confer their protection and strength as part of a moral mandate. Colonial power relations demanded that the colonizer not appear dependent on the colonized. British propaganda documents promoted Malaya’s economic contribution to Britain, while stressing the obligation of the British Government to defend its weak dependencies against internal threats (Regional Information Office, 1952; Colonial Office, 1952). Presumably, not all the colonized were as weak as they were made out, and the rhetoric of the ‘White Man's Burden’ was a useful strategy to disguise beneficial monetary considerations. In sum, Malayan export revenues were a significant factor in rescuing Britain from its relatively disadvantageous financial position with respect to the US.
It is important to note that during this transitional period between the British Empire giving way to the American Empire, there was a lag in the establishment of a new political leader to an economic one. The US emerged from the war the undisputed economic leader to the point that it could afford to shrug off temporary dollar discriminations by the sterling block in return for political support in its fight against the Soviet Union. By dollar discriminations, I mean that the US was willing to overlook the sterling area policy to buy manufactured goods from Britain to prevent more dollars flowing back to the US (Strange, 1971, p.89). Britain was a key player in persuading sterling area countries (eventually the Commonwealth) to support US policies with regard to the USSR and China in the Cold War stand-off. At the same time, should Britain harm the US drive for political hegemony, as it did with the bombing of the Suez Canal in 1956 against the wishes of the Americans, the US could apply economic pressure to bring the British round to their way of thinking. During the Suez crisis, Americans embargoed oil supplies to Britain in tandem with a run on the pound. When Britain attempted to borrow from the IMF to avoid a drastic devaluation of the pound (sterling reserves were at a critical point) they were told that the Americans would veto the loan unless the British left Egypt immediately. The British were aware that any policy regarding international economy could only succeed with American involvement.

There were two links between Malayan and American interests: the first was the global nature of the communist threat; the second was the importance of keeping rubber and tin supplies flowing to the West (Malaya: Facts behind the fighting, 1952, p.11). Latour’s (1987, p.108) method of “translating interests” to recruit allies is applicable in this situation because the Americans and British were indispensable to each other’s goals (Latour, 1987, p.119). Superficially, it appeared that the British needed the Americans more than the reverse, but they also felt that the US would be helped by the established British hegemony in courting local elites. At the same time, in an effort at preserving imperial illusions, the Colonial Office attempted to avoid synchronizing their policy statements on Malaya with American press releases. For example, T.C. Jerrom remarks that the Colonial Office was careful not to make the statements by Dean Acheson in Washington appear timed for the debate in the House of Lords. Acheson’s press conference was eventually scheduled after the debate, but the text from Lord Salisbury’s speech was telegrammed to Washington no doubt to allow synchronicity of speeches. A British embassy circular to the South-East Asia Department at the Foreign Office stated that the State Department had asked to be informed if Her Majesty’s Government were going to make a statement on Malaya so that they could make arrangements for a supporting statement at the same time. A circular letter by B.A.B. Burrows at the British Embassy in Washington states:
There is a steadily improving climate here for the acceptance by the American press and people of a public expression of support for the restoration of peace and order in Malaya. Various recent events have contributed to that end. The gradual growth of knowledge that there were other Asian theatres of war besides Korea was given a sudden and important impulse by the Secretary of State's speech in New York. In the reaction to Mr. Eden's remarks there was no real inclination to dispute the argument that Malaya and Korea are parts of the same war against Communist aggression.

More specifically the public has been made increasingly aware of the problems of Malaya itself through an effective campaign waged by the Natural Rubber Bureau which has bought valuable space in newspapers and magazines to display illustrated accounts of what is happening there with particular resistance to Communism. These advertisements are favourable to us but have occasioned little or no public criticism on that account. Another new but important influence is the arrangement to purchase Malayan tin. Indeed, editorials in even less friendly papers have spoken of the importance of preventing the Communists from interrupting supplies of Malayan rubber and tin for the free world, without the customary thrusts at British Imperialism.\(^{18}\)

In response, Acheson stated that "The United States was fully cognizant of the importance of Malaya's role in the free world, politically, economically, and strategically, and of the significance of the present struggle in Malaya as an integral part of the free world's common effort to halt Communist aggression."\(^{19}\)

So far, I argued that Malayan tin and rubber were important factors in Britain's imperial economy. In Chapter 5 I also argued that Malaya was granted independence in 1957 as a bribe to prevent the local elite from negotiating with Communists. Through the move of handing over power to a sympathetic local elite, Britain managed to retain economic control of Malayan resources. At Independence, Malaya had the second highest standard of living in Asia after Japan.\(^{20}\) It inherited an economy built around the export of rubber and tin. Foreign ownership, mainly British, prevailed though both the British and the Malay-led government, which included Chinese businessmen, found it convenient to blame the Chinese for dominating the economy. Economic control by sector in the 1950's before independence was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector ownership</th>
<th>Export/Import</th>
<th>Mining</th>
<th>Plantations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>British</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Derived from Gomez and Jomo, 1997, pp.11-12.

Given the proportion of sector control shown above, Britain was eager to obtain assurances that there were no nationalization programs in the offing after independence. It was widely assumed that in return for British defence, the Malayan government would show preferential treatment towards
British firms and continue to maintain the formidable Malayan surplus in sterling reserves. Jomo and Gomez (1997, p.14) suggest that the Malay-led government may have seen cooperation with British interests as a way of preventing the Chinese from expanding their share of the economy. Again, the influence of racial conflict affecting the economic decisions made by the new government is apparent. Jomo and Gomez's argument is plausible in light of the problems involved in maintaining Malayan reserves in sterling. Malaya was the one colony that would have been in a position to peg its currency to either gold or dollars, or at least diversifying its reserves, after independence, because it was considered to have a healthy and viable economy, and yet it did not. Charles Tilly (1994) makes the point that groups bring memories of past experiences with them to negotiations with other groups. These memories are mostly unspoken factors, deafening in their silence, which ultimately determine the outcome. In an interesting example of the influence of race on economic decision-making, Malaya's Chinese finance minister, Tan Siew Sin argued in favour of taking Malaya out of the sterling orbit but was over-ridden by the Malay Prime Minister who wanted to preserve the defence agreement with Britain (Rudner, 1971, p.15). Britain's 30% devaluation of sterling against the American dollar in 1949 affected all the currencies associated with the use of sterling as a master currency. Moreover, at independence, the British argument that by remaining in the sterling area, Malaya could continue to borrow on the London market outraged even the Currency Board and Treasury colonial officials in Malaya. They bitterly remarked that since Malaya's dollar earnings were crucial to keeping sterling afloat, it would take a great deal of borrowing before the cash flow reversed itself. Malaya's tax on profits for British investment in its resource industry was also the lowest of the top three countries for direct investment return.

Table 6.4 Country returns on British investment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Italy</th>
<th>Malaya</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-tax profit on direct investment</td>
<td>50.4%</td>
<td>32.8%</td>
<td>28.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate of taxation on profit</td>
<td>53.1%</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled from Strange, 1971.

Malayan resources were a lucrative investment because taxes were low. Yet Malaya did not see much of these profits because much of it was repatriated to the controlling companies in Britain. Malaya had posted financial surpluses in 1951 and 1952, but according to Treasury officials, "These surpluses consisted largely of transfers of capital, including funds transferred to London by British-owned companies, where they were used to pay taxes and dividend, or were placed in reserve." Sir Gerald
Templer, then the High Commissioner, was against publicly releasing the figures on surplus and capital transfers and asked that the information be withheld. He wrote:

If correct they would invite devastating criticism that British companies in Malaya have in two years taken 282 million pounds sterling out of Malaya on an original capital investment in Malaya, estimated officially by the Bank of England to be, no more than 68 million pounds sterling.\(^{24}\)

Susan Strange (1971, p.112) claims that between 1955 and 1961, 60% or $844 million of the GDP was moved out of the country, while between 1961 and 1970, outflow of profits was $1.8 billion ringgit as opposed to $1.00 billion in investment.\(^{25}\) This was the price that the Malayan elite chose to pay to prevent the country falling into the hands of the Chinese Communists, although Tan Siew Sin’s example above shows that the elite were not unanimous in their decisions.

While the fear on the part of Malay politicians was due to race rather than ideology, my reading of archival documents also suggests that Britain was actually far more anxious than Malaya to maintain a military presence in Malaya to preserve an imperial image. Troop presence would also have the bonus of protecting British investment from a possible local temptation to nationalize.\(^{26}\) It is a peculiar dimension of the hegemonic relationship between Britain and her ex-colonies that no formal agreement was ever negotiated to safeguard British economic interests. During British Cabinet discussions on the subject, Lennox-Boyd, the Colonial Secretary, actually argued against a formal agreement, referring to the example of Britain's relationship with India and Pakistan on the subject of expropriation. Lennox-Boyd said:

The fact is that the sort of assurances we could expect to secure in any formal agreement are not as valuable to us as the recognition of mutual interest and the establishment of understanding and cordial relations between the commercial interests and the local governments.

...I shall represent to the [Federation] delegation that the repetition of these assurances, which relate to overseas interests, would be to their own advantage in ensuring a prosperous economy for Malaya.\(^{27}\)

In fact, the simplest of assurances sufficed regarding Malaya's position in the sterling area, past and future borrowings on the UK capital market, and the maintenance of preferential treatment for British commercial interests:

*Exchange control.* The Federation Government will continue to regulate its dollar expenditure in general conformity with the policy followed by the Sterling Area and in consultation with Her Majesty's Government. (Annex A)

*Overseas investment.* The conference recorded ...that it would remain the policy of
the Federation Government to encourage overseas investment, industry and enterprise to look to Malaya with every assurance of fair and considerate treatment and without fear of discrimination. This included continuation of the present policy whereby the overseas investor could, after payment of local taxes and obligations, remit to his country, within the framework of ordinary and reasonable exchange control requirements, funds for the payment and repatriation of his capital. (Annex B).²⁸

Britain had already made Malaya pay a high price for the Emergency by cutting back on funds slated for development programs and moving them into military projects.²⁹ A memorandum from the Colonial Office points out that Malaya only received five million pounds sterling from a pool of 120 million pounds allocated for colonial welfare and development. Even after independence, Malaya's conservative development program could be said to be a reflection of the agreement with Britain not to use up its reserves too quickly. External assets were kept at 35% of her liabilities, banks could not lend more than 12.5% of government revenue, and borrowed funds had to be repaid within three months of the end of the fiscal year.³⁰ Britain also continued to set interest rates in Malaya, thus, controlling the rate of local borrowing. This maintained reserves for British banks to use for their purposes. The consequences of the Malayan government’s decision to accommodate the British position on finance led to low-key development. Ironically, while these decisions were based on the racial consideration of maintaining Malay primacy in the political arena under British military shelter, the slow pace of development would ultimately lead to an eruption of discontent on the part of the Malays in 1969.

6.2. DISCOURSE OF PROGRESS: GLOBAL THEORIES AND LOCAL EFFECTS

In the first section and in Chapter 5, I tried to show that British policy regarding Malaya was very much tied into the peculiar relationship between Britain and the USA after World War II. Peculiar in the sense that Britain realized that the mantle of economic superpower had passed on to the US, whereas Britain’s role as the political superpower, while waning, was still significant. In order to safeguard its interests, Britain would have to manipulate its policies to dovetail, at least publicly, with the US.³¹ As I mentioned earlier in the case of the attack on Suez, British and French imperial aims did not always mesh with incipient US imperial aims. In the case of the Emergency in Malaya, Britain represented it as part of the common global struggle of the Free World against Communism. Militarily and politically, Malaya was imaginatively and historically bracketed between the wars in Korea and Vietnam. These Asian theatres of war were clearly identified with the hegemonic struggles between the US, on one side, and the USSR and China on the other.³² In addition, Malaya had the
advantage of being an important source of raw materials, rubber and tin, to the US. These factors allowed the British to downplay the colonial aspect of the war in Malaya. In Chapter 5, I tried to show that Britain crafted media statements to fit America's obsession with communism. Now I want to look at how Malaysia's position as a source of key raw materials, and America's obsession with communism, guided Western policy in Malaysia.

In contrast to the common belief that development is a post-World War II phenomenon, I argue that the evolving discourses of nationalism and development in Malaysia were not new but continuations of much of the accepted assumptions and vocabulary of colonialism. However, no discourse survives without reshaping itself to the context of its time and place, what Nicholas Thomas (1994, p.7) refers to as a “critical reaccentuation”. Therefore, it is this reaccentuation to revitalize the discourse of colonialism during the Cold War, and its consequences for Malaysia, that will occupy me in this section. The discourse of development is important in any discussion of the tropical rainforest because it was, and still is, despite rising criticism in Western countries, the master narrative through which countries, people and objects are assigned economic worth, and ultimately, their right to exist. Under the aegis of international development agencies, Malaysia embarked on programs to expand the plantation sector at the expense of the tropical rainforests. During this period, timber became another source of export revenue providing yet another impetus for deforestation. The Cold War may be over, but the value system evolved through economic development programs in that era survived with only cosmetic changes. This, in turn, was a survival of a discourse linking material progress and racial superiority that that evolved during the colonial period. I begin by discussing the linkage between American and British programs for economic development and the increasing pace of decolonization in the context of the political and military rivalry of the Cold War. I move on to discuss the language of development and the construction of the Third World as a problem needing Western attention. I then discuss the institutional instruments to operationalize the project of development.

6.2.1 Development and the Cold War

The yearning for economic development presents unique opportunities for the United States and other industrial countries to participate in the revolutionary processes that will determine the future of political institutions in the world's less developed areas. Before the Second World War, the world was divided into two: the colonizers and the colonized. After the War, it was more complex: there was the First World and the Third World, with the
communist bloc existing as a kind of menacing, non-interacting Second World. The Third World retained its colonial status of inferiority despite quasi-political independence in name; now constructed as a problem that had to be dealt with rather than simply a source of raw materials to be exploited. Admittedly, Western altruism towards decolonizing countries was underlain by an anxiety around their susceptibility to communism. Colonial powers, such as Britain, contributed to this sensibility by playing up to American fears of communism by conflating any kind of nationalist sentiment with socialism (see Chapter Five). By now Britain was fully aware that no economic or political intervention could succeed without American involvement, and stated that their "main object must be to secure this [American participation]". Thus, Britain fully endorsed the American position and claimed to have developed parallel policies on economic development and combating communism which were supported both at home and in the U.S. The first criteria for British aid, henceforth, would be "likely capacity to resist Communist penetration or attack". The British were especially "anxious to steer American thinking " along those lines since "the question of development must be related to sterling balances", and they were hoping that the Americans would pick up the bill for development. This was a key factor as Britain was planning to curtail the release of colonial sterling reserves banked in England in the future. I will continue this discussion in Section 6.2.2.2 when I examine the Colombo Plan. British fears about Malaya were definitely tied to their concern about the control of rubber and tin, and in the case of Malaya, were echoed by the Americans. But the global strategy for development as visualized by the Americans appeared to be mobilized by an almost religious fear of Communism rather than an equal concern for maintaining control over resources. After all, of the Malayan Emergency and the Korean and Vietnam wars, only Malaya could be seen to be tied to the need to keep vital resources in the Western camp.

In the closing days of the Second World War, the Americans were preoccupied with ensuring that a major depression did not reoccur. The idea behind the Marshall Aid Plan to rebuild Europe was to construct a solid economy tied to the American one thereby avoiding the reoccurrence of political instability. Secretary of State, Allan Dulles, stated that long-term development assistance in conjunction with military aid would be an "invaluable weapon" in the war against international communism. With regard to the newly decolonized states, the Americans realized that they needed new policies to keep these countries in line; "it is doubtful whether the US or the UK, or both together, can maintain and defend ... their interests in ... a 19th century fashion." Therefore, new weapons were sought. The NSC's A Report to the President by the NSC on United States Objectives
and Programs for National Security (14 December 1950) stated:

[The] objective in providing economic aid outside the Nato area is to create situations of political and economic strength in the free world especially in critical areas whose present weakness may invite Soviet thrusts.

The architect of the scheme that best articulated American foreign policy concerns was Walt Rostow. He articulated development as a modernization project that included industrialization, urbanization and literacy to improve the economy of a country, thus leading to the emergence of democratic regimes. Rostow, an economic historian at MIT, wrote the influential The Stages of Economic Growth that took an evolutionary approach to progress and development. He claimed, “It is possible to identify all societies, in the economic dimensions, as lying within one of five categories: the traditional society, the pre-conditions for take-off, the take-off, the drive to maturity, and the age of high mass consumption” (Rostow, 1960, p.4). Technology features prominently in Rostow’s theory. He demarcated the world into a Newtonian and pre-Newtonian one, the latter being traditional societies incapable of systematic productive manipulation for economic advantage (Rostow, 1960, pp.4-5). In the second stage, science provides new productive functions, and in conjunction with an external trigger, such as a military attack, initiates the break-up of the old society. Moreover, at this point, the idea spreads that economic progress is a pre-condition for another purpose such as national dignity (Rostow, 1960, p.6). During the take-off stage, new technologies are adopted, old ways abandoned and new social and political structures evolve concomitant with the economic changes ensuing. In Rostow’s scheme, economic growth and technology were inextricably tied, and the changes they wrought evolved a new way of organizing society so that political and social changes followed in their wake. The obvious step to creating a social and political landscape abroad that Americans could approve of was to begin by offering technological and economic inputs.

The last two stages, the drive to maturity, and the age of high mass consumption, involved the consolidation of the new social and political organization. Rostow’s stages of growth essentially posited one economic and political system for everyone. While he admitted that not all societies would choose modernization, meaning standardized, large-scale production through industrialization and labour specialization, he argued that inevitably, when these societies were faced with more powerful neighbours with the arsenals of modernity behind them, they would capitulate and embrace modernization as the only means to survival (Rostow, 1990, p.xxiv).

The obstacles to progress at the time were assumed to lie in the irrational traditionalism of indigenous peasantries. The academic bastions of this school of thought were MIT (Rostow),

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Princeton (Lucien Pye) and Syracuse (Gendzier, 1985). Lucien Pye's start in Malaya has been noted in Chapter Five Section 4.2.3, and a list of his work is given there. His subsequent importance to development funding and conditional relationship with counterinsurgency programs were the most lasting and damaging legacy of his racist and teleological research on the psychological profile of the Chinese insurgent in *Guerrilla Communism in Malaya, its social and political meaning* (Pye, 1956). Pye subsequently extrapolated his early research to construct psychological profiles of the Chinese political being who is only responsive to forceful authority in works such as *The Authority Crisis in Chinese Politics* (1967), *Warlord Politics: Conflict and Coalition in the Modernization of Republican China* (1971). In the eighties, Pye's work was extrapolated further into constructing the profile of the Asian political being in *Asian Power and Politics: the Cultural Dimensions of Authority* (1985). This profile consisted of respect for authoritarianism coupled with self-interest. Pye's research was complemented by Samuel Huntington's model of racial confrontation in *Political Order in Changing Societies* (1968), and most recently, in *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* (1996). Another influential study at the time was Daniel Lerner's (1958) *The Passing of Traditional Societies*.

The psychological profile of peasant traditionalism was combined with Rostow's evolutionary approach to formulate development policy. Rostow, after all, was Head of Policy Planning during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. Development theories at the time hinged on three assumptions: that economic decisions were predicated on the same (Western) goals that defined success by Western criteria of achievement; the decision-making process depended on an essentialized psychological profile, and that that profile was known (Gendzier, 1985). This psychological inability to generate change was known as the “psychological gap” that exists in the members of traditional societies before they truly embrace modernity. Implicit in the first assumption is the role of technology to generate change. Such assumptions can be seen in the work of the foremost development theorists of the time. By foremost, I mean the theorists who were the most influential with the US government and their financial instruments such as the World Bank. Practically speaking for the Bank, development is manifested by state intervention and global planning for a private enterprise economy. Together, their theories built on an Orientalist discourse that construed the world in terms of binary distinctions premised on the inferiority of the Third World relative to the First, now explicitly articulated as technology-rich and poor. Research based on a theory of development premised on an ‘inferior’ Third World became the “charters of intervention” (Thomas, 1994, p.41)
referred to. Through the influential Social Science Research Council's Committee on Comparative Politics, Gabriel Almond and Lucian Pye directed a series of research efforts between 1963-1978 responsible for introducing functionalist and institutionalist approaches to development policy.\textsuperscript{45} Their influence lay in defining US policy on investment, interest rates on loans, and military intervention for the Third World. Like Orientalism (Said, 1979, p.3) development discourse became the gateway for writing, discussing and implementing programs on the Third World.

From the start of American interest in the Third World, as the newly decolonized countries were now known, economic development was seen as integral to the political regimes that emerged. The dominance of development as a discourse was a function of its embeddedness in the political climate of the time. Development became integrated in counter-insurgency programs as a pacification strategy. But more significantly, with reference to Malaya, support for development programs as a form of political pacification can be attributed to their linkage to military programs and American obsession with Asian insurgencies through the Senate Foreign Relations Committee 1957-1960 that obtained its academic input and rhetorical ballast from the academics mentioned above. A report by a policy team at Syracuse University even suggested that University area programs, graduate and professional schools should all assume that some of their students would work abroad and tailor their programs accordingly, including providing a background in military facts.\textsuperscript{46} Rostow's academic home, MIT, ran courses on counter-insurgency for aid administrators and diplomats as well as military personnel (Blaufarb, 1977, pp.71-74). Rostow (1990, p.x) wrote that he evolved his stages of growth theory in the context of the Cold War, the economic prospects of underdeveloped countries and how these related to the prospects for peace. One of his fundamental questions was what Americans could do to influence the trajectory of political development in the Third World (Rostow, 1990, p.x).

Domestic politics and its obsession with communism (un-American activities) were deeply implicated in the program of development that emerged. American foreign policy focussed on developing governments in Third World countries that would work with the US.\textsuperscript{47} The report released by a team of policy advisers at Syracuse University argued that “Economic development ... is the universal aspiration of the emerging nations of the world.”\textsuperscript{48} Therefore, if the US could identify itself with such progressive aims, it would be in a better position to “transmit to them something of the spirit and value of our way of life.”\textsuperscript{49} Arturo Escobar (1995), Vandana Shiva (1988, 1992, 1994, 1997) and a host of other scholars have criticized this assumption of a single goal, and pathway of
achieving it, for everyone. But during the fifties and sixties, the juggernaut of development funding would have meant few dissenters in the academic world; those few would have been marginalized anyway. An MIT report released in 1960 suggested economic aid and technical assistance as particularly appropriate tools because they could affect the “contours of society as a whole.” In particular, they were eager to create successful capitalist economies in India and Japan to act as counter-weight examples to Communist China, an approach described as an effort “to produce contagious success in economic development on freedom’s side of the Bamboo curtain.” An MIT report to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (1960), whose authors included Max Milliken, Lucian Pye, Daniel Lerner and Walt Rostow among others, divided the world into two camps: the technologically advanced and technologically backward. According to these scholars, lack of technology was the defining feature of the traditional society. These societies could be sophisticated in some ways yet unable to sustain growth because they could not generate a regular flow of inventions and innovations. The biological difference between white and non-white worlds was now re-inscribed through their relationship to technology. A particular, elitist, market-driven view of development was thus imposed because it was seen as part of the teleology of an emerging democracy. Pacification through development was important because it was linked to the survival of local regimes sympathetic to the West. Aid became linked to three purposes:
1) To increase the production and distribution of materials for defence purposes;
2) To build up local military resources; and
3) To target aid at governments friendly to the West.

According to Gendzier (1985, pp. 12-13), Almond, Pye and Huntington were symptomatic of the contradiction that on the one hand, they believed that capitalism and democracy were historically linked, but on the other hand, they had to confront the fact that a market-driven society generated class differences and restricted access to resources thus undermining efforts to build a democratic society. However, echoing colonial discourse, Third World failures were attributed to organic characteristics. Resistance to changes was attributed to innate peasant conservatism, and the ensuing instability and political repression were often rationalized by Western experts in the language of psychology, that is, the Asian, or non-Western, despotic mentality.

6.2.1.1 Third World as a Semiotic Field
In the previous section I discussed some of the political issues underpinning the development discourse that evolved in the second half of the 20th century. On the economic front, there was the
reasoning that the production of vital raw materials had to be kept within the capitalist orbit. Malaya was a particularly good example because it was a source of rubber and tin. On the political front, there were Western fears that the numerous local insurgencies would cause the newly decolonizing countries to fall into the communist camp. Economic development programs were planned to deflect these countries from the temptation of doing so. Moreover, unlike programs of military or political co-operation which were suspected by local elites to harbour imperialistic tendencies, in promoting economic development, "the West does not labour under the same handicap of suspicion of imperialism or selfish exploitation." The consequences of this background to development were two-fold as it affected Malaya. To begin with, the forest, through the Malayan Emergency became symbolic of local insurgencies. Development programs created to detract support for the people in the forest meant centrally planned, large-scale agricultural productivity. In both scenarios, the forest literally stood as an impediment; as a material screen for the insurgents in the first case, and as an obstacle to progress in the second. The productiveness of the forest at the time was not seen as anything that could be co-opted into the market economy. Next, within the larger program of counter-insurgency, development projects were transformative steps that continued the project begun by colonialism – the construction of the Third World in its image, now through self-imposed programs that used Western criteria of achievement and success.

Racism in the form of social Darwinism, that is, economic poverty and technological backwardness as characteristics of all non-white peoples that were also proofs of their moral, physical and intellectual inferiority, continued in the postcolonial world through the discourse of development. In the same manner as David Spurr's (1996, p.61) analysis of colonial discourse, development discourse became the rhetorical position from which to analyze and judge the Third World. Provocatively, Sunil Khilnani (1997, p.158), writing of India, but with relevance for other postcolonial countries, argues that development, through its emphasis on the possibility of change and reform, at least incorporated all the nations of the world into the march of history. Thus, it was an easy step to integrate development with nationalist discourse. But I would argue that development, like Orientalism, only saw the non-European worlds as incorporable into the same historical narrative, insofar that as a project, enough differences were eradicated so as to render it useful in global capitalism, while still remaining in a subordinate category. An example of this is the international division of labour where Third World countries are sufficiently organized along Western institutional lines to provide low wage labour for industries from wealthier countries, yet can be justified their
inferior status because of differences in levels of technical competence. Hence, Third World countries can be judged relatively backward. In development, as in colonial discourse, movement through space was conceived primarily as movement through time. This horizontal mapping was matched vertically by a hierarchy of nation-states. In time, these inferior characteristics became targeted by nationalist leaders as problems that needed rectifying. Development became the metanarrative for the benchmarks of economic success and technological progress. After all, how could anyone be against vaccines and clean water? Nor is this study an argument against these. Rather, this research is an investigation into how so many different societies became persuaded of their need to embrace a single path to success and a single criterion of success that in the process led to the devaluation of nature. In Malaya this process led to devaluation of rainforests, traded against the commodity of plantation agriculture. Now I want to turn to a particular discursive strategy of marking a hierarchy of nation-states, and by default, a hierarchy of races.

6.2.1.2 The Vocabulary of Numbers: Ranking Nations

If we accept that Third World nation-states were the targets of development, and they themselves felt the need for development, how did Western governments and institutions go about assigning resources for projects and deciding on the criteria for achievement? Arjun Appadurai (1993) argues that Orientalism set the stage for a system of ranking because its vocabulary was a way of particularizing and dividing things Oriental into manageable parts. He argues that statistical social science was a way of identifying and quantifying deviant populations as part of the project of civic control extended to the colonies. I want to extend this insight into the way the discourse of development has ranked nations according to their worthiness based on criteria of difference from metropolitan societies. Like the colonial period, difference, as a category, was deployed on whole nation-states and populations that were deemed problem areas because the mark of difference was race. This contrasts with pre-colonial and metropolitan societies where groups on the margin of society were designated as problems.

Data-gathering creates identities by the logic of its form that organizes and collects data according to categories. This in turn redirects local practice by putting different weights and values on existing conceptions of group identity, physical distinctions, and agrarian productivity. Numbers are part of a referential, justificatory and pedagogical complex. In the Third World, states and international agencies put these numbers to important practical uses to argue, and to adjudicate claims
for resources, and to assess options. Numbers served not just for learning but for arguing for certain policy initiatives. Thus, countries were ranked by GDP, and policy advice was based on export potential and market prices. Their appeal lay in that they could convey large amounts of information in a concise manner (Appadurai, 1993, p.319), and they permitted comparisons. From the perceived relationship between technology and economic growth, GDP became the surrogate indicator for technological sophistication by which the nations of the world were ranked. Spurr (1996, p.63) argues that this form of classification was no longer simply classifying the visible, but ranking natural, deeper causes, that is, the capabilities of different races. But they also became a disciplinary strategy because numbers as categories inevitably normalized through standardization. In this case, to standardize each country to the economic level and lifestyle of Western countries. And numbers became part of a hegemonic system whereby they were generally accepted with little challenge to their veracity. The danger lay in the reification of numbers as material reality. Classification was tricky because it sought to be general enough for practical application yet sensitive to local variations. From there, measurements were taken to fit bodies into classifications. Numbers set the stage for policy initiatives by providing a normalizing frame, that is, they flattened out local variations, separating physical and ecological features from the social context. They were valued because they provided an easily shared vocabulary for information transfer and disputation between different groups, that is, linguistic commensuration. This last trait was an important consideration in setting standard global policies. Numbers became a metalanguage for packaging exotic information just as development would become management of the exotic.

In emphasizing certain criteria for progress such as GDP, international agencies stressed a certain route to achievement where the chief means was technological proficiency. Technology, once seen as premier proof of European superiority, became a bargaining chip to encourage the non-European world to co-operate. In keeping with the supposed neutrality of policy-making, governments and their Western patrons dedicated funding in education to an acquisition of technical skills. Abandoned and denigrated was any attempt to teach critical thinking. As early as 1948, the impetus for the Commission on University Education in Malaya was planning the training of a generation of technicians to aid the state:

Successful government depends on accurate understanding of social and economic conditions. The wealth of the country depends on the utilization of its natural resources. The health of its people depends on a knowledge of the causation of diseases and the way in which the operation of these causes may be prevented.
The terms of reference of the Committee were:

1) to consider the preparation of a comprehensive resource inventory of the basic facts concerning land, water and other resources in the Federation of Malaya and their inherent characteristics, potentialities and economic uses;
2) to formulate principles on which the utilisation of land, water and other resources in the Federation of Malaya should be based;
3) to advise the High commissioner and the State and Settlement Governments on the basis for planning the integrated development of the Federation of Malaya in its varied land and water resources;
4) to issue from time to time advice on the best use of land and water resources in the light of information available.60

The Committee was formed on 25 March 1952. Of the 26 members of the Council meeting, three were social scientists, one of whom was an economist. Three members represented the Rubber Research Institute of Malaya. Of the six technical committees suggested, one would represent social science, but it would include two civil servants and the Director of the Medical Research Institute. The Technical Committee on Animal and Vegetable Resources included a suggestion to nominate its three private members from the rubber industry -- Dunlop, Guthries and Socfin. No ordinary members of the public were suggested. In the Mineral resources committee, it was suggested that the private members be from branches of the mining industry.61 Science and technology in Malaya was off to a centralized and market-driven start.

Surprisingly, Malaya could already call on several research institutes although no universities existed yet. This was because the research institutes catered to expatriates whereas locals were not deemed as educable to the university level. Among the institutes available to help the government were: the Geological Survey, the Drainage and Irrigation Department, the Fisheries Department, the Institute of Medical Research, the Veterinary Service, the Forestry Department, and of course, the Department of Agriculture and its extension stations, the Rubber Research Institute, the Raffles Museum and the Botanical Gardens in Singapore. The last, founded in 1859, was the oldest of the research institutions. Both the Botanic Gardens and Raffles Museum were involved in cataloguing the flora and fauna of the Malayan Archipelago. The Botanic Gardens had also been the nurturing ground of the first para-rubber seeds to arrive in the country (see Chapter Three, Section 3.1.5).

As a school girl in Malaysia, we were streamed after our national exams into the science and arts streams; the top 30-40% of the pupils was sent into the science stream, and students were strongly discouraged from switching to the arts stream. Anyone wishing to defy the wishes of their parents and teachers to go into the arts or social sciences would be quickly isolated by the immediate mantle of inferiority. In the case of Malay pupils, they were not just discouraged, they were not
allowed to switch over as the Malay government was anxious to correct the ‘disproportionate’
number of non-Malays in the sciences. The current quota system for university places not only
restricts entry by race but also restricts acceptance into science and professional courses by race so
that the majority of the students in these disciplines are now Malay. (The race of the applicant must
be declared on application forms to local universities). This policy reflects the general social
acceptance of science and scientists in the hierarchy of human worth. Concerned with maintaining
racial primacy, the Malay-led government targeted the acquisition of scientific education as part of
the program of racial competition. If development was seen exclusively as an issue of growth through
technology, did this perspective affect the non-evolution of a civil society in Malaysia? In its place,
we appear to have a fragile racial coalition held together by the promise of material goods. This is not
to dismiss the real material comfort that development can bring, but to question the survival of any
society that can be bought off and persuaded to ignore a lack of political participation. During my
fieldwork in Malaysia in 1995, the country was experiencing an economic boom. I was simultaneously
impressed and depressed by the number of people who stated that they could go along with
government discrimination whether against the ethnic group they belonged to or immigrant labour,
as long as the economy continued along its successful trajectory. Even the recent political agitation
over the arrest and conviction of the former Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim did not translate
into a backlash against Prime Minister Mahatir Muhammad at the voting booth in 1999.

6.2.2 Colombo Plan: Operationalizing Development

No aid program loomed so large in the Asian public imagination as the Colombo Plan. It was
conceived in 1950 with the mandate of furthering economic development. One of the Plan’s self-
described achievements was “the status to which the planned use of economic resources has become
elevated”. From the start, the British awareness that bribing former colonies into supporting the
Western platform would require American aid was tinged with resentment of the knowledge that the
Americans could easily out-bribe the British. The Colombo Plan was born in the shadow of these
tensions between the British and the Americans. To give it its full title, The Colombo Plan for
Cooperative Economic and Social Development in Asia and the Pacific, was an association of
independent countries. One of its information booklets described it as a "Passage to Opportunity"
(Martin Adeney, 1969), emphasizing once again a rite of passage as a linear motion through time
from backwardness to progress. Development, like colonialism, would be the most ambitious
counter-insurgent project because it attempted to restructure the self-valuation of the Third World. Initial Colombo Plan members were India, Pakistan, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Over the next few years, the biggest donors, the US and Japan, and other recipient countries including Malaysia (as Malaya) in 1957, would join them.\textsuperscript{63} Ostensibly, the Colombo Plan was created to facilitate aid and development projects in the region. Specific aid programs were negotiated on a bilateral basis, but the general outlines of the aid program were capital and commodity aid, technical assistance through experts and volunteers and training assistance in the form of scholarships abroad. In 1981, more than $65.1 billion dollars had been expended on the program. Of this, $4.3 billion was allocated to 160,541 scholarships and 48,129 experts and volunteers who went to work in the field in the recipient member countries.\textsuperscript{64}

The reality of whether the Plan was useful to the recipient countries is debatable, and in the case of Malaysia, doubted by the British themselves, although seen as a necessary propaganda move. A letter from O.A. Spencer (6 December 1951), the Economic Secretary in the Federation of Malaya Treasury, to J.D. Higham, Head of South East Asia Department in the Colonial Office, commented on the Plan in these words:

Considering, quite frankly, that none of these contributes in the remotest way to the welfare of the people in this country but is really a form of international window dressing, it is really getting beyond a joke.\textsuperscript{65}

Spencer went on,

As to the Colombo Plan I hope it may not be too tactless once again to remind our friends in the Treasury that we have yet to discover what benefits we get from it and that it is quite impossible to persuade, for example, State Governments whose outlook is primarily Malay, to give priority of work in the middle of the emergency to something which they can see little or no benefit to their States. Should Treasury be artless enough to reply that the benefit we get from the Colombo Plan is the right to borrow in the London market, may I suggest that the gentle answer should be that it is, or should be, part of the birth right of every member of the sterling area to borrow from the London market, and that indeed far from borrowing in the London market Malaya has poured into the London market (on short and long term) over £100 million in less than two years. Some of this may be of a temporary character, but we obviously must do a lot of borrowing before the net flow of capital between the United Kingdom and this country becomes inward as far as we are concerned.\textsuperscript{66}

Lord Reading's report on the meeting in Karachi indicated that the real importance of the Colombo Plan was engendering goodwill for the United Kingdom, and that the US and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development were great supporters.\textsuperscript{67} Moreover, Reading reported, "There was no disposition to embarrass us by pressing us unduly on sterling balance releases although there was a perhaps understandable reluctance to see releases of sterling balances described as external
Aid would be given in the form of financial aid, technical aid in the form of field experts and training of local students in various technical fields. The participating countries were ranked according to GDP both in terms of defining need and evaluating success. In keeping with the above section that showed that Malaya was financially well off, but locked into a defence-for-currency deal with the British, Malaysia never received much aid from the US. Most American aid went to India, Pakistan, South Korea and Vietnam, in other words, to frontline countries in the fight against communism. Instead, Malaysia and Singapore were recipients of unusually generous, low interest loans -- $60 million and $120 million to Malaysia and Singapore respectively -- from the British through the Special Aid Program inaugurated in 1968 (Colombo Plan, 1983). This supports Strange's (1971) contention that as part of the agreement for keeping their surplus in sterling, Malaysia and Singapore would receive loans for development schemes to placate their populations. Twenty-five percent of the loan was in the form of direct grants while the rest was interest free.

6.2.2.1 New Missionaries and the Word of Science

As in colonial projects, numbers were used to argue, prescribe and judge the effects of Colombo Plan programs. Through the calculus of underused resources, the significance of numbers took on major dimensions. Progress became measured in gallons of water used, miles of road built, yards of cable strung and square miles of forests cleared. In Malaysia, in particular, it was imperative that the "jungle yielded its secrets" through mapping and soil-coring so that it could be cleared for timber and agriculture (Adeney, 1969, pp.17-19). Countries were encouraged to continue on the path of export-oriented agriculture with the help of fertilizers and pesticides. Not surprisingly, the main purpose of mapping Malaysia turned out to be evaluating its potential for planting rubber and oil palm. In planning a "university to fit a country's needs" the Plan's First World administrators and Third World disciples, having determined what a country needed, disparagingly described an arts degree as qualifying its possessor to stand in the unemployed queue (Adeney, 1969, p.19). Civil rights were tied strictly to finding one's place within the pre-determined market economy, an early manifestation of the trickle-down effect. In other words, since critical thinking doomed one to the unemployment queue, Third World societies would have to wait until they had achieved financial success before deserving civil rights. Not surprisingly, today countries as disparate as Chile and South Korea have been advised to forget past repression so as not to jeopardize economic growth and foreign
investment. Technical assistance was a vital part of the Colombo Plan even after dispensing with the quite obvious reasons for operationalizing the Plan. Technology was seen as the only way forward. Peasant agricultural systems and indigenous knowledge were discarded in the process (Shiva, 1997; Marglin, 1996). More subtly, the seeming neutrality of scientists must have been a godsend in coupling the training of a new elite that could implement progress yet at the same time staying uncritical and within the Western camp. Economic progress was intrinsically related to technology, and social justice was never an explicit issue. It was always assumed that when the economic pie was big enough, there would be enough for all. Colombo Plan public relations described the situation facing its non-white members thus:

The countries of South and South-East Asia are on the threshold of a new revolution.... In these efforts, technology is playing an important role. The countries of South and South-East Asia which are rich in their traditions of culture and heritage and their tremendous manpower have been technologically backward. The impact of the Industrial Revolution which completely changed the outlook and standard of living of the people of the West was but mildly felt in these areas. Agriculture continued on the same pattern, industrial development, except in the export sector, was not marked and basic social services were inadequately developed.  

The early formulators of the Plan were concerned with how the lack of technical institutions, trained men and technicians constrained the pace of development. The interesting aspect of considering only trained men may have been the intrinsic discrimination in language as opposed to criteria to qualify. In Malaysia, women, including one of my cousins, benefited from the scholarships as well as men. However, even technical expenses were only a small portion of the Plan's costs, about five to seven percent of the total costs. Of that amount, over half went to the payment of foreign experts. Most of the money from the Plan was channelled into loans, investments and equipment. American Peace Corp workers went to Asia through the Colombo Plan. Aware of the racial cleavages in the country, and probably maintaining assumptions of race and capability, the colonial authorities tried to hire Chinese Americans and non-American Chinese to go to Malaya as science teachers. The idea was to hire Chinese who were definitely not "Communistic" to set an example to locals. General Templer asked for American aid in technical experts, possibly in agriculture and rural education, especially those who could not go back to China and were assumed to be hostile to Communism, to help in resettlement and education (Observer, 20 April 1952). Unfortunately for them the essentialist assumption that Chinese Americans would feel some form of kinship with the Chinese in Malaya and volunteer to go there was misplaced. The Malays did not want more Chinese, and the local Chinese wanted to know why they were not hired. The problem, as the Colonial Office was
aware, was that there were enough local people with qualifications to take up the post. A confidential savingram from the Governor of Singapore to the Secretary of State for the Colonies (21 July 1952) stated that Singapore had no shortage of qualified people, and furthermore, Chinese Americans were likely to be Kuomintang sympathizers which would also pose problems of divided loyalty. However, when the Singaporean economist, Dr. R.K. Chou was brought to Malaya as an expert, British Malayan civil servants refused to work with him, and he was dismissed. He was replaced by another British civil servant.

In the late fifties, a report tabled by Syracuse University’s Maxwell Graduate School estimated that almost 1.59 million Americans went abroad as business people, missionaries, teachers, students and relief workers. The report went on to suggest that these people be used to provide field information and intelligence through a network of local contacts. In Malaysia, a common joke was that the American Field Students program and the Peace Corp were the youth arms of the CIA. In a sense, this too was a continuation of an earlier trope, the 'White Man's Burden', now cloaked in neutral techno-jargon. The former colonies became a semiotic field connotating everything problematic and irrational requiring the attention of the new missionaries of the West -- the technical experts. Equations and formulas became the new word of God. Templer, speaking to the Legislative Council on 19 March 1952, laid out his strategy for agriculture in the following terms:

I know of no way of ensuring that a proper agricultural and irrigation and forestry programme is developed in any country unless it be along the lines of a general pattern laid down for the country as a whole by the central government in consultation with various States and based on the advice of the best experts available. The next requisite is that this general pattern is loyally accepted and carried out with sincerity throughout the land.

The idea was always for foreign experts to design a scheme, which would then be imposed on local people. Forests of course, did not figure in the scheme of things except as barrier.

In principle no forest reserve will be alienated for agricultural purposes before the alienation of State land, but it is acknowledged that departures from this principle may prove necessary in the interests of the State. A recent case in point is an application for 25,000 acres in the Kemasul Forest reserve (Mukim of Mentakab) for planting rubber.

Since World War II, no institution symbolized development and progress as greatly as the World Bank or more specifically, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD). The 1955 mission for the IBRD concluded that rubber constituted 40% of all export earnings in Malaya although the chief export of Borneo was timber. Most private investment at the time was going to replanting rubber and palm oil, whereas public investment was going into clearing land for (Malay) smallholder settlement. The other public investment was in the extension of the road.
network as a prerequisite for making new land accessible to planters. Again, we see the different valuation of the forest. It was valuable only in its absence, providing timber and cleared land for planting rubber and oil palm. The mission urged that the Malayan government espouse limited intervention beyond providing infrastructure and a favourable climate for foreign investment. Its conclusions on agriculture were the following:

The possibilities for expanded agricultural production ... appear promising; acceleration of the pace of such development present difficult problems. The most significant of these are the inadequacy of the knowledge and evaluation of unutilized agricultural potentialities; barriers to improvement of cultivation practice and to settlement and development of new lands, imposed by tradition, habit and inertia, and the adverse effects on the incentive to improve and expand agriculture created by unsatisfactory credit and marketing agreements, unfavourable developments in land tenure relationships.

This analysis dovetailed well with the advice of the Colonial Secretary, Oliver Lyttelton. In 1953, Lyttelton stated:

Colonial Governments will defeat their own object if they saddle themselves with a crippling burden of recurrent charges on capital which does not earn a return. The only certain way of providing for these recurrent charges is to see that a proper place is given in development plans to those basic services which make a direct contribution to the expansion of the territory's resources.

Development would unfold according to the conservative colonial policy combined with the assumption that the problem, as the IBRD mission saw it, was the barrier of traditional peasant psychology. This could be broken down only by applications of systematic technology that would maximize output and spur on the opening of new lands.

And yet, and yet.... The excitement and hope of the early years of believing in the potential of technology to provide for a better society should not be discounted. As a child riding the new roads with my father surveying the newly deforested lands in preparation for agriculture, I find that no words written today can recapture the exhilaration of the sunlit land in front of me in contrast to the gloomy forests. Visible and transparent, its secrets yielded, the land seemed to hold promise for a new world. Even adults then did not question the costs paid by others for economic development, and less still, question whether the emphasis on technological solutions predicated an assumed hierarchy in worth and values. Having caused economic chaos and political instability through their imperial aims, the US and Britain could portray themselves in an altruistic light by sending forth a new group of missionaries, the technical experts. These experts were willing to endure discomfort for the sake of bringing the Word of Science to their benighted fellow human beings. State survival was decided by technology as standardized, mass produced objects for market consumption and export,
and these became the benchmark for success of Third World countries.

6.3 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND MALAYSIAN IDENTITY

Sunil Khilnani (1997) and Amitav Ghosh (1997) have both argued that modernity was the only saving grace of colonialism that otherwise would have been simply a humiliating period. Instead, local elites saw modernity as a goal to emulate on the way to equalling their colonial rulers. Partha Chatterjee (1993) saw the achievement of modernity through development as the means of legitimizing the new post-colonial state. Nationalism, until independence, had assumed the role of criticism of colonial oppression. Post-independence nationalism did not evolve into any form of emancipatory movement. Therefore, economic development was especially important in the many post-colonial states that had to unite a fractured population. This dilemma was especially acute in countries such as Malaysia that had a shaky legitimacy to begin with, having co-operated with the colonialists to suppress an anti-colonial insurrection. It is useful to recall that Malaysia used the argument of economic superiority to justify its separate identity from Indonesia. By then, the ranking of nation-states by GDP was widely accepted even by those countries denigrated by the ranking system. Franz Fanon had long foreseen that racial alienation came about in a two-step process: recognition of economic subordination; followed by internalization of inferiority (quoted in McClintock, 1995, p.361). Nationalism was seen as a way to revitalize racial pride by driving out the oppressors. That was usually the easier part. What followed in Malaysia, as in many postcolonial countries, was that national pride became coupled with economic success because the latter was a precondition of racial pride and this also was how countries were ranked internationally. Government propaganda even argued for a Malaysian identity based on complementary economic activities:

The territories of Malaysia constitute one natural homeland....

They do not have the climatic range of the United States of America or the U.S.S.R. In fact they all share a common equatorial hot-wet climate, a soil rich in mineral wealth and a terrain covered with equatorial virgin jungle where man's labour has not converted it for the cultivation of tropical crops like rubber, pepper, coconut and rice.

The natural resources of the Malaysian territories are happily complementary to one another for the needs of a great state which has ambitions of taking off into modern industry and an advanced economy. Malaysia produces some of the foremost sinews of modern industry -- tin, rubber and oil. (Malaysia: The New Nation, 1963).

Acceptance of this criterion in part reflected a realistic assessment of who ran the world, and in part reflected the sadder aspect of internalization of colonial values. Since economic development was a way of legitimizing the leadership of the dominant group, it was usually implemented at the expense
of other groups. This section sets out the context in which the Malaysian government embarked on their ambitious program of state-sponsored plantation expansion that became the dominant cause of deforestation in Malaysia. Plantations became the 'nature' of the new nation-state. I then examine how the narrative framing of the resulting reconfiguration of the landscape was naturalized through the iconic figure of the bumiputra settler-farmer.

6.3.1 Independence and Structures of Contestation Affecting Resources
Khilnani (1997), Chatterjee (1993), Ludden (1993) argue that colonialism institutionalized sectarianism in political representation, thus setting the pattern of future contests for state power. These contests, described by Khilnani (1997, p.195), over the “ownership of the state” manifest themselves in two arenas: economic opportunities and cultural recognition. In Malaysia, the two arenas merge into one. Cultural primacy became the precondition of control of economic opportunities. After Malaya was granted independence by the British in 1957, the Malay-led government sought control of economic opportunities because one of the primary criteria for cultural pride is the control of economic opportunities. To dismiss the cultural dimension in politics and economics is to ignore that nations are cultural representations, which are contested because of the power of these representations to limit and legitimize access to the resources of the nation-state. Political contests take place within a context of essentialized and enumerated communities; in other words, biological traits are seen to define a community and who counts as part of it. This, in turn, determines who has access to rights and resources. This last section sets out to explain the second phase in the expansion of plantation agriculture in Malaysia in light of continuing racial and class tensions.

6.3.2 Agents of Local Development
At the time of the release of the IBRD report (1955) there were already 116,000 land applications waiting to be processed. The resettlement of the Chinese peasantry in New Villages under closely watched conditions may not have been a source of envy, but pressure was mounting on local politicians to establish a program to provide land and amenities for the Malay peasantry. By its own admission, the government acknowledged that the resettlement of Chinese smallholders in the Emergency had halted agricultural development (Shamsul Bahrain and Lee, 1988, p.3). Some emphasis was given to rural development since most of UMNO's support came from rural areas, which were
populated mainly by Malays. The government had to contend with rural poverty and they did so by establishing two public enterprises – the Rural Industrial Development Authority (RIDA) established in 1950, and the Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA) in 1956.85

RIDA’s mandate was to organize and stimulate the development of rural areas, and thus bring the Malays’ economic level up to that of the other racial communities. RIDA was to develop local district and mukim (parish) development boards which would have autonomy within limits established by state and settlement development boards. It was hoped thereby that the mistrust of the Malays towards non-Malays could be overcome, and the task of building a united nation facilitated.86 The colonial authorities were concerned by criticism in the Malay press that Malay development was proceeding too slowly.87 Touching on a politically sensitive issue, Dr. Onn, leader of UMNO criticized the money lavished on the New Villages which was not matched by spending on the Malay kampungs.88 In defence, the government argued that the MCA had contributed a great deal to resettlement funds, not to mention fines imposed upon, and the sales of the belongings of, people resettled.89 Moreover, the British argued that there was a lack of Malay candidates to carry out development. However, in his speech to Legislative Council, Templer (19 March 1952, CO 1022/253) admitted that the economic position of the “Malay race” was a matter of serious concern because “[A] most dangerous situation will develop one day unless drastic steps are taken”. Obviously, racial concerns were responsible for moving the colonial government to act on the issue of Malay peasant poverty. But despite RIDA’s budget of five million dollars, only one eighth had been spent at the time.90

While RIDA was of limited success, FELDA opened up 762,197 hectares of land and resettled 106,510 families between 1956-1987 (Shamsul Bahrin and Lee, 1988, p.26). FELDA, created in 1956 with a budget of $10 million ringgit, had a mandate to promote and assist land development and settlement schemes initiated by other local agencies rather than actually carrying out projects themselves. The combination of Malay peasant poverty, and a lack of agricultural development owing to a circumscribed Chinese population, was the political impetus for FELDA which would have the most dramatic impact on deforestation yet seen in Peninsular Malaysia. But in the 1960s whether these plans for rural development would ever translate into action was still debatable. This would change after 13 May 1969.
6.3.3 May 13 and the NEP

In the 10 May 1969 elections, the ruling Alliance party lost seats to opposition parties in the non-Malay urban areas as well as in some rural areas with predominantly Malay populations. Through a combination of factors, including rising unemployment and rising expectations in the wake of independence, and seen within the context of the always volatile racial antagonism, the racially-motivated violence that followed in its wake on 13 May 1969 was unsurprising. Despite the censorship imposed at the time, some literature developed on the ‘May 13’ incident over the next two decades (Abdul Rahman, 1969; Gagliano, 1970; Goh, 1971; Parker, 1979). There is still no conclusive evidence that the violence was premeditated. Three hypotheses emerged:

- The violence was premeditated in an effort to cause trouble in the country
- It was precipitated by a faction within the ruling UMNO organization in an effort to discredit the Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman and trigger his retirement
- The violence was unpremeditated and was the result of Malay fears of the country being taken over by non-Malays in the face of opposition party wins in the election.

Tunku Abdul Rahman’s (1969) claim that it was a Communist uprising received little credence. All commentators other than official government propaganda agree that the violence began with Malay supporters of the government. In any case, the details of the riots are less important for this research than its outcome. A state of emergency was again declared. The third section of Chapter Five discusses the increase in the number of stories concerning danger and violence in the forest in the aftermath of the urban riots of May 13 as part of the rumour regime to distract public attention from the real location of political unrest.

In the wake of the May 13 riots, the reformist faction took power under Tun Abdul Razak who replaced the more fiscally cautious Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman. Razak understood that if Malaysia as a nation-state was to survive, the government had to address the interethnic disparity in incomes. As Director of Operations, his New Year speech laid out Malaysia’s problems thus, "we are faced with two major national problems -- race relations and economic development."

Razak went on to say,

It is now clear to all of us that the era that led to the May 13 tragedy has ended. We might call it an 'experimental era in which the different races were encouraged to live together under the democratic way of life.

We had thought that in this way, in adopting a policy of fairness to all, ... a nation of united and loyal citizens could be established. ("A 'think afresh' year says Tun," The Straits Times, 1 January 1970).

Indeed, any pretence at racial equality would go out the window in the wake of the May 13 riots. In 1970, the Malaysian government introduced the New Economic Policy (NEP), followed a year later
with its blueprint for operations, the Second Malaysia Plan (SMP). The primary objective of the NEP was to achieve national unity by eradicating poverty "irrespective of race" through social restructuring to achieve interethnic economic parity. The phrase "irrespective of race" in Malaysian political parlance had absolutely everything to do with race. Razak's political ascendance was evident in his New Year speech, which was given top coverage compared to the speech by Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman. Razak would take over as Prime Minister in time to inaugurate the NEP and the SMP. In the words of the new Prime Minister, the Second Malaysia Plan as a blueprint for the NEP set out to "eliminate the identification of race with economic function", long taken for granted in Malaysia. Its "objectives, priorities, and strategies ... have all been shaped by the over-riding need to promote national unity" (Forward, SMP, 1971). 'National unity' was predicated on a positive discrimination program in education, business and employment opportunities. But these opportunities themselves were dependent on continued economic growth, and in particular, export growth (SMP, 1971, p.6). The SMP's goals were all honourable: economic parity, regional and rural-urban balance. But because they were all predicated on racial categories, the rationale that it would lead to national unity has always been defeated from its inception. The NEP and the SMP were calculated to consolidate Malay support. But this left over 40% of the Malaysian population with aspirations but no institutional channels to facilitate the realization of their aspirations. Not surprisingly, Malaysia has continued, as in the colonial period, to be a country comprising a nation and a non-nation. Instead, the non-nation was offered a slice of the economic pie; a viable bribe as long as the pie existed.

6.3.4 Projecting the Corporate State

The Malaysian government operationalized the NEP by entering the corporate arena as a serious actor. The machinations of the evolution of state capitalism in Malaysia are beyond the scope of this study (see K.S. Jomo, 1997, 1988). The result was two-pronged. First, aside from the usual government departments supporting infrastructure, federal and state level statutory bodies were established to implement the NEP. At independence there were two; in 1965, there were only five in agriculture; by 1975 there were 38 agricultural bodies, and by 1980, 83. Although most of the increase in public enterprises, especially after 1970, came from the manufacturing and service sectors, the agricultural agencies continued to have the most visible impact on the transformation of the landscape.
The most visible manifestation of the NEP was in the transformation of the landscape through the ambitious FELDA programs. It is hardly surprising that FELDA would emerge at the forefront of the government's ambitious new strategy. Razak, as minister for rural development between the years 1959-1970, had been the minister responsible for FELDA. The government understood the urgency of raising rural incomes (SMP, 1971, p.3) and pinned its hopes on the "abundant land, forestry and other resources" (SMP, 1971, p.120). Unlike many postcolonial countries where the urgent issue of land hunger led to a confrontation over land ownership, Malaysia was fortunate in being able to circumvent these problems by opening up the forests. After all, earlier forest squatters had been interned in the New Villages. While the east coast states could develop their hinterlands, many west coast states did not have the same luxury, and it was assumed that some inter-state migration would take place. Interestingly, the Malaysian government always distanced itself from other transmigration or resettlement programs in Southeast Asia (Shamsul Bahrin and Lee, 1988, p.33). Economic development as tied to agriculture did not rest on reform but the duplication of large scale, standardized agriculture -- in fact, the corporate model. The Plan also focussed on increasing production for export, at that point still very much focussed on rubber and tin. FELDA created a complementary system for agricultural export that did not compete with the corporate estates especially in light of eventual government control of the largest plantation companies, a subject I discuss briefly at the end of this chapter.

The point is that for a newly independent country to survive, the simplest solution to raising incomes was to intensify old practices. There were ample reasons for continuing on the well-known path since the conditions of success could be determined, and the information and institutional resources and markets existed to support it. In Chapter Two and Section 6.2 I described the unusual situation of sophisticated research support available to the rubber and later, the oil palm industry in Malaysia mainly through the Rubber Research Institute of Malaysia (RRIM) and the Palm Oil Research Institute of Malaysia (PORIM). Physical and chemical information for the optimum conditions of growth were available. Unlike many developing countries, Malaysia boasted a long-term record of climatic information and extensive information on soils and flora. Various journals concentrated on just plantation related research, or even more specifically, just rubber alone as in the case of the journal Rubber Development. Research on the various stages of growth, processing and shipment of rubber and oil palm were available including standardized, easily understood manuals issued in English, Malay, Chinese and Tamil. Examples of specific research after the Second World
War that contributed directly to the competitiveness of the industry included cloning of high-yielding rubber trees, standardizing the quality of rubber products since standardized quality was one of the main advantages of synthetic rubber over natural rubber, increasing the lifespan of trees, and mechanizing some of the most physically unpleasant (and probably dangerous) tasks associated with creping rubber (Bateman, 1971). Plantations were both the laboratory and exhibits of science and technology in Malaysia. The Malaysian government sent exhibits of the rubber industry abroad as part of a public relations campaign to portray the vital part played by rubber in everyday life.⁹⁴ The exhibit featured various stages in the production cycle of rubber as a diorama against the backdrop of a panel representing the forests. In art as in life, the forest was projected as the unproductive, undifferentiated flat space beside the three-dimensional space of the plantation.

In the mid-sixties, the declining price of rubber in the face of competition from synthetic rubber and fears of eventual exhaustion of tin deposits led Malaya to attempt diversification of its export base (Table 6.5). In particular, the standardized quality of artificial rubber made it a better option than the uncontrollable flaws of nature.⁹⁵ The Second World War had spurred the race to develop a substitute for rubber as the shock of the Japanese conquest of Malaya and their control of rubber supplies sank in (Bateman, 1971).⁹⁶ Not surprisingly, cloning was embraced as the saviour of the rubber industry then, as biotechnology makes claims for the plantation sector today. The estate sector laid off almost a fifth of its workers as it shifted production to palm oil and timber. Timber production doubled between 1960 and 1965, and increased by another 2.5 times between 1966-70 (SMP, 1971, p.12). However, more than 60% was coming from Sabah; it was the expansion of the oil palm plantations that was beginning to compete with rubber for land (Table 6.4). (Food self-sufficiency also became an issue after 1966 but has declined in importance again.) In contrast to the concern for the rubber industry, annual reports from the Ministry of Forestry worried at the large number of positions unstaffed -- 25 out of 87.⁹⁷ Of the remaining 52, a number were staffed by Peace Corp and Colombo Plan volunteers rather than permanent staff. The report also noted that companies had little control over labour poaching wood (pp.33-34).⁹⁸ And yet the poaching had very little impact on the forests in contrast to the impact of clearance for agriculture. Logging for timber would continue to be a minor cause of deforestation in Peninsular Malaysia whereas oil palm would overtake rubber as the primary impetus behind deforestation, and state-sponsored agriculture would overtake the private sector as the chief perpetrator (Table 6.7). In 1969, the proportion of land suitable for agriculture was estimated at 9.8 million acres (SMP, 1971, p.133). The target of the SMP was to
develop over a million acres of land through various state and federal land development agencies. FELDA alone would be scheduled to develop over 55,000 acres of land a year and to resettle 23,700 families over the course of the five-year plan (SMP, 1971, p.1). In contrast, rehabilitating already developed land under FELCRA was set at a target of 25,000-40,000 acres for the whole five-year period with future targets set at a modest 3,200 acres a year (SMP, 1971, p.134). Agricultural expansion through deforestation was always a more viable alternative in the scale of values that prevailed than rehabilitating cultivated and abandoned land. Furthermore, inter-state migration meant that land pressure in certain states could be exported to other states mainly Pahang (Shamsul Bahrin and Lee, 1988, p.84).

Table 6.5 Malaysia Export Performance1951-1959 ( % )

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1951-55</th>
<th>1956-60</th>
<th>1961-65</th>
<th>1966-69</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rubber</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tin</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timber</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palm Oil</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Gomez and Jomo, 1997, p. 18

Table 6.6 Annual Area Developed 1957-1987 (Hectares)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rubber</th>
<th>Oil Palm</th>
<th>Sugar-Cane</th>
<th>Cocoa</th>
<th>Coffee</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1957-60</td>
<td>5,909</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5,909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961-65</td>
<td>35,390</td>
<td>11,093</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>46,483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966-70</td>
<td>18,562</td>
<td>53,900</td>
<td>3,994</td>
<td>991</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>72,462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971-75</td>
<td>45,321</td>
<td>116,615</td>
<td>3,994</td>
<td>991</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>166,921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976-80</td>
<td>63,744</td>
<td>125,172</td>
<td>1,743</td>
<td>13,254</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>203,913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981-85</td>
<td>30,135</td>
<td>124,664</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4725</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>159,524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986-87</td>
<td>2,113</td>
<td>60371</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3428</td>
<td>751</td>
<td>66663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>201,174</td>
<td>491,815</td>
<td>5737</td>
<td>22398</td>
<td>751</td>
<td>721,875</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


*Note that all measurements now given in metric units rather than imperial units to be consistent with the Malaysian practice.

Table 6.7 Land Developed 1961 – 1990 (Hectares)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>166,612</td>
<td>173,937</td>
<td>348,265</td>
<td>392,760</td>
<td>360,470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(FELDA)</td>
<td>(48,280)</td>
<td>(72,440)</td>
<td>(161,900)</td>
<td>(206,819)</td>
<td>(161,600)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Sector</td>
<td>56,279</td>
<td>25,779</td>
<td>55,502</td>
<td>64,545</td>
<td>57,100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


An important aspect of the success of the internal migration program was the orderliness and institutional environment in which the program was carried out. It helped establish an air of normalcy.
and inevitability to the program. In Chapter Five, I discussed the insecurity of the post-colonial state and its attempts to legitimize itself through the heroic narrative of freedom fighting. In a less obvious fashion, appropriating the vocabulary of science and technology, one of the tools of Empire, allowed the Malaysian state to transfer some of the cultural authority that went with science and technology to itself. Malaysia, of course, is not alone in an almost blind faith in the power of technology to cure its ills. Moreover, by invoking a technical vocabulary, the biases of the state were cloaked by the neutral language of science and planning. Thus, the state entered as a neutral arbitrator of resources rather than as an actor throwing in its lot with certain groups. Science was a neutral voice legitimating the destruction of the forests through the criteria of rational regional development planning (Figure 6.1). An example of the scale of regional development is the Jengka Triangle project which called for the development of 450 square miles of virgin forest and the resettlement of 120,000 people in 97 villages serviced by over a thousand miles of roads.99

Figure 6.1 FELDA development in Perlis. Source: Shamsul Bahrin and Lee, 1988, p.87.
Eight industrial centres were planned for the region including one of the largest timber-processing centres. In the process, the area was scheduled to produce 300,000 tons of logs a year. The main crop of the scheme would be oil palm followed by rubber. Given the scale, and cost of, the project the degree of participation of new “missionaries” was also unsurprising. Among the contractors involved were Tippetts-Abbett-McCarthy-Stratton of New York, Hunting Technical Services of London, Tuolumnne Corporation of San Francisco and the Economist Intelligence Unit of London.\textsuperscript{100} Between them, they covered planning, engineering, development economics, economic feasibility, financial analysis and forest utilization.

During my visit to Malaysia, one of the most irritating incidences was the reoccurrence of blackouts, or electrical power outages. This brings me to an important aspect of centralizing state power, that of projecting the presence of the state. One of the indicators of a neglectful state is the frequency of power outages and crumbling roads. The development of power lines, roads and water mains were all important for their role in transforming the landscape and physically embodying the network of the state. To a minor extent these also caused deforestation. In the same period, no money was spent on silviculture, reafforestation, or higher education in forestry, but instead money was spent on forest road construction, timber research laboratory, and timber depots. Projected spending including forest road construction was $1.5 million followed by sawmills, fibre board plants, timber depot and lastly reafforestation at $300,000 but nothing on silviculture.\textsuperscript{101} More importantly, the biggest expenditure of $140 million dollars went to the construction of hydro plants. Mega-hydro projects were launched and connected to a national grid (SMP, 1971, p.209) many of them financed and encouraged by the various aid and development agencies. The IBRD alone provided $190 million of the $207.6 million required for hydro projects (SMP, 1971, p.210). Aside from the IBRD, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) was also eager to provide loans for further development of hydro-projects. These rural electrification programs were important for the development of agro-based industries. Certainly Malaysians were eager to have electricity. However, the by-product of hydro dams, especially in the context of most developing countries, turned out to be vast tracts of drowned land. Smaller scale dams could have accomplished the same results, but the large scale dams were symbolic of the technological progress about which developing countries were eager to boast. Perhaps it is typical of Malaysia that when this program did come to pass, it was not due to the rational acceptance of technological and methodological criteria but the irrational fear that was the result of essentializing race.
6.3.5 Constructing the Settler as a Metaphor for the Bumiputera

Much of the following official information on Felda schemes comes from Shamsul Bahrin’s and Lee Boon Thong’s *3 decades of evolution* (1988). Shamsul Bahrin and Lee are two geographers at the University of Malaya who were asked by FELDA to research and write the book to commemorate FELDA’s success over three decades. They reported that a typical FELDA scheme consists of an estate of approximately 2000 hectares dedicated either to oil palm or rubber. Each settler is allocated 3.2 to 4 hectares as well as an additional hectare for their house and orchard or *dusun* (Shamsul Bahrin and Lee, 1988, p.38). The settlement area is grouped around the local management complex. Also located there will be basic facilities such as a mosque, clinic, food credit shop operated by FELDA, school and recreation field or *padang* (Shamsul Bahrin and Lee, 1988, p.119). The presence of a food credit shop echoes the arrangements on private estates and has been the source of some of the resentment documented in the newspaper articles. Despite reference to the program for settlers as “bioeconomics” (Shamsul Bahrin and Lee, 1988, p.33), FELDA schemes were developed much along the lines of plantation agriculture by concentrating on a few crops for export.

FELDA, in accordance with government plans, openly stated that the goal was to concentrate on monocultural plantations and admitted that having decided to pursue oil palm they would have to rely on the private sector model to develop their schemes. This goal conflicted with settlers, who, not surprisingly, wanted to concentrate on food crops (Shamsul Bahrin and Lee, 1988, p.33). FELDA has officially distanced itself from other Southeast Asian resettlement programs that aimed to perpetuate peasant agriculture (Shamsul Bahrin and Lee, 1988, p.33). In fact, even after rubber and oil palm, the only other crops occupying significant acreage were other cash crops such as sugar cane, cocoa and coffee. In the process, FELDA stated that their main barrier would be the transformation of the peasant psychology, thus showing that planners in Malaysia had definitely taken to heart the teachings of development experts such as Pye and Lerner discussed in Section 6.2. Subsequent researchers have recorded conflict situations similar to those that surface on the estates despite the major differences of the availability of loans and grants and technology training available to FELDA settlers through government sponsored-programs. The FELDA programs reinforced the spatial and racial divisions that were already so pronounced in Malaysia. Several researchers have argued that far from the original goal of creating a community of self-supporting farmers, the FELDA scheme actually transformed the Malay peasantry into a proto-proletariat through the relationships regarding land ownership, labour control and the control of production and marketing of crops (Jomo, 1997,
Certainly, while the conclusions of these researchers may be subject to dispute, all their evidence is corroborated by FELDA itself.

The similarities to the estates can be seen in the following:

1. Settlers had to transform their working hours from a non-fixed routine to a daily routine of eight hours (Shamsul Bahrin and Lee, 1988, p.34).

2. FELDA imposed a certain disciplinary regime. If settlers did not complete their work on time, contract labour was brought in to finish it, and the income of the settler was reduced. This could happen in the case of rubber planting or more domestic situations such as cleaning up house compounds (Shamsul Bahrin and Lee, 1988, p.47 and p.129). FELDA admitted that this departed from the 'pioneering' concept but that it was a necessity since often times, settlers, not being used to such a disciplined existence, could not be relied upon to complete their work. In addition, tapping overseers were employed on rubber estates to check the work of the settlers thus reinforcing the image of estate labour (Shamsul Bahrin and Lee, 1988, p.51).

3. FELDA controlled marketing of the produce because settlers had to sell through the state-run agency FELMA. Settlers argued that when prices went up, they were forced to sell at much lower than market rates (Berita Harian, 9 July, 1976, 27 March 1978; Utusan Melayu, 23 June 1975 and 11 June 1976). Moreover, it has been suggested in the local press (The New Straits Times, 27 August 1987) that FELDA officials still made all the important farm decisions thus reinforcing the image of private sector estates. In response, settlers sold the produce surreptitiously to non-Malay traders in the neighbouring towns (Shamsul Bahrin and Lee, 1988, pp.168-198; Halim, 1992, p.112; Guinness, 1992, p.159). In an ironic return to the practices of the Emergency, settlers used forest tracks to smuggle rubber out of the estates into the neighbouring towns (Halim, 1992, p.120). FELDA's control of the downstream processing of agricultural crops, marketing and investment of profits from sales later extended to provision of insurance services, transportation, and banking. Joint ventures with Japanese firms such as Mitsui and Denka all replicated the way the large estate firms of Boustead, Guthries and Sime Darby had expanded over the years (Shamsul Bahrin and Lee, 1988, pp.168-198). The joint ventures also point to the pay-off that Japanese firms reaped from the Japanese aid to Malaysia in the early years.

4. Later in the program, settlers were paid a salary from a local pool thus reinforcing the image of estate labour (Shamsul Bahrin and Lee, 1988, pp. 88-92; Guinness, 1992, p.159). Settler dissatisfaction has been systematically documented by Halim (1992) by culling newspaper accounts of conflict and sometimes violence on the FELDA estates. This included strikes by settlers, locking up officials until they gave in to settler demands, and slapping officials on the face. The last action was not simply a violent act but, through a mutual understanding of cultural norms, was meant to convey supreme disrespect that a fistfight did not. Slapping was a gesture of contempt men reserved for women and children, not each other.

5. Furthermore, the Group Settlers Act of 1960 (Shamsul Bahrin and Lee, 1988, p.20), while allowing for individual ownership after the repayment of loans to FELDA, has strict clauses on the resale of land, forbidding subdivision and dictating what can be grown on the land. Early settlers may have been grateful for the land, but these clauses later caused some of the informants of Halim's (1992) study to describe their position as sewa (renting) or tumpang (borrowing).
The notion of the FELDA settler itself was constructed through the lens of establishing a permanent population of Malay farmers who worked the soil. Race rather than poverty was the determining factor for eligibility since rural poverty was undeniably the lot of the hundreds of thousands of Indian estate labourers who were ignored in the FELDA programs. The Malay-led government was keen to establish the image and the material reality of Malay settlers working the earth as part of the national conception of *bumiputera*, or 'sons of the soil' as the Malays referred to themselves. The abbreviation of this term is *bumi*, literally 'earth'. The forest harbouring Chinese Communists would be erased to make way for Malay settlers. Through the FELDA programs, the 'sons of the soil' would be returned to their place on earth. What more concrete form of territorialization could take place? Jonathan Boyarin (1994, p.9) argues that territory was a prerequisite to nation-hood because identity had to be literally grounded. In Malaysia the politics of fixing an identity literally came about through territorial appropriation and grounding it in the earth through cultivation. FELDA literature repeatedly used the terms settlers and pioneers, referred to characteristics of fortitude and industry in overcoming travails as criteria for acceptance into the FELDA schemes, and referred to the cultural ties with soil (updated as bioeconomics). Moreover, opening up the forests to be replaced by planned agriculture using the latest laboratory tested techniques came to symbolize going forward in space to reverse the ravages of colonial time; that is, taking back the land. Cutting down the forests was the physical equivalent of the *telos* of national territorialization; this was not the same as pioneers in the US or Canada, but a re-taking of the land. The FELDA program by allowing only Malays to take part in the schemes to settle the frontier perpetuated the idea of the *bumiputera*, or sons of the soil, as the ontological heirs of the nation.

In a gendered connection between agriculture and nationalism, the first prime minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, was said to have "put down the seed of Malaysia" in the birth of the country.105 The caption below his photograph reads, "The father image". But then nations have typically been seen through the framework of the family (McClintock, 1995, Chapter Ten). The Malay women's political association in Malaysia is known as the *Kaum Ibu* or mothers of the family. Industrialization may be seen as crucial to the progress of the state, but it is the vocabulary of agriculture that is made to represent the birth and survival of the nation. The gendered aspect of this relationship between nationalism and agriculture was reinforced in the acceptance criteria for the program that allocated most of the points to the husband, a total of 27 as opposed to 13 for the wife. There was no criteria for the acceptance of women alone. Also despite denials of political ties, researchers such as Jomo
(1988), Jomo and Gomez (1997), Halim (1992) and Guinness (1992), all argue that membership in UMNO is the unwritten prerequisite for acceptance into the program. More openly admitted is the favouring of ex-servicemen or, in the early years after the Emergency, the favouring of ex-Home Guards (Shamsul and Lee, 1988, Appendices II and III).

It seems fitting that the connection between race and territorialization should be manifested in replacing the militaristic Communists in the forests with their former opponents in the erased forests. I suggest that Malay self-identification of rural simplicity could not be identified with the primeval forests in the plans of the government because it was too close to the lack of civilization sneered at during the colonial period, and still denigrated by the Western model of progress. In this sense, only highly technological societies such as Canada and the US can afford to assert confidently the relationship between nature and heritage. Here, there is no possibility of being mistaken for backwardness if one chooses to conserve relatively small tracts of forested land. Less obviously, because FELDA was simply for Malays the resettlement program served to perpetuate the separate existence of different ethnic groups and the association of place and race. In an ironic twist of fate, few settlers actually own their land more than thirty years after joining the program. Heavy indebtedness to FELDA loans, the reluctance of FELDA to issue titles, and continued indebtedness because of replanting, has postponed issue of titles (Guinness, 1992, pp. 148-170; Halim, 1992). In recent years, there have been difficulties in getting the younger generation to stay on the FELDA settlements because better education and perceived better opportunities arose in the factories in town. This was debated on television during my fieldwork in Malaysia in 1995.

The second prong of the NEP to foster an economic space for Malays, was the creation of government-owned private or public limited companies. These proliferated under the Companies Act instituted in 1965 in accordance with the SMP objective of creating a Malay entrepreneurial community within one generation (SMP, 1971, p.47). These companies later acted as holding companies and trust agencies when the government embarked on its ambitious program to nationalize parts of the private sector. Although these two prongs, land development and corporate takeovers, have been discussed in terms of different aspects of the political economy of Malaysia, the symbolic aspect of the relationship between the two so far has been overlooked. Together, they carve out that part of the economic space that was most symbolic of returning sovereignty to the Malays. Razak himself described the aspirations of the SMP as “the creation of a viable and dynamic commercial and industrial community of Malays and other indigenous people, and the emergence of a new breed of
Malaysians" (SMP, 1971, Foreword, p.vi). Among the first corporate sectors to be targeted by the government was corporate agriculture. In fact, despite the traditional habit of blaming the Chinese for controlling the economy, 62 percent of the private sector still lay in foreign hands in 1970 (SMP, 1971, p.40). The first of the largest companies associated with plantation agriculture in Malaysia, such as Sime Darby was acquired by the Treasury Department's holding company Pernas. Government trust companies eventually controlled the largest plantation company, Guthries, and one of the oldest Golden Hope, formerly Harrisons and Crossfields (Jomo and Gomez, 1997, p.38). FELDA openly admitted that FELDA senior officials sat on the board of directors of the major companies (Shamsul Bahrin and Lee, 1988, p.171). By 1995, Malays controlled 20.6 percent of the private sector to 40.9 percent Chinese ownership and 27.7 percent foreign ownership (Jomo and Gomez, 1997, p.168). The relative percentages are not indicative of the symbolic significance of the companies taken over by the state. Just as British corporate investment had transformed the scale of spatial reconfiguration of the 19th century Malayan landscape, now indigenous control of the grand plantation companies symbolically signalled the return of sovereignty to the Malays.

One final point, the two strategies were addressed to different sectors of the Malay population. FELDA was to meet the needs of the Malay peasantry, while the government-controlled companies set out to create a space for a Malay entrepreneurial class. By physically staking territory through FELDA and capturing space in the corporate world, the Malay government was constructing the economic space to accommodate the Malay nation. It was also creating the standard relation among state, foreign and domestic capital, and labour that would replace the earlier political economy of Malaysia but which was still built on the foundations of racial suspicion and fear. Overall, the goal was not socio-economic equity but the creation of a Malay corporate class. Wealth redistribution was not throughout society but across ethnic lines, and even within that ethnic group, only a partial redistribution. Capital flight, not to mention the brain drain, from Malaysia accelerated after the May 13 violence. This has had repercussions in the lack of political stability in Malaysia. The dilemma faced by minorities has been that intrinsic rights and citizenship have always been subject to monetary conditions, even more so than in the West. Therefore, access to higher education, for non-Malays is dependent on being able to buy it, usually in the West (Guardian Weekly, 15 February 1998 and 26 February 1998; Financial Post, 26 August 1995). Wealth is needed to function on a daily basis because rights have to be bought. The current political crisis in Indonesia triggered by the financial crisis has led to desperate appeals for help by Indonesian Chinese not wealthy enough to flee the
country. This scenario is a familiar one to the Jews in Europe before World War II and Indians in East Africa in the 1960s and 70s. To ask these groups voluntarily to yield economic power without offering the safeguards of civil rights is useless.

6.4 CONCLUSION

The newly independent Malayan government proceeded to cut down the forests in a public sector approach to plantation agriculture, and today stands as the owner of the largest plantations in the world (Halim Salleh, 1990). Beginning in the 60s, on the advice of the World Bank, Malaysia started to export timber, and thereafter timber concessions became useful political gifts (Hurst, 1990). The rainforest in Malaysia has disappeared at a faster rate than the more well-known Brazilian rainforest. As the newest NIC on the block, Malaysia is an interesting case study because its argument that cutting down the rainforest is a necessary step to economic development is taken seriously. Malaysia's Prime Minister has successfully turned environmental criticism of forest mismanagement into an issue of neo-colonial interference, with some justification and a great deal of sympathy from developing countries especially in the light of the current negotiations on biodiversity and biotechnology. Western countries, including Canada, are calling for conservation followed by open access to biodiversity resources for research scientists, therefore framing the issue as one of conservation for the universal heritage. Once again, science is made to appear the spokesperson for nature, which obscures the economic implications of such arrangements. Malaysia and other developing countries are trying to force the issue of biotechnology transfer and licensing, thereby framing the negotiations in terms of sovereignty and economics, with the implication of accusations of neo-colonialism.

If Malaysia is involved in a continuing neo-colonial struggle with Western powers, it is also involved in its own neo-colonial struggle with other groups. Malaysia's fragile racial alliances have always been held together by economic success. Part of the success has come about from the abilities to pacify the Malay peasantry and induce the economy to grow, thus benefitting Malaysians in general. But the land from the rainforests that provided for resettlement and plantations has been used up so the state is now directing its attention to East Malaysia with its vast tracts of uncultivated land. Here the state is confronting aboriginal groups in East Malaysia over resource control while Malaysian companies such as Guthries and Sime Darby prepare to buy up land and dispossess local populations in Philippines, Vietnam and Papua New Guinea (company reports, 1993-94). Once again, the familiar arguments of scientifically justified economic choices are brought forth, but this time, the 'natives' are not cooperating.
1 All the statistics compiled from T. R. McHale (1967).
2 Jomo (1988) corroborates this proportion from McHale (1967).
3 The estate giant, Guthries, was given permission to replant when smallholders were being turned down. See J.S. Potter, "State Executive Council Notes", DOS 33/16, 28 July 1954; and no.6 in NS Con 3/54 SJ17, 1954; No.16 in LOJ 186/53, 22 September 1954, both sets of notes in BAM 1/12.
4 In another case, Emergency curfews caused serious hardship for communities relying on night fishing to supplement their diets and income. See Table 1.3 in Guinness (1992, p.19). He calculated that the Malay villages lost over half their income from fishing because of the restrictions due to the curfew.
5 Minute, A.Gann, "Malayan rubber re-planting cess", 8 November 1951, CO1022/70. The cess meant the establishment of two funds. Fund A would contain contributions from estates (greater than 100 acres). Each estate would be credited with an amount proportionate to its own contribution and repayments of these credits would be made annually for the replanting. Smallholders paid into fund B and it was proposed that there be repayments along similar lines. It would differ from government administration in that cess funds were only for replanting and not on any other kind of work or research. The Administration Board would have 18 rather than 9 RPC members and 3 government members who could not vote. Schemes need only be approved by members and not by the High Commissioner. When rubber prices increased the RPC would get the estates to pay an additional 4.5 % and returned as soon as possible to estates whereas cess on smallholders would continue as long as the board deemed necessary. Therefore, the additional cess would only be effective for smallholders. The government feared that the new legislation would empower the estates to vary or suspend rates of cess as they saw fit, "Small-holders would occupy a minority position on the Board as they do in the R.P.C. and it would be possible for their interests to be sacrificed by the Estates (their capitals), who regard them -- perhaps misguidedly- as competitors."
6 Requests by the Department of Agriculture to supply seeds from high yielding varieties for replanting on smallholdings was also met with resistance; the Guthrie Group was a notable exception in refusing to co-operate. See Minute, HNH on the need for government support for smallholders, 26 July 1952, CO1022/70.
7 Minute, A. Gann, 8 November 1951, CO 1022/70.
8 Minute, HNH on the need for government support for smallholders, 26 July 1952 , CO 1022/70.
10 Actually created in 1931 when Britain came off the gold standard and the rest of Western Europe stayed on it. In the period after WWII, sterling was demoted from its role as a master currency to its role as a negotiated or reserve currency.
12 The sterling area was preserved by US Marshall Aid that allowed Britain to continue capital flows to sterling area countries. On the other hand, dollar discrimination by sterling area countries was overlooked by US (Strange, 1971, p.89).
13 The American solidarity campaign and the other measures proved a moot point in proving that Washington orchestrated the dumping of sterling on the markets but that proved a complete failure because no solution to the dumping; that is loans, could go ahead without the Americans. The Americans had also threatened the French with the same action with less effect as the French were not as reliant on American economic aid. See Diane Kunz (1991).
15 "The United Kingdom in South-East Asia and the Far East" memorandum prepared for Cabinet by the Permanent Under-Secretary of State's Committee in the Foreign Office, October 1949, CO 967/84, no.69. "The United Kingdom in South-East Asia and the Far East" memorandum prepared for Cabinet by the Permanent Under-Secretary of State's Committee in the Foreign Office, October 1949, CO 967/84, no.69.
16 Agreement on External Defence and Mutual Assistance between the Government of the United Kingdom and the Federation of Malaya, 12 October 1957 -- actual signed Agreement, 9 July 1963, Cmd 2094; A. Lennox-Boyd, Memorandum for Cabinet Colonial Policy Committee [re:Conference on constitutional advance in the Federation of Malaya],

22 O.A. Spencer to J.D. Higham [re: Colombo Plan: Federation of Malaya Chapter], 6 December 1951, CO 1022/141.

23 Draft chapter for Malaya and Borneo Colombo Plan, South-East Asia Annual Report adopted by the Karachi Meeting, 1952.orig. SEA 69/279/01, CO 1022/139.

24 G. Templer's inward telegram to Oliver Lyttelton, Secretary of State for the Colonies, and Malcolm MacDonald, Commissioner General for South East Asia, 13 March 1952, CO 1022/139.

25 One sterling pound was equal to approximately eight Malaysian ringgit in that period.


27 Draft memorandum by Mr. Lennox-Boyd advising against a formal agreement, February 1956, CO1030/72, no. 29.


29 Letter from Malcolm MacDonald, Commissioner General for South East Asia to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 29 February 1952, CO 1022/141.


31 In Chapter Three I showed that the Colonial Office and Whitehall were at pains to prevent some of their documents from being seen by the Americans.

32 The Malayan Emergency lasted four times longer than the Korean War.


34 Memorandum by Permanent Under-Secretary of State’s Committee in the Foreign Office, “The United Kingdom and South-East and the Far East,” October 1949, CO967/84, No. 69.

35 Far East Committee, Report on “Economic and social development in South and South-East Asia and the Far East,” Appendix A, November 1949, PREM 8/1407/1 EPC(49)152.

36 Far East Committee, Report on “Economic and social development in South and South-East Asia and the Far East,” Appendix A, November 1949, PREM 8/1407/1 EPC(49)152.

37 Far East Committee, Report on “Economic and social development in South and South-East Asia and the Far East,” Appendix A, November 1949, PREM 8/1407/1 EPC(49)152. Sterling reserves were important for maintaining the strength of the pound.

38 Speaking to the Postwar Economic Policy and Planning sub-committee in 1944, Dean Acheson described the problem as a lack of markets. He suggested that the solution was long-term investment facilitated by the International Bank for Reconstruction, transcript of second session, 78th Congress, House Subcommittee on Foreign Trade and Shipping, 30 November 1944, p.1081.


40 National Security Council 129/1, 24 April 1952.


42 Jayant Lele (1993) argues that at the time both right and left, as represented by Rostow and Gershenkron respectively, shared the basic premise of a Western (emphasis mine) understanding of modernization, that is a linear evolutionism, with the West as the model of success.

43 Townsend Hoopes, the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Near East-South Asian Affairs claimed that by 1967, all foreign affairs material going to President Johnson was first screened by Rostow. See Townsend Hoopes, *The Limits of Intervention*. (New York: Van Rees Press, 1969), p.59. Townsend (p.61) described Rostow as having "a rare capacity for 'instant rationalization' whether the evidence existed to support his point of view or not."


46 Syracuse University Maxwell Graduate School of Citizenship and Public Affairs. *United States foreign policy: The

47 Syracuse University Maxwell Graduate School of Citizenship and Public Affairs. United States foreign policy: The operational aspects of United States foreign policy. No. 6 (Washington: U.S. Govt. Printing Office, November 11, 1959), p.13. At the same time, the Americans were eager to avoid being associated with the European colonialist reluctance to depart from the colonies. The Americans understood that being allied too closely with the European position would sour relations with future Third World governments.


54 The anomalous position of Japan as an industrial powerhouse has been rhetorically dealt with by shifting the benchmark of success to scientific originality rather than innovation.

55 Institute for Defence Analysis, Instability at non-strategic levels of contact, Study Memo no.2 (Washington, D.C.: Special Studies Group, 6 October 1961), pp.21-22.

56 "The United Kingdom in South-East Asia and the Far East" memorandum prepared for Cabinet by the Permanent Under-Secretary of State's Committee in the Foreign Office, October 1949, CO967/84, no.69.

57 More curiously, Khilnani distinguishes this view of modernization from that of the Marxist view, arguing that the latter saw no possibility of including non-Europeans in the narrative of historical progress. I would have thought that both the liberal and Marxist views only saw non-Europeans included in the march of history provided they could mimic the European model.

58 "The United Kingdom in South-East Asia and the Far East" memorandum prepared for Cabinet by the Permanent Under-Secretary of State's Committee in the Foreign Office, October 1949, CO 967/84 no.69; Far East Committee, Report on "Economic and social development in South and South-East Asia and the Far East," Appendix A, November 1949, PREM 8/1407/1 EPC(49)152.


61 This last recommendation came from the Commissioner General for SEA. See savingram from M. MacDonald, Commissioner General in South East Asia to G. Templer, High Commissioner Federation of Malaya, J. Nicholl, Governor of Singapore and Vice-Chancellor, University of Malaya, 8 April 1953 on Pan-Malayan Scientific Advisory Council.


63 Cambodia, Laos, Burma, Nepal, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Bhutan, Republic of Korea, Afghanistan, Maldives, Iran, Bangladesh, Fiji and Papau New Guinea and South Vietnam (following reunification in 1978, Vietnam left the Plan).

64 The Colombo Plan (Colombo: Information Section Colombo Plan Bureau, 1983).

65 Colombo Plan: Federation of Malaya Chapter, CO1022/141.

66 Colombo Plan: Federation of Malaya Chapter, CO1022/141.

In one of the more bizarre examples, the Plan criticized Indians for making use of only 7% of the water in their rivers and letting the remaining 93% flow unused into the sea (Technological Cooperation in South Asia. Colombo: Colombo Plan Information Unit, p.6).


This effort was pursued by Dr. Thuraisingham in Malaya and Dr. Fenn in England. See minute from Mr. Minnitt to Mr. Jerrom, 30 May 1952, CO 1022/322.

Lin Yu Tang, the pro-American Chinese Nationalist writer consented to become Chancellor of the National University of Singapore. He left two years later amid great local resentment. See Han Suyin (1981), My House Has Two Doors.

CO 1022/322 American Aid to the Federation of Malaya.


Daniel Bronson, one of my students at the University of Minnesota Duluth, served with the Peace Corp in Uganda. He said that Peace Corp volunteers were made to swear that they would not become politically involved in the host country because of the suspicions and bad faith engendered by earlier CIA involvement in the Peace Corp. A number of Peace Corp volunteers intermarried in the local community, and like local technocrats, their position must have been a peculiar one in the sense of being both insiders and outsiders.

CO 1022/93 Agricultural Policy -- Federation of Malaya.


For an institutional history, I refer the reader to Cheryl’s book, The World Bank (1982). The IBRD also has two affiliates under the umbrella of the World Bank -- the International Finance Corporation (IFC), and the International Development Association (IDA).


The Aims and Structure of the Rural Industrial Development Authority in Malaya, CO 1022/253.

"Memorandum on Rural and Industrial Development Authority Seeking Policy Decisions on the Development and Staffing of the Authority", undated, probably 1952, CO 1022/253. In the same document but with a note in the margins that the passage had been deleted before release to the public, the British admitted that the earlier 'normal administrations' led by the District Officers had failed to promote economic growth for 75 years.

Lucille Bocock, minute, 24 October 1952, CO 1022/253.

Lucille Bocock, minute, 29 April 1953, CO 1022/253.

Minutes of the Legislative Council meeting, 21 November 1952, CO 1022/53.

Lucille Bocock, minute, 4 April 1952, CO 1022/253. The budget was increased to $7 million the following year despite this track record suggests that RIDA was a public relations exercise.

The late Tun Abdul Razak is honoured in Malaysia today with the title Bapa Pembangunan (Father of development).

At its most discriminatory, this has been typified by the dual categories of blue (national) and red (non-national) identification cards, a situation that could be spatially mapped as many of the red ID card holders lived in the New Villages.

Personal communication from Dr. David Moon, consultant to CIDA on developing a landuse expert systems model for Malaysia.

"The rubber industry presents tree showcases to the Science Museum," Malaya, February 1960, pp.37-38. The rubber industry sponsored an exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum of Science. At the peak of the Emergency, the Natural Rubber Development Board, in consultation with the National Committee for Visual Aids in Education had worked together to produce a booklet on the rubber industry featuring smiling Tamil plantation workers. The booklet was entitled, "The story
of natural rubber... and the people of the plantations."


96 L.Bateman was the Controller of Rubber Research and Chairman of the Malayan Rubber Fund Board. His Foundation Lecture in 1971 was entitled "Science, Sociology and Change in the Plantation Industry". He explained that he had included sociology because "How new ideas emerge from the tenets and practices of the time and then feed back to lead to the piecing of hitherto impenetrable conceptual and observational barriers is the heart of science and much else besides."


98 Ministry of Forestry, Report: Federal Forest Administration in the Federation of Malaya for 1952 (Kuala Lumpur, 1952), pp.33-34, CO 1022/359. In Malacca for example, 76% of timber for fuel came from reserved forests. In Negri Sembilan "an easing of the Emergency situation made it possible to resume marking of fellings in reserves..." in Kedah, 66% from reserves, Penang 83%. In contrast in Perlis only 7% came from reserves.

99 Pahang’s massive land development, Malaysia (July 1971) p.111.

100 Pahang's massive land development, Malaysia (July 1971) p.111.

101 Draft chapter for Malaya and Borneo Colombo Plan, South-East Asia Annual Report adopted by the Karachi Meeting, 1952. orig. SEA 69/279/01, CO 1022/139.

102 The area allocated to each settler was flexible. At the inception of the FELDA program, each settler was allocated 2.8 hectares. As the price of natural rubber declined in the 60s, the area was increased to 3.2 hectares so that a greater volume of rubber produced could compensate for the drop in income per kilogram. In the case of the massive regional development project in the Jengka Triangle, settlers were offered four hectares but with no additional land for house and orchard.

103 As a settlement grows, a police station, fire station, cinema and petrol kiosk may be added to the village.

104 I am indebted to Halim (1992) for his meticulous documentation of these events from local newspapers. It is worth pointing out here that unlike the New Straits Times and the Malay Mail which are government organs, criticism of government policies sometimes appear in papers with lower circulation including the Penang-based Star. The last newspaper, given its association with the first Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman, was an occasional critic of the Mahatir government.

105 This is Malaysia, Straits Times Publication, 1963, p.9.
CHAPTER SEVEN
CONCLUSION OR CONTINUATION

I came to this research curious as to why Malaysians evinced so little interest in the deforestation of their/our country. As the ambivalence in the use of pronouns indicates, I have difficulty writing a neat conclusion to a narrative of which I am part. I began with a question that seemed the simplest to me – what do we mean when we talk about the rainforest? To quote Donna Haraway (1989, p.1), "in what specific places, out of which intellectual histories" is the rainforest constructed? Many of the cultural, economic and political preoccupations of contemporary Malaysia are reflected in the struggles around and over the rainforest. In Peninsular Malaysia the deforestation has been largely accomplished, but the intermeshed hierarchies that devalued the forest still prevails, now translated into other domains of application in the relationship between state and civil society.

Because of the centrality of resources to the Malaysian political economy over the last 100 years, a history of the Malaysian rainforest, must be, in part, a biography of the nation-state that evolved from colonialism. The material contests over the rainforest were, and are, articulated through a variety of cultural signs that link the struggle over the rainforests to other struggles. The common thread is the struggle for rights, one that in its myriad forms has found itself in opposition to the hierarchies of value instituted with the colonial intrusion of the nineteenth century. Understanding the place of the rainforest in Malaysian political culture requires understanding the assumptions and values put in place by these hierarchies. The rainforest came to stand for many things that were the antithesis of the things valued in the discourses of colonialism and its offspring, development and nationalism – profits, scientific progress, racial primacy. This value system survived political independence, although not unchanged or insensitive to context. The memory of each claim to rights and its resolution influences the claims that come after it. Contemporary Malaysia is a canvas of memories imperfectly painted over. Each layer of memory is tinged with the hues of underlying memories that provide visual cues of the past in the present.

Today, what remains of the rainforest in Peninsular Malaysia is domesticated through the language of ecotourism. The forest is portrayed as an unchanging Eden that has waited "130 million years" for modern-day adventurers and their tourist dollars (Figure 7.1). Malaysia can now afford Eden as a counterpoint to the Petronas Tower, billed the highest building in the world, and the twin cities of Putrajaya and Cyberjaya, its new capital. This physical pairing of
primeval innocence and technical achievement has its social equivalence in the Orang Asli who now fill the role of the simple, innocent folk and the Bangladeshis, Filipinos and Indonesians who labour on plantations, construction sites and in households as domestic workers. Meanwhile, as I mentioned in Chapter One, Malaysian estate-owning companies such as Boustead, Guthries and Sime Darby are all in the process of negotiating with the governments of Vietnam, Indonesia and the Philippines to purchase land for the cultivation of rubber and oil palm as real estate prices rise in Malaysia. During my field season in 1995 in Malaysia the government was offering to help Pakistan and South Africa develop their natural resources. The language used in the local media was reminiscent of centre-periphery relations. Class difference in Malaysia is now displaced onto national difference.

Figure 7.1 Tourism Malaysia brochure – the rainforest waits patiently for the modern day tourist.
Although Malaysia is in a frenzy of architectural destruction of its old buildings, newspapers feature lifestyle articles on memberships in clubs decorated to look like London clubs with chandeliers and leather furniture, and furbished with enough wood panelling to give an environmentalist nightmares. The stylish, sepia-tinted television advertisement celebrating the 150-year anniversary of the New Straits Times Press in 1995 featured pig-tailed coolies (looking suspiciously like well-fed late twentieth century aerobic exercise instructors) and topeed 'tuans' in khaki shorts in a sequence of historical vignettes ending with the headline "Malaysia -- We Can Do It." Yet these tandem destructive and constructive efforts are not contradictory in effect. Recent economic travails notwithstanding, these efforts construct Malaysia’s colonial past not as a humiliating period, but as part of a continuum in our success story. What was once the exclusive privilege of colonial rulers is now ours. We disown an historical past to construct one consistent with our present. The not so subtle message is that the economic periphery has moved; Malaysians have joined the 'haves.' The past of the 'haves' has now become our present. The move from the periphery towards the centre is more widely reflected in Malaysia’s contemporary relationships with neighbouring states through exporting investment and importing labour as aspects of centre-periphery relations are played out in a different geographical arena from traditional conceptions of First World-Third World relationships.

In this sense, a history of Malaysia’s rainforests as one of contesting claims, speaks to the wider experience of the contradictions of a post-colonial society and its obsessions with certain trajectories to finding self-worth. In Malaysia, the claims for rights have been largely articulated in the language of belonging. But this begs the questions of how the decision is made about who belongs, and who makes the decision. To argue that belonging is an inherently ‘natural’ property privileges an asymmetry in rights. The Malaysian government has always argued that this is a necessary protection for racial survival, an argument echoed in many parts of the world and deployed in widely different contexts. Racial survival also justifies sacrificing the rights of some groups – immigrant labour, racial minorities, working class women -- in the national pursuit of economic development.

My aim in this study has been to understand why societies accept values and hierarchies that work against us. Prime Minister Mahathir, with the support of Malaysia’s elite and middle-classes, continues to blame the West for its economic troubles and adopts a defiant stance when criticized for its repressive political culture while not acknowledging how much of Malaysia’s contemporary politics is its colonial legacy. But blaming the West is hardly a way out of the social convolutions bequeathed by colonialism. Ultimately the problems remain ours. We must
do what lies within our own capacities to resolve them. We need to acknowledge the trade-off we have made in denying rights to certain sectors of the population and putting up with limited political engagement in return for the material comforts of development. And we need to disown the colonial legacy of racial essentialism that sets a limit to any possibility of social solidarity. Pluralism in Malaysia is just another term for social fragmentation. To accept that we cannot protect basic rights as the price of economic success is to accept the racist rhetoric of colonialism that human rights are only for some humans. It is also a collectively destructive position. If the Malaysian government is anxious about its technical ability to survive in a global economy, its position contradicts its goals by ensuring that the brain drain continues. As long as some groups feel that they have to purchase rights on a daily basis, their talents and productivity will go to the highest bidder. This usually means the US, Australia, or Canada. Finally, can any society produce a technically creative population while maintaining an iron grip on freedom of expression?

I want to end with a scene within a scene far away from Malaysia that encapsulates the stakes in contemporary post-colonial societies. It is 1997 in London, England, and I am watching the evening news with my hostess. On-screen, the final airlift of Western workers out of Burundi is taking place. For a moment, I have an intimation of the Burundians' panic and desolation at this evidence of final abandonment by the rest of the world. I try to articulate this to my hostess and fail. She responds that, indeed, it must be dreadful to wonder if the airlift will actually arrive. She obviously identifies with the lucky ones who have a choice to leave the violence in Burundi, the ones who take the right to safety for granted. Rights, what separates the winners from the losers. Perhaps instead of only remembering a triumphalist and heroic past, we also need to remember the losers of past economic, political and military contests. Remembering failure may remind us of our human-ness. That way may lie the first step to achieving basic rights for all.

1 Tourism Malaysia brochure on Taman Negara.
2 Information taken from the 1994 annual reports of the three companies.
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*New Straits Times*
*Star*
*Times*
## APPENDIX I

**Important dates in Malayan/Malaysian history**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1786</td>
<td>British establish foothold in Penang.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>All of Malaya under British rule.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1942-45</td>
<td>Japanese occupation of Malaya.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>British reoccupation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>Emergency declared.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>Malayan independence.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Creation of Malaysia from Malaya, British North Borneo and Singapore.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>Singapore leaves the union.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>Race riots.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## APPENDIX II: LIST OF NAMES AND ADMINISTRATIVE TITLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abdul Rahman, Tunku.</td>
<td>Chief Minister, later first Prime Minister of Malaya/ Malaysia (1957-1970)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdul Razak, Tun</td>
<td>Prime Minister of Malaysia (1970 – 1976)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlee, Clement</td>
<td>Prime Minister, Britain (1945 –1951)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Briggs, Harold</td>
<td>Director of Operations, Malaya (1950-1951)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chin Peng</td>
<td>Secretary General Malayan Communist Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cranborne, Lord</td>
<td>Secretary of State for the Colonies (Feb.1942- Nov. 1942)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creech Jones, Arthur</td>
<td>Secretary of State for the Colonies (1946-1950)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eden, Anthony</td>
<td>Prime Minister, Britain (1955-1957)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gent, (Gerald) Edward</td>
<td>Governor of Malayan Union (1946-1948)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Commissioner, Federation of Malaya (1948)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Griffiths, James</td>
<td>Secretary of State for the Colonies (1950-1951)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee, Hau-Shik (Colonel)</td>
<td>Alliance executive member; Minister of Finance for Malaya (1956-59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lennox-Boyd, Alan</td>
<td>Secretary of State for the Colonies (1954-1959)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyttelton, Oliver</td>
<td>Secretary of State for the Colonies (1951-1954)</td>
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<tr>
<td>MacDonald, Malcolm</td>
<td>Governor General, Malayan Union (1946-1948)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commissioner General for Southeast Asia (1948-1955)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MacGillivray, Donald</td>
<td>High Commissioner, Federation of Malaya (1954-1957)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onn bin Jaafar</td>
<td>Founder of Independence of Malaya Party (1951)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanley, Oliver</td>
<td>Secretary of State for the Colonies (1942-1945)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tan Cheng Lock</td>
<td>President, Malayan Chinese Association (1949-1958)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Templer, Gerald</td>
<td>High Commissioner, Federation of Malaya and Director of Operations, Malaya (1952-1954)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>