A sense of space: land struggles of the Semai of peninsular Malaysia
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Chapter Four: The Making of Orang Asli Places in the 1940s to 1960s

All commentaries on the Orang Asli underscore the period of the 1950s and 1960s as crucial times in the changing relations between the state and the Orang Asli. During the communist war of "national liberation" against British-Malayan regime, which came to be known as the Emergency period (1948-1960), both fighting parties viewed Orang Asli "collaboration" as crucial to the winning of the war. Beginning in the early 1950s, the government of the day embarked on an active and intensive campaign to re-organize the lives of the Orang Asli in the interest of national security. It was during this period also that the state explicated the terms by which the Orang Asli could expect to enjoy whatever rights in the land accorded them. It would therefore be accurate to suggest, as most commentators have, that Orang Asli-state relations and Orang Asli rights in land, or the lack thereof, was/is intimately linked to the latter's perceived position as a "security/sovereignty" threat in national politics.

In this chapter, I wish to examine the politics during this crucial period in the constitution of state-Orang Asli relations and its implications for Orang Asli land rights. Without undermining the "national security" argument, I would demonstrate that other significant processes on different socio-spatial scales conflated in the making of social relations between the state and the Orang Asli during this period. In terms of place-making, or the constitution of social relations in a particular social space, other social processes on different scales are not merely "backdrops" to what is occurring in one place. During this time-period in question, for instance, there were at least three other significant social processes on different scales, apart from the national-security/sovereignty struggles between the government and communist forces, that were thoroughly interconnected in the making of Orang Asli places (social relations). First, on one local scale, Orang Asli groups were actively re-organizing their social space/relations in the context of the Japanese Occupation of Malaya initially (1941-1945) and subsequently, the conflicts between the government and communist forces. These Orang Asli strategies were especially frustrating the government forces in their efforts to win the war against the communists. Second, at the same time, on a national scale, the process of Malay nationalism was taking significant twists in its course, which clearly impinged on the Orang Asli situation. Finally, on an international/global scale, a change in the discourse/practice of
states-indigenous peoples relations could also be detected and which was impacting on many local situations around the world. It is the effects the interplay of these changing social relations on different scales had on the Orang Asli situation, especially their land rights that I shall examine in this chapter.

Semai-occupied land as Battlegrounds between 1941-1945

In December 1941, the Japanese armed forces, using bicycles as their main means of transport, fought their way down the Malay peninsula to militarily occupy the country. In the course of their invasion, the Japanese conflict with the British military and local resistance groups quickly spread to the jungle areas. One area in particular which became battlegrounds for intensive fighting between the warring forces was around the region of south Perak where the Japanese Military command was stationed (Chapman, 1950). This area also overlapped with Semai-inhabited places (Map...). At the beginning of the conflicts, British military "stay behind squads" attempted to harass the Japanese from jungle hideout-bases. Soon after the British forces were joined by a guerilla army led by the Malaysian Communist Party (MCP), initially known as the Anti-Enemy-Backing-Up Society, but later with British support was organized as the Malayan Peoples Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA). Japanese atrocities against the Chinese were especially harsh due to the latter's support for China in the earlier Sino-Japanese War. This helped swell the ranks of the MPAJA guerillas with local Chinese membership and it was not long before the Japanese military began to organize "search and destroy" jungle-expeditions against the MPAJA bases in the jungles (Leary, 1989). In the circumstances, the Semai found themselves in the midst of a war aimed at the control of the jungle areas. The Semai settlement sites were brutally assaulted by both sides in the contest for territorial control. Killings, a lack of food and other deprivations were characteristic of Semai everyday life during the period of the Japanese Occupation and even flight into the deepest jungle areas did not provide security. When the Japanese were not patrolling the Semai-inhabited areas to "search and destroy" British-MPAJA guerilla bases, their aircraft were bombing the stay-behind camps suspected to be located beside Semai settlements just outside the towns of Kampar, Tapah and Bidor (Chapman, 1950). As soon as the Japanese patrols left a particular jungle area, MPAJA-British
guerillas would emerge to question Semai inhabitants of their enemy's movements and activities. Semai men were coerced to serve as porters and guides to the British and MPAJA forces in jungle trekking. The Semai were also obliged to courier food supplies from the nearby towns or provide it themselves to the jungle guerillas. Meanwhile, both warring parties were constantly suspecting the Semai of aiding and abetting the other and there were several instances of Semai individuals being interrogated, tortured and killed. In mid-1942, for example, some personnel of Force 136 (a British clandestine army unit which was set up to destroy Japanese tenure of all Southeast Asian countries) joined up with a British-MPAJA unit in a base situated beside a Semai settlement in the Batang Padang District (Ibid.). In July of that year, the Japanese troops raided the area killing some MPAJA guerillas as well as some Semai villagers. The MPAJA guerillas suspected that "Sakai informers", from the area around the town of Kota, had tipped of the Japanese. As retaliation, several Semai from settlements around the Kota area were rounded up for questioning. Among those who were picked up by the MPAJA soldiers were Atuk Pendue, the Mairaknak/Penghulu of Darat Legep and his assistant. Beh Perang, in his sixties now, was in his teens when this incident happened and he recalls the events:

Atuk Pendue had gone to Tapah to collect the tin vouchers when the communists came looking for him. They asked his wife and neighbours for his whereabouts. Because they were afraid, his wife and neighbours lied and said that Atuk Pendue was visiting his sick relatives in Kampung... The soldiers waited until evening. It was getting dark and Atuk Pendue had still not returned. The communist soldiers then left but they instructed the people to inform Atuk Pendue that they wanted to meet with him. As soon as Atuk Pendue returned home, he was given the message... Immediately he set out in the direction given by the communists... not long after two communist soldiers came looking for Atuk Sanja. At that time, he was fishing in a nearby stream. They called out for Atuk Sanja but he did not reply until they threatened to kill his wife and children. Then they shot their rifles in his direction. Finally Atuk Sanja appeared... he was tied and taken away. Before he left Atuk Sanja instructed the people that should anything happen to him they should flee the settlements and only return when the war is over. His wife tried to stop the soldiers from taking her husband away but they beat her with their rifles and she fainted... For two days we waited for Atuk Pendue and Atuk Sanja... on the third day, we heard rifle shots... some people went to investigate. When they returned they told us that Atuk Pendue and Atuk Sanja were dead... when they heard this news the people were sad and afraid. That night itself they all fled the settlements... some went to Bukit Gading, others to Sungkai, Sandin...
The years 1942-46 were therefore trying times for the Semai. Japanese imperialist designs on Malaya and British, MPAJA and MCP resistance had converged in Semai-inhabited places in the jungles of the Central Mountain Range. Local-global social flows and interconnections between places and people during "peace time" are usually of a more gradual and mediated character but these "rules of engagement" between people-places are waived during war times. Semai-occupied places were located in the jungles and all of them were quickly transformed into key battle-sites for territorial control and Semai social relations were severely affected. The day they discovered that Atuk Pendue and his assistant were murdered, the villagers were also warned that MPAJA guerillas were to launch a raid on all the settlements in that area. That very night they fled to further-away Semai settlements, such as Bukit Gading, Sungkai and Sandin, to seek refuge and shelter from the threats to their life. For the present-day Semai who had lived through those times, the experiences are remembered in a diasporic-like recollection. Wah and Beh Tua were in their twenties when they, together with all the other Darat Legep Semai, had to flee for their lives to "far-away" places they had never been to before:

...we just took what few things we could carry and walked by night... through streams and over hills all the time afraid if we would be captured by the soldiers and shot like they shot and killed Atuk Pendue and Atuk Sanja... for 4 years we could not return to our settlements and we were separated from other relatives who had fled to other places... each time we met someone from another place we would inquire if the others were safe... we thought then that we would never see our relatives again or return to our settlement...

The Japanese occupation and British-MPAJA activities also had the effect, among other things, to consolidate relations between the Darat Legep Semai groups and several other Semai and Temiar groups in the region. As one informant explained:

We became *mai numpuk* (residents) with the *mai pasak* (original inhabitants) of Sandin, Sungkai and Bukit Gading. Previously, they were just another *Mai darat* (they of the hinterland) to us. We may have met in the jungle during our hunting but we never *numpuk* (reside) with them. They were from another *gu* (territorial watershed).

During their 4-year sojourn, moreover, the Darat Legep Semai also relinquished their *penghulu* (headman) position. Both as a protection against the MPAJA guerillas, whom the Semai feared were searching for them, as well as in accordance with their customary law where the soujourners became *mai numpuk* (residential others) in another lengrik. They recognized the authority of that group. Soon after their return to their previous settlements of Darat Legep,
however, the Penghulu Mukim of Batang Padang summoned the Darat Legep Semai "headman" to the former's office. The Darat Legep settlements convened a meeting and decided to appoint Atuk Jok, the son of Atuk Pendue, as the new *penghulu* in order to meet with the Penghulu Mukim. There was, however, a change instituted in the Semai deliberations and subsequent appointment of Atuk Juk as headman. While they maintained the traditional offices of *setin* (assistant headmen) and *Jenang* (elder) they decided to do away with the office of *Mairaknak hutan* (elder of the forest) which they had created at the turn of the century. According to Penghulu Sekarang:

*Mairaknak hutan* (forest elder) and *ketua kampung* (village heaman) were made into one office since that time, meaning that the headman now has control over the hinterland as well as the settlement areas.

Penghulu Sekarang could not give the reason why this change was decided but Atuk Nang remembers the discussions of the time:

One individual asked [during the meeting] if we should appoint a *Mairaknak hutan* to assist Penghulu Jok since Atuk Mawai [the previous *Mairaknak hutan*] had also died [two years after Penghulu Pendue was killed]. But we said that there is no need now. The Japanese war has brought the communists and the Chinese into the deep jungle and many of them have remained there. We are not the only ones occupying the forestlands. There will be problems and if we cannot settle them then our headman must bring them to the Penghulu Mukim. If it is just us in the forests, then it is necessary to have a *Mairaknak hutan*.

For the Darat Legep Semai the year 1946 was one of re-settling and re-organizing their places of settlements and *kampoks*. When they returned to their *lengriik* they discovered that Chinese farmer-squatters had occupied part of their land. The Chinese had moved in soon after the villagers left and used the Semai clearings to cultivate vegetables to supply the MPAJA forces. The incursions of Chinese vegetable farmers into parts of their clearings necessitated opening up new agricultural plots elsewhere. First, Penghulu Jok organized a *gotong royong* (community activity) to clear the undergrowth in their rubber plantation. Meanwhile, individual households returned to tend their *kampuk* plots in the forest. It was only in 1947 that they began, as a group, to open new swidden plots at Merubok. Soon after they had begun farming a Christian Pastor brought them news that the Communists were returning to their jungle bases. It was at this juncture, therefore, that the Darat Legep Semai decided to relocate their dispersed homesteads to
the site where Atuk Juk's house stood - at the banks of Sungai Nam, which is the current location of these Semai villages (Map...).

**Semai-Occupied lands as "Red" Areas**

With the surrender of Japan in 1945 the MCP moved from their jungle bases to continue their national liberation struggles against the colonial-imperial powers in line with Communist International policy formulated in 1941 (Short, 1975). The arrival of British troops and the re-establishment of a colonial administration, however, soon checked the MCP's political and trade union activities. When the MCP decided to launch its war of "national liberation" against the Malayan government in April 1948, many of the same guerillas who had earlier fought alongside British troops against the Japanese returned to their jungle hideouts to wage an intense and prolonged guerilla war this time against the British-Malayan government forces. Once again, the Orang Asli were caught in the midst of an atrocious jungle war. They were used and again suspected by both sides for collaborating with the enemy. Suspecting that the Orang Asli were either "influenced" or "forced" to collaborate with the CTs (communist terrorists), the initial strategy of the British Security forces was to forcefully re-settle groups of Orang Asli in areas where they could be closely controlled. Meanwhile, unknown to the British security forces the MCP politburo embarked on a systematic organization and mobilization of Orang Asli towards the cause of the war of national liberation (Leary, 1989). Exploiting their fear and mistrust of the security forces, their disenchantment with the colonial administration who failed to protect them during the Japanese Occupation and their general negative sentiments regarding the Malays, the Communist Politburo embarked on a campaign to conscientize the Orang Asli whilst organizing them for the nationalist struggle. In the document ("Outlines of the Malayan Asal Mutual Help Association" dated 13th August 1949) the MCP politburo introduced the word "ASAL" (original) to describe the Orang Asli - as "The Aboriginal inhabitants of the country who lived in the jungles"; that "the ASAL of the twentieth century [are] still living in a state of semi-civilization with no written characters, ignorant and superstitious... they are subject to deception and exploitation by other races thereby rendering them a backward race". The document also outlined the aims and plans for the mobilisation of the aboriginal peoples as
"ASAL" organizations in the "nationalist war of liberation”. It was the MCP's use of this term "Asal", as part of the strategy to win over the Orang Asli to their cause, which incidentally inspired the government to coin the term "Orang Asli" to refer to these peoples (Tan, 1975).

The Communist mobilizing of the Orang Asli was deemed so effective that by 1953 British forces believed that some 30,000 aborigines were part of these "ASAL" organizations assisting the CTs in their war efforts (Carey, 1976:311; Noone, 1972:152). It was also believed that a special 12th Regiment Asal Organization was set up in 1950 which, by 1959, had a total strength of 50 units operating in the states of Perak and Kelantan. The situation became all the more hazardous for the Orang Asli of Perak when, on 9th January 1952, the Government forces recovered the aforementioned communist document confirming their worst fears that the Communist guerillas were being actively helped by the Orang Asli in their insurgent "terrorist" activities. Forced re-settlement of aboriginal groups suspected of being ASAL organization members was stepped up. At the same time, however, sectors of the British administration were also realizing that this strategy of re-settlement was proving counter-productive to their objectives, if not a blunder altogether (Nicholas, 1990:69). Thousands of Orang Asli, alienated from their familiar surroundings were succumbing and dying from the heat, disease and mental depression of their forced re-settlement (Jimin, 1983:60). It was assumed that this only served to reinforce aboriginal sympathy for the communist cause. Many Orang Asli escaped the camps, if they were not freed in CT raids, and many others who feared possible resettlement fled deeper into the forests seeking communist protection (Tan, 1975:193). Given these dawning anxieties, the Federal Government commissioned the Federal Advisor on Aborigines to the writing of a military manual on the "Malayan Aborigines" for the purpose of assisting the security forces to win over Orang Asli support from the cause of the communists to the cause of the British. In April 1952, Major P.D.R. Williams-Hunt, the Federal Advisor on Aborigines, produced "An Introduction to the Malayan Aborigines", material "... put together for the information of the security forces" (Hunt, 1952:88ff). The newfound concern of the colonial government towards the aborigines and the security motive behind this interest is evidenced in the forward of the aforementioned manual, written by Sir Gerald Templar, High Commissioner of the Federation of Malaya from 1952-54: "Without some understanding of the background and outlook of these fascinating people, it is impossible to make use of them on operations" (Williams-Hunt,
1952:v). It seemed that the government security forces were learning from the strategies of the MCP. Among the MCP documents retrieved by the security forces there was a directive from the Central Politburo of the MCP which read:

All comrades engaged in the work of the Asal must take full responsibility in investigating and studying the habits of living customs, traditions, rituals and other racial characteristics of the Asal... This will help us improve our methods of work... Understand fully the Asal compatriot's way of life... try to identify ourselves with them...

(Noone, 1972:151)

Semai informants remember the visits of "Tok Janggut" (Major Williams-Hunt) to their settlements in the years 1951-52. He encouraged Penghulu Jok to start planting again and even provided the villagers with crop seeds. He also brought them medicines and encouraged them to visit health clinics specially set up for them in nearby towns. Tok Janggut is all the more fondly remembered by the Batang Padang Semai in general because he married a Semai woman from the District in 1950. Moreover, his tragic death in June 1953, while attending his Semai sister-in-law's wedding is even more impressed in their minds. Neither the occasional visits of "Tok Janggut" nor the regular patrols of the security forces to the Sg. Nam settlement area obliterate the fact that the Semai were still suspicious and fearful of the British-Malay security forces as well as the CTs whose presence was continually made known just as much as the security forces. It was apparent that the Semai informants who do remember events during the Emergency Period refused to be drawn into the details of their involvement with the CTs. It is quite probable that the reason for this is that, at the time of my fieldwork, these Semai were engaged in the writing of a memorandum to the Perak state Government regarding the gazetting of their land as an Aboriginal Reserve. Evident in the memo is the emphasis put on how the Semai cooperated with governmental forces in the counter-insurgency campaigns.

Whether or not the Semai collaborated, and to what extent, with either the British or MCP military need to be examined in the context of a Semai "war strategy" which they practised during this period. A number of writers (Barber, 1971; Short, 1964; Dentan, 1968) as well as Semai villagers I spoke to have indicated that, during the British-Communist battles, the Semai had adopted a Temiar-devised war practice to deal with both the Communist and Security forces who were demanding Semai cooperation with threats of reprisals should they refuse. The strategy consisted of the following: within the geography of a particular watershed marked by a number of Semai settlements the Semai organized themselves such that groups
located upstream (*ulu teow*) and thus nearer the Communist jungle-bases were to lend support to the communists. At the same time, it was agreed that Semai groups settled downstream (*direh teow*) and in more regular contact with the government forces were to support the latter in their campaigns. In this arrangement, "pro-Communist" up-stream Semai and "pro-government" down-stream Semai groups were also required to keep each other informed of the plans and movements of both warring parties. Those groups located in-between the two previous groups were, as Dentan's contributors explained:

...to play dumb...we're just stupid dirty aborigines... we live and die in the jungle like animals. We know nothing. These midstream people were to provide food and shelter on demand to the mai [others]. They were not to supply guides and bearers except for a good cash consideration. They were not to ask the troops' plans or destinations... No information was to be given mai that might endanger any Semai or lead to a battle for which the Semai might be blamed... In the event of a communist victory the "pro-communist" bands were to cover up for all the bands downstream from them, claiming that all had been pro-communist. Conversely, if the government won, the "pro-government" bands were to cover for the bands upstream. (Dentan, 1968:81)

All the Semai caught in this conflict situation seemed to have adopted this strategy during the emergency period (Ibid.). Dentan also noted that even at the time of his fieldwork (1962-63) there were Semai groups resorting to this innovative strategy against Malayan government agencies trying to implement development programs in Semai areas (Ibid.). Given that this strategy was pervasive among the different Semai groups and that it was a strategy borrowed from the Temiars alludes to a sense of cooperation among the different groups of Orang Asli in the Batang Padang District, if not in Perak generally, during this time.

Seen in terms of place-making we can explain this Semai/Temiar strategy using what Giddens, inspired by Goffman, calls

..."front" and "back" regions which actors employ as integral the contextuality of action and the sustaining of ontological security. "Front" regions are zones in which some degree of norm conforming behaviour is expected, in which rule-following "correct performances" are required, in which one may be subject to some form of surveillance or control, in which one may feel compelled to hide or cover up certain aspects of the self. "Back" regions are usually "zones within which agents recover forms of autonomy which are compromised or treated in frontal contexts, unguarded moments in which rules may be undermined, unobserved areas where norms may be flouted, times and places sometimes allowing for more full disclosure of the self, niches in which both the powerful and less powerful can utilize reflexivity to sustain a psychological distancing between their own interpretations of social processes and those enjoined by "official" norms. (as quoted/paraphrased by Fred, .23)
In the Semai case, however, the "front" or "back" zones, the "conforming" or "autonomous" actions, the "unobserved" areas, etc. were not so clearly distinguishable. Again, the notion of the Semai *ruai*-place can more fully elaborate the meanings of this strategy. While Giddens accept that identities are relational, the possibilities are limited by the assumption that such relations must be those of bounded, negative counterposition, of inclusion and exclusion. Yet as I have tried to demonstrate in the Semai case it is difficult, if not impossible to distinguish the inside of place from outside - indeed it is precisely the presence of the outside within which helps to construct the specificity of the Semai places.

It was perhaps this Orang Asli strategy which lent to the mobile and elusive nature of the Perak aborigines and which proved especially frustrating to the Security forces during the government's war with the communists in the 1950s. Since the start of the conflicts in 1948 the security forces had suspected the Perak aborigines for their collaboration with the communist insurgents but the matter could not be confirmed by army intelligence until 1952 (Williams-Hunt, 1952). Even when the suspicion was confirmed, with the discovery of a communist document on the Asal organization, the security forces were continually frustrated in their attempts to secure information or collaboration from the Semai. As the Federal Adviser on the Aborigines, Major P.D.R. Williams-Hunt, instructed the security forces:

The first problem in talking to the Aborigines is to catch your Aborigine... The second problem is that of interrogation, Aborigines are extremely irritating people to those unaccustomed to dealing with them. Firstly many Aborigines are quite incapable of giving a coherent story and secondly their way of life is such that they have little use for the past and only a slight interest in anything but the immediate future... Interrogation is best achieved by a "tame" aborigine... Most Aborigines have very little conception of time, distance or numbers...There are certain difficulties with their routes and movements... considerable difficulty may be encountered in Aboriginal place names many of which do not appear on the map. (Williams-Hunt, 1952:91f)

For the central government, Aborigine-inhabited areas in the 1950s were no longer viewed as merely "unoccupied" State lands nor were they extensions of the Museum/court where the protected primitive races, the Malay wards or the potential Christians are placed. Aboriginal areas had become "national security" or "communist-dominated" areas inhabited both by "naive", "semi-tamed" aborigines duped by the communists and "hostile" aborigines actively collaborating with the insurgents. While in earlier times the sense of place conveyed by the British onto Orang Asli-inhabited areas were "no-man's land" and "wastelands" (to legitimate
their economic exploitation of the forest lands), in the 1950s another British sense of place was
projected onto "Sakai" areas to justify yet another form of intervention. In the 1950s, newspaper
reports and official documentation/correspondence constantly employed these new categories to
classify the "Sakais" and their places (Colin, Williams-Hunt & Sabak, 1989; Williams-Hunt,
1952). In one account entitled "New Force For Sakai Areas, [A]n organization called the Perak
Aboriginal Areas Constabulary, is to be formed in Perak to police the remote areas in the state
inhabited by the Sakais" (Straits Times, 8.3.50). In another account, an "'Enlightenment' plan
shows modern life to villagers who have never seen a ship". It reads:

... [the] Sakai are to be given a chance to see all the wonders of Twentieth Century life
in a big city...Under a new scheme, known as "Kampung Enlightenment"... groups of...
Sakai men and women are to be taken on educational tours... [they] have never seen the
sea or a plane, a ship or a train at close quarters. They have no idea of what a modern
factory is...they will be taken to the Government offices...They will inspect the General
Hospital, the Railway station, Police Headquarters, the Mosque, the zoo and a domestic
science school...they will visit a Malay cinema an amusement park, Radio Malaya and
they will see the Singapore Free Press in production. (Straits Times, 5.11.52)

In yet another telling account of these distinctions between the "backward" aborigine and the
"civilized" British the colonial newspaper reports of the "Sakai girl [who] went to see the
Queen" (Straits times, 13.11.1952):

Wa Draman the pretty Sakai girl who went to see the Queen, returned to Malaya by
Comet yesterday - delighted with every bit of her month's stay in Britain. She was
thrilled by the bright lights, she enjoyed fish and chips and she didn't even mind the
weather. The two British institutions which most impressed her, however, were the
Royal Family and the "big, strong, polite London bobbies". She waited two hours for
Queen Elizabeth to pass by on her way to open Parliament, and bought a foot-high
statue of a London policeman. But it wasn't all a holiday for Wa Draman. She helped her
husband, Mr. P.D. Rider Williams-Hunt the acting Director of Museums and Adviser on
Aborigines to the Federation, to collect Malayan museum pieces which had "gone
astray". With her help, Mr. Williams-Hunt managed to recover what he called "an
invaluable collection" of ancient Malayan pottery metal-work and antiques.

This British regime's sense of place of Aboriginal areas, as "national security" areas, was also
fuelled by contemporaneous events happening elsewhere in the world. "The French debacle in
Indo-China, the Korean war, and a strong Communist China galvanized both the British
authorities and the Malayan people into a combined effort to stamp out the insurrection..."
(Leary, 1989:22). This change in classification of Aboriginal places is reflected at the same
time, in the transferring of the responsibility of the welfare of Orang Asli and the scrutiny of
their social relations from the Museums Department to a newly created Department of Aboriginal Affairs. Not surprisingly, this department was placed under the authority of the Member of Home Affairs in the Federal Secretariat under whose jurisdiction were also the police and prisons departments.

The addition of this new layer of signification upon aboriginal sites as security areas inhabited by hostile/naive aborigines and therefore "place-extensions" to be overseen by the Home Ministry, entailed with it a new topographical knowledge needed for the governance of those places as such. As one government document reported the mandate given to these agencies:

In conjunction with the deployment of Security Forces, the Department of Orang Asli... were also responsible to provide medical assistance, operate shops, establish schools, collect civic and combat intelligence as well as conducting psychological warfare amongst the Orang Asli

More specifically, the security forces and the field-workers of the Orang Asli department were instructed to gather:

...topographical intelligence... which will be of value to Security Forces...to keep a series of route books with a section of the standard one inch map series on the left hand page and details of tracks, photographs, etc., on the right hand page. Routes and tracks...These should be photographed... rivers and streams of any size should be photographed... the locations of rapids and the route through them; tracks on one or both banks; places where it is best to off load and walk... A sketch plan to show routes into and in the ladang [ Malay for 'clearings'], location of houses, particularly that of the headman... There is no end to the observation that can be made on the Aborigines themselves but probably only three points are of particular value to the security forces. (a) The general attitude of the people, i.e. whether hostile or friendly. (b) Details of any common disease from which the community is suffering. (c) The names, identity card numbers, and other details of headmen. Headmen should be photographed.... (Williams-Hunt, 1952:88ff)

As a result of these topographical intelligence, Aboriginal areas such as that of the Semai places were ascribed new meanings and this in turn was to have implications to Semai mobility and identity. Between 1948 and 1956, for instance, the Semai were restricted in their movements to the "secure" places of their aboriginal area marked out by the Security Forces and the Department of Orang Asli Affairs i.e. places (relations) where the Semai were supervised and monitored by security forces and fieldworkers of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. Then in 1957 the whole Sg. Nam settlement site, just as other Orang Asli areas before, was declared a "red area" which resulted in their forced relocation to a military camp in the nearby
This camp then became the Semai-security forces' place for two years, an extension of the Home ministry as a place on internment but also a specific mix of relations based on 24-hour surveillance and control. For the Darat Legep Semai, this internment experience was clearly connected to the JOA's "welfare" activities in their settlements that began in the early 1950s. One elderly Semai informant recounts the developments leading up to their two-year internment in the camp:

...in 1953 there was a woman, Gus Mary, who took care of the Orang Asli in the Batang Padang District. She often visited our settlement and it was her that helped set up the first school in our village. She also encouraged the Orang Asli to stay in one place so it would be easier to protect them from the communists in the deep jungle...in 1954 another person by the name of Hely was sent to tend to the Orang Asli. His wife was a nurse in the hospital at Tapah. The situation in our settlement was becoming increasingly difficult. Mr. Hely distributed 15 shotguns to various villagers and 4 more shotguns were purchased by the village. In 1955, Mr. Hely was replaced with Tengku Mak Idim... at the end of 1955 the latter was replaced with Tengku Said. Following that, in 1956 Mr. Badillah replaced Tengku Said. It was Mr. Badillah who ordered the villagers be placed in the camp so that they may be protected from the influence of the communists... the roofing of our houses, beams and even all our domestic animals were put onto military trucks and transported to the camp. We stayed there for two years. It was difficult to find food. Gradually one by one the villagers fled the camp and returned to their settlement sites. In 1959, Mr. Richard replaced Mr. Badillah.

This severe limitation of Semai mobility, the consignment/confinement to a particular place, on one hand, and the limitation on their identity on the other, has remained a central feature of the government's policy towards the Orang Asli since the 1950s. The current legislation, regarding the Orang Asli - the Aboriginal People's Act, 1954 (revised 1974), hereafter referred to as Akta 134 - reflects this pattern of relations between the Federal/State governments and the Orang Asli. A key feature of the current legislation are the strict provisions designed for the control and surveillance of "aboriginal areas/reserves" in the interests of national security. Given that this legislation was passed a year after British Military intelligence confirmed their suspicions that the Communist Politburo was successfully mobilizing Orang Asli support for their war of national liberation, the purpose of the 1954 legislation is clear. It was to increase the state's powers of surveillance and control of the Orang Asli population in their specified "areas and reserves". The Aboriginal People's Ordinance (No. 3 of 1954) while containing many elements of the 1939 enactment, clearly removed whatever ambiguity or circumscription from and amplified such provisions as "exclusion of persons and class of persons", "the freedom of
association between Orang Asli and other sections of the population", "the appointment of headmen" and other matters pertaining to access to aboriginal areas/reserves (Rachagan, 1992).

In subsequent legislative revisions and amendments, since 1954, these features of surveillance and control of aboriginal areas/reserves, were further clarified to reinforce the already comprehensive powers of the state over the Orang Asli population. First, with formal independence and the adoption of the Malayan Constitution of 1957, Orang Asli affairs became a Federal responsibility (Ninth Schedule, Federal List No. 16) in contrast to the provisions of the earlier legislation which gave the administration of aboriginal affairs to the Governments of the respective states or settlements. In 1958 there was yet another amendment to the 1954 Ordinance (Legal Note 332/1958) and, since then, two more amendments, one in 1967 (No. 16/1967) and the other in 1974 (No. 134/74 or Akta 134). In fact in 1974, the Aboriginal People's Act of 1954 was further amended to give yet more unfettered powers to the Commissioner of Aborigines vis-a-vis control over Orang Asli places and relations. The Commissioner, in this case the Federal Minister-in-charge, is also empowered to determine who may or may not come into contact with the Orang Asli (Section 14, 134/1974); to determine the nature and extent of the interaction between Orang Asli and other sections of the population (Section 19 [1] [c], 134/1974); even to control the interaction among the Orang Asli (Section 12); to prohibit and control the entry into or the circulation within any place inhabited by the aborigine of any written, printed or published material or film, etc. which is capable of "suggesting words or ideas" (Section 19 [1] [c], 134/1974); to confirm the selection of a headman as well as remove him from office (Section 16 [1] and [2], 134/1974). In fact, the amendments to the 1954 Ordinance now extend the powers of surveillance and control of the state not only to aboriginal areas and reserves but to "any aboriginal inhabited place" (Section 14). The powers of the state also allow for the control of employment of aborigines (Section 19 [1], 134/1974) and the prohibition of any person other than an aborigine of the same ethnic group to adopt or take control of an aboriginal child without the consent of the state (Section 18, 134/1974).

These restrictive laws were mobilized at the slightest hint of "unrest" emanating from Orang Asli areas. In September of 1957, for instance, some Orang Asli groups in the Batang Padang District refused to supply a certain forest product to traders due to a sharp fall in prices
(Straits Times, 20.8.57, 21.8.57). Despite protestations from the JHEOA that this was "wise" business dealings on the part of the Orang Asli the latter's actions were explained off by a government politician as the "work of the communist terrorists" (Ibid.). A few months later a new government directive required that the Orang Asli "no longer [be] allowed to trade their jungle products to any trader but only through a government agency..." (Malay Mail, 24.1.58).

By mid-1960, the Malayan government was confident of its victory over the communist insurrection and the State of Emergency was formally lifted. The military unit of the MCP, the Malayan Races Liberation Army (MRLA), had already been disbanded in 1958 with large numbers of its soldiers surrendering themselves to the Government Security Forces (Short, 1975). Those MCP guerillas that remained committed to their military cause had retreated to the Thai border. As for Orang Asli groups which were detained in urban camps, such as the Sg. Nam Semai, they were allowed to return to their previous settlement sites. But with the end of the communist threat Orang Asli-inhabited areas such as those occupied by the Semai, continued to be maintained as "restricted areas". A 24-hour police-curfew was imposed and except for certain state agencies and their officials, non-Orang Asli persons were barred entry into these places unless the authorities granted official permission.

Orang Asli Areas as Melayu Places

The security threat posed by the Orang Asli in the context of the communist insurrection was not the only factor that ushered them more intimately into the national politics of the 1950s-60s. There was another related process at the wider scale, which also influenced the state's construction of Orang Asli places during this period. This was the process of Malay nationalism. The history and complexities of Malay nationalism have been discussed at length elsewhere (Roff, 1967; Ariffin, 1993). What concern us here, however, are the significant implications of Malay nationalism on the Orang Asli situation in the post-war period. Although they were differentiated groups in terms of ideology, foreign connections and plans of action, there was one common concern shared by the Malay nationalists. This was the Malay grievance since early this century, regarding their steadily weakening socio-economic position in the country vis-a-vis the European and the Chinese populations (Ibid.). In the immediate post-war period
Malay nationalist sentiments were especially fuelled by the prospects of an erosion of Malay rights with the Malayan Union Plan proposed by the British (Funston, 1980). This Plan was designed for the integration of the different ethnic groups into one Malayan polity; the bringing together of the pre-war state-administrative structure which comprised ten government units into a centrally controlled state; and the formal transfer of ultimate sovereignty of this "new" colonial state to the British monarch. To achieve these aims the British government planned to reorganize the citizenship qualifications whereby the Chinese and Indians would qualify for citizenship under very liberal laws and to open up the Civil Service to all ethnic communities - a privilege previously accorded only to Europeans and a selected group of Malays. The Malay group which was most threatened by the implications of the Malayan Union Plan, and therefore the group that spearheaded the opposition to it, were the Malays of Aristocratic birth and those close to the nobility (Allen, 1967; Stockwell, 1979). Their oppositional activities culminated in the setting up of UMNO in 1946, the Malay political party which was to assume the dominant role of government when the British granted independence to Malaya in 1957. The UMNO leadership managed to garner broad-based support from the Malay population as it argued against the British plans of granting citizenship to the non-Malays under liberal terms:

If implemented [the Malayan Union Plan that is] the Malays would be reduced from a nation to a mere community among other communities in a land that was historically theirs. They would be forced to become Malayan nationals against their wishes as they were, had been, and always will be Melayu. The Malays felt that they would be reduced to the same fate as the North American Red Indians (Ariffin, 1993:55, referring to this fear articulated by the first president of UMNO at the Pan-Malayan Malay Congress on 5 March 1946)).

With a groundswell of UMNO-led Malay opposition to the Malayan Union proposal, as well as by "pro-Malay" retired British members of the Malayan Civil Service in London, the Malayan Union though inaugurated on 1 April 1946 was never brought into effect (Stockwell, 1979). What was put in its place, on 1 February 1948, was the Federation of Malaya concept, which was negotiated among the British, the Malay rulers and UMNO. In the Federation, the sovereignty of the Sultans, the individuality of the states, and Malay special rights were upheld. Citizenship was made more restrictive for non-Malays, requiring of them residence of at least fifteen during the previous twenty-five years, a declaration of permanent settlement, and a competent knowledge of Malay or English. Although citizenship rights were then given to the
non-Malays, they were denied a nationality (Ariffm, 1993:109). In the Federation of Malaya Constitution, non-Malays were referred to as citizens of the Federation of Malaya but not accorded the status of "nationals". These non-Malays had to qualify to be subjects (nationals) of the Melayu rulers of the Federated (nation) States. A subject of the rulers was defined as:

1. any person who belongs to an aboriginal tribe resident in the state; or
2. any Malay born in that state or born of a father who is a subject of the Ruler of that state; or
3. any person naturalised as a subject of that Ruler under any law for the time being in force; and that the word 'Malay' should mean a person who
   (a) habitually speaks the Malay language;
   (b) professes the Muslim religion; and
   (c) conforms to Malay custom

With the establishment of the Federation of Malaya in 1948, and the British granting of independence to the Federation in 1957, the Melayu concept of nationality was translated more systematically into state policies and administrative structures. The thrust of the fledgling UMNO-dominated government was the creating of a national community based on Malay cultural traditions (Nagata, 1984). While the measure of the progress and effectiveness of national integration campaign with the local Chinese, Indian and Eurasian populations was assessed in terms of the Malay language, Orang Asli integration enlisted another criteria for evaluation - the Malay religion. Already in 1956, the Conference of Malay Rulers had declared their "Big campaign to convert the country's 10,000 aborigines to Islam" (Straits Times, 22.8.56). But with the adoption of the Malayan Constitution of 1957 the Orang Asli became the responsibility of the Federal-state government (Ninth Schedule, Federal List No. 16). As such the "making" of the Orang Asli into "Melayu" became a state responsibility. The first newspaper report on this state-sponsored Islamic missionary activities in aboriginal areas which appeared soon after Malaya's independence underscores this discriminating strategy in the campaign:

Perak aborigines are being slowly converted to Islam, the State Council was told today... disclosed that 108 had become Muslims...Two do missionary work among their people by contact through headmen, it was said. Malay missionaries who speak the language of the aborigines are also active. In the last six years more than 460 non-Muslims approached the Perak Religious Department for conversion to Islam, although the department does no missionary work among the state's other non-Muslims. (Straits Times, 14.12.57).

Two months after the aforementioned newspaper report, another report indicated that the integration of Orang Asli into the national Malay community, by way of conversion into Islam,
was not restricted to aboriginal areas alone but in the Department of Aboriginal Affairs as well. This report, however, did not mention that the conversion was that of the Commissioner of the JHEOA at that time. The Malay Daily reported that:

An English youth of Viennese descent, approximate 34 years of age recently embraced Islam at the Kadhi's court... The youth, Mr. Alexander Timothy Carey is a Christian. His Muslim name is Mr. Iskandar b. Yusuf... According to his testimony to the authorities he stated that he embraced Islam solely at his own wishes and need without any force or persuasion from any one.

(Berita Harian, Feb. 1958).

In 1961 when the Federal government announced its new policy of modernization-development of the Orang Asli, its objective was made explicit: "the ultimate integration [of the Orang Asli] with the Malay section of the community" (Government of Malaysia, Statement of Policy Regarding The Administration of the Orang Asli of Peninsular Malaysia, Blue Book 1961:3). In socio-economic terms, this state policy was and continued to be implemented on the basis of the "modernization" model as stated by a director of the JHEOA as late as as 1983:

The 'modernization model', subscribing to the 'stages of growth' theory as expounded by W.W. Rostow et. al, is still being pursued by the Department with respect to those Orang Asli groups who are living within the rural fringe areas...(Jimin, 1983:55)

However, given the ethnic twist of this modernization programme, the implementation necessitated:

(a) The resettlement of Orang Asli into "pattern settlements" whereby they are housed in new Malay-type dwellings and provided with a piped water supply and facilities such as a school, community hall, health clinic and sanitary conveniences;

(b) The promotion of cash crops - Orang Asli are encouraged to cultivate cash crops such as rubber, oil palm, and fruit trees in specially designated plots of land; and

(c) The provision of agricultural skills and knowledge to unresettled Orang Asli (Carey, 1976).

McLellan (1985) termed this policy as a "... kind of ethnomorphosis planned for the Orang Asli... their acceptance of Islam and their eventual blending into rural Malay communities" (92). She and others (Means, 1985; Nagata, 1993) have also demonstrated how this "shift in government policy toward the Orang Asli" (Means, 1985:646) was all the more pushed through by the government in the 1960s and 70s as a way to resolve the ethnic question to ensure its legitimacy of rule.

The latent paranoia among some Malays concerning their precarious claim to majority status in the expanded Federation of Malaya, after the formation of Malaysia in 1963, led many Malays to view the aboriginal peoples of Malaya, as well as those of Sarawak
and Sabah, as essential - both as political allies and for the ethnic purposes of counting, ethnically, as "indigenous peoples". The Malay term "Bumiputra" - literally, son(s) of the soil - was supposed to encompass this wider concept of indigenous ethnic identity. (Means, 1985:646)

Thus, when compared to the 1931 census records which shows the Malay population to be 44% of the total, the 1970 statistics put them at a majority of 53.2% as a result of including the Orang Asli and East Malaysia (Borneo) indigenous peoples as fellow "bumiputra". Among other arguments, the government appealed to this numerical superiority of the Malays over the Chinese and other races to legitimize the "special rights" and preferential policies for the Malays which were introduced in the New Economic Policy (McLellan, 1985, Nagata, 1993).

In terms of administrative personnel as well, the Malaysian Civil Service became Malaysianized with independence, but with Malay quotas. As for the JHEOA, it was gradually transformed into a more exclusive Malay enclave. The first three departmental heads of the JHEOA were all British. The fourth was a "Hungarian born in Vienna, who had studied at the London School of Economics and Political Science and obtained a Ph.D. from the University of Edinburgh... [obtained] a position at the Department of Aborigines...converted to Islam which later made him more acceptable as a temporary head of Department since there were no trained Malay anthropologists at the time" (Means, 1985:646). Dr. Iskandar Carey remained head of Department until he was replaced by a Malay who had been in the department and was given leave to study for a Ph.D. from Cambridge, which he completed in 1973.

Baharon Azhar Raffie assumed the post of commissioner of aborigines in 1974. Already in his dissertation, the new Commissioner of Aborigines argued why the implementation of the Orang Asli policy is essentially Malay in orientation. This is because the Orang Asli:

...share some common historical and cultural ties with the Malays therefore the process of integration means, among other things, the evolution of a national consciousness through the acceptance of certain national symbols which are culturally Malay e.g. the King, the Malay language and Islam as the national religion (Baharon, 1973).

The head of the medical section within the JHEOA was for many years a British medical officer who hired and trained a majority Orang Asli staff for the Orang Asli hospital, which was set up in 1960. When he retired in 1969 the medical services were increasingly staffed with Malays such that by 1980 the Medical and Health Services Division of the JHEOA was headed by a refugee Cambodian Muslim. During the latter's term of office not only were the staff of the
hospital dominated by Malays but, by 1982, a majority of the patients were actually Malays rather than Orang Asli. (Means, 1985:647)

In 1978, when another Federal-Government policy-statement vis-a-vis the Orang Asli was formulated this specific nature of Orang Asli integration was repeated as an on-going objective:

... every facility and opportunity must be given for the Orang Asli to embrace Islam and continue to learn and live the teachings of Islam. (Guidelines for the Development of Orang Asli into the Modern Malaysian Society, Ministry of Home Affairs, 1978).

It was not just happening in Malaysia

A central theme in this thesis is that, in line with the Semai notions of place-making, the constitution of social relations in one place and at a particular scale is interconnected with social processes in other places i.e. at different scales of one global universe. The ways the British, then the Malaysian regimes went about organizing Orang Asli social relations especially in the 1950s and 60s and their implications for Orang Asli land rights - were not unique innovations just at the Malaysian scale. The practices of spatially segregating the Orang Asli from the rest of society, "protecting" them from the "evils" of modern society, assigning the care of their places to special agencies, legislating on their identity and mobility, integrating them into the dominant society, etc. were state-practices happening elsewhere around the world. Similar approaches by state regimes towards the indigenous situation were observed in earlier times and contemporaneously in places as far away from Malaysia as Canada (Kariya, 1993), China (Mosely, 1966), Australia (Gale, Vachon, 1982), Brazil (Cultural Survival, 1981), Chile (Berglund, 1977), the United States (Ortiz, 1984), Thailand (Tan, 1975) and the list of countries can go on (Burger, 1987; Moody, 1988; Ashworth, 1978, 1980).

In Malaysia during the 1950s, the indigenous situation was highlighted to the state authorities because of the perceived Orang Asli roles, first, in the communist insurgency and second, in the Malay nationalist campaigns. Similarly, in other countries across the globe especially in the 1950s and 1960s, state and interstate authorities were reacting in ways the British/Malaysian regimes were doing towards the indigenous peoples, within their national territory, who were politically "awakening" to their rights. The following two examples serve to
illustrate the point on the manner in which social processes, vis-a-vis the state's making of indigenous peoples' places in different countries across the globe are so thoroughly interconnected with each other. First, we look at Canada in the 1950s. In the context of Canadian indigenous peoples' rights campaigns in the 1940s, the Canadian government in 1951 reviewed the previous Indian Act of 1924 (Asch, 1982). With this revised legislation, a state-sponsored economic modernization-development programme for the Canadian "Indians" began in the 1950s. And like the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) set up in the 19th century in the United States, the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) set up in the 1950s in Brazil, the Presidential Assistant on National Minorities (PANAMIN) established in the 1960s in the Philippines, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA) set up in the 1970s in Australia, the Department of Orang Asli Affairs (JHEOA) set up in Malaysia in the 1950s, the development-modernization of the Canadian "Indians" was assigned to the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA). More specifically, while the development-modernization programme was "integrationist" or "assimilationist" in character, the policy simultaneously, espoused a spatial segregation of indigenous populations into "reserves" (Kariya, 1993). More similarities between different governments can be mentioned. For instance, with the exception of the Australian DAA all the other aforementioned agencies which were assigned the development-modernization tasks of their indigenous populations were initially set up under the purview of the interior/home ministries of those states. And the similarities between the DIA and the JHEOA do not stop there. Since its inception, the Canadian DIA was transferred no less than ten times between various federal ministries and departments (Ibid.). Compare this with the JHEOA, which in its shorter history compared to the DIA was transferred seven times from one Ministry/Department to another. Like the DIA (Ibid. p. 188), the JHEOA (Hasan Mat Nor, 1993:9) was also mandated to be an almost total institution for the indigenous population, a one-stop agency for all their needs. The point of these comparisons is not merely to illustrate the similar organizational patterns whereby different governments go about intervening in the situations of their indigenous populations. Rather, the focus is on the ways in which the British/Malaysian governments went about "making indigenous places" i.e. constructing/organizing Orang Asli relations since the 1950s. These relations were clearly
shaped by similar social processes (vis-a-vis indigenous peoples) in earlier times and contemporaneously at locales far away from Malaysia.

Second, the "protection-assimilation" discourse of the British-Malaysian governments towards the Orang Asli in the 1950s and 1960s, although generated by the circumstances of the Emergency and Malay nationalism, was also an echo of a larger global discourse/practice regarding indigenous peoples being articulated during that same period. In the immediate post-World-War-II global scenario of post-war reconstruction and heightened development-modernization programmes in almost every country in the world, (Roberstson, 1984) various indigenous groups in Europe, North/South America and Australia were also more organizationally articulating their own peculiar development problems. In as early as the 1920s indigenous groups of North America were already sending their representatives to the League of Nations with memoranda regarding the former's right to self determination (Bose, 1995). But it was in the post-World War II period that saw more groups - the Karen of Burma, different indigenous groups of North/South America, the Sami of the Scandinavian countries, the Inuit of North America/Canada, the Australian Aborigines, etc. - taking their grievances into the national and international policy-making fora (Burger, 1987). And the response of several governments including Malaysia to the indigenous situation in their countries during the 1950s and 1960s was development by way of protection-assimilation. The aforementioned case of Canada in the 1950s is exemplary. Similar spatial compromises to the indigenous situation were initiated in Australia (Gale, 1993; Vachon, 1982) the United States (Ortiz, 1984), Brazil (Presland, 1979). Despite the differentiated particularities of the indigenous "awakening" to their rights in the various post-world-war II countries, the similar strategy undertaken by various governments can be linked to the workings of one international agency during the 1940s and 1950s. The International Labour Organization (ILO) which was set up at the time of the League of Nations was involved with indigenous populations in South America since the 1920s (ILO, 1984). However, it was not until the end of the Second World War that the ILO was able to begin to make a significant impact on indigenous situations at a global level. The ILO campaigns resulted in the first ever piece of international law relating to indigenous peoples - ILO Convention 107 of 1957 (Convention Concerning the Protection and Integration of Indigenous and Other Tribal and Semi-Tribal Populations in Independent Countries). Although
the Malaysian government was not one of the 27 states to ratify this convention it was clearly influenced by it in its 1961-formulated policy towards the development-modernization of the Orang Asli. In fact, the wording of the "Government of Malaysia, Statement of Policy Regarding The Administration of the Orang Asli of Peninsular Malaysia, Blue Book 1961" on pages 3-5 and 21, is almost a verbatim rendition of sections of the ILO Convention 107, 1957.

Examine these wordings of the ILO Convention 107:

Article 2 [No.] 1. Governments shall have the primary responsibility for... the protection of the [indigenous] populations concerned and their progressive integration into the life of their respective countries... (b) promoting the social, economic and cultural development of these populations and raising their standard of living; (c) creating possibilities of national integration to the exclusion of measures tending towards the artificial assimilation of these peoples... Article 3 [No] 1. So long as the social, economic and cultural conditions of the [indigenous] populations concerned prevent them from enjoying the benefits of the general laws of the country to which they belong, special measures shall be adopted for the protection of the institutions, persons, property and labour of these populations. [No] 2. Care shall be taken to ensure that such special measures of protection - (a) are not used as a means of creating or prolonging a state of segregation; and will be continued only so long as there is a need for special protection and only to the extent that such protection is necessary...

And the "Government of Malaysia, Statement of Policy Regarding The Administration of the Orang Asli of Peninsular Malaysia" reads:

... their [the Orang Asli's] ultimate integration with the Malay section of the community... but so far as their social, economic and cultural conditions prevent them from enjoying the benefits of the laws of the country, special measures should be adopted for the protection of the institutions, customs, mode of life, persons, property and labour of the aboriginal peoples. However, such measures of protection should not be used as a means of creating or prolonging a state of segregation and should be continued only so long as there is a need for special protection and only to the extent that protection is necessary... The social, economic and cultural development of the aborigines should be promoted with the ultimate object of natural integration as opposed to artificial assimilation. (Government of Malaysia, Statement of Policy Regarding The Administration of the Orang Asli of Peninsular Malaysia, Blue Book 1961:3-5, 21).

These governmental and international policies suggest that the spatial protection-segregation of the indigenous is a conditional step or process towards the "modernization-development" and "integration" of the indigenous populations with mainstream society. At the conclusion of this process, as in the case of Malaysia, all legal distinctions between Orang Asli and the Malay community were to be unnecessary. Once the Orang Asli is integrated, s/he could then function in society like all other Malays. In terms of land rights, therefore, the Orang Asli would then
enjoy similar rights as the Malay community once the former is "integrated". Until that point in time, however, the spatial protection-segregation policy is necessary and a special state agency is mandated to be the "trustee" or "guardian" of Orang Asli relations in those specified places.

Restricted Areas

For the Orang Asli in general, these processes of national security, Malay nationalism, protection-segregation, modernization-development, etc. and their implications were clearly felt on the ground as it were. These processes spelt out for the Orang Asli a confinement and consignment of their identity and mobility to particular and restricted places. When the Sg. Nam Semai returned to their settlements in 1959, after their two-year detention, they realized that they were no more accountable to the Malay Penghulu of the Sub-District but to the JHEOA. If the Semai wanted to move their settlements, the JHEOA must first be consulted. Similarly, the appointments of Semai headmen must be confirmed by the JHEOA, gathering certain forest goods required a licence from the department, trading in forest products were to mediated by the JHEOA, etc. It was more than a question of accountability. The Orang Asli in general were required to depend on the JHEOA for their every need (Williams-Hunt, 1993; Ibrahim, 1995) as the latter set about to reorganize Orang Asli relations from scratch, as it were.

The Semai recall that for the first time in the early 1960s social infrastructure projects were implemented at their village-level by the JHEOA. Among other things, a school, a fishpond and a village-community hall were set up for them and they were provided building materials to renovate their houses. These allocations of social infrastructure, however, came with specific appeals to Malay culture and religion. For instance, the villagers were assisted to re-build their houses into Malay-style dwellings:

...Tuan... [the JOA Officer from Tapah] even carried out a survey of our settlement and orchard sites and told us that he will be applying for our land to be gazetted as Orang Asli Reserve... for that purpose we should have more "normal" houses like the Malay villagers... (Bah Kenyet)

In the schools established by the JOA, compulsory instruction in Islam was incorporated in the teaching curriculum, something the Semai initially acquiesced to but soon after resisted by withdrawing their children from the school. (The JOA finally closed down the school on
grounds that there was insufficient staff to maintain it). In another project, the Semai were supplied with the basic technology and seedlings to start up rubber smallholdings, the primary income-generating activities of the Malay peasantry (Ibrahim, 1993). Besides that, regular visits were made by religious officials accompanying JOA staff to persuade the village headmen to convert into Islam promising them and their villagers better development prospects. As Bah Tua narrates:

We were advised that our Asli religion and customs are not good for us... that we are Malaysian citizens now, so we should convert to Islam and be true Malaysians.

These Islamic visits actually began soon after the Semai returned to their settlement sites after their two-year detention. Muslim missionaries began frequenting the Semai settlements to bring a message that the latter's religion was heathen and inferior. Beh Jil recalls the events during that time:

...that year itself [1959] the Gob missionaries began to visit our village. They would come often bringing us food, medicine and other provisions... they will give these to the headman and he will distribute them to all the villagers... the Gob will also give us ceramah (lecture) telling us how important it is to have religion, that we are now Malaysian citizens so we should accept Islam... but none of us entered Islam. They would continue visiting our village, continue telling us that we must have religion, that it is not good to be without a religion... they really persusah us... then when the JOA opened a school in the village, all the children had to attend Islam lessons... really persusah

As in earlier times, these forces of change "from above" as it were affected the Semai but the process cannot be simply read off as a one-way affair in the shaping of Semai social relations. Implications of social processes on different scales of society were concretely mediated through the social-cultural practices of the Semai in particular places. In terms of these impositions of Malay culture and religion on the Semai in the 1960s, the latter's response was reminiscent of the spatial "back-front" strategy they employed during the Emergency. Two examples may suffice to illustrate this.

The architectural style of the Semai houses, constructed in the early 1960s, reveals the ways they incorporated social changes yet maintained certain distinct Semai practices. When the JHEOA supplied them with building materials to renovate their houses the Semai villagers were instructed to rebuild them in the fashion of Malay dwellings. The villagers complied with these instructions because, as Bah Ingat put it, "they [the JHEOA officers] were supervising the
reconstruction work and they were supplying us the material". It is interesting, however, to note that the architecture of the reconstructed houses of the villagers which are maintained to this day betray a clear mix in cultural style. The front section of the Semai house, facing the road, resembles a typical Malay dwelling-place, constructed from the materials provided by the JHEOA, while the back section (the wal or fireplace/kitchen) is built from forest resources and fashioned in a distinctively Semai style. When I asked Wah Kawat to explain the mixed architecture, she explained:

...we had no choice, the materials provided by the JHEOA were insufficient. My mother, sister and I spent several months collecting rattan, bamboo and wood from the forest to construct our wal. When we extended the house, the JOA people were not around to watch us, so we built it according to the Asli way.

But perhaps more significant in mediating the social processes impacting them was the way the Semai dealt with the imposition of Islam. Withdrawing their children from the JHEOA-school, where compulsory instruction in Islam was part of the curriculum, was one way to resist a religion they could not identify with. However, Islamic missionaries were persistent in their efforts at proselytizing the Semai. The Semai villagers finally managed to stop the Islamic visits when the villages became "Christian/Bahai" places.

Methodists, Lutheran, Pentecostal and Catholic missionaries had begun working among the Orang Asli of Perak in the early 1930s. Before the state-imposed restrictions in the 1950s the missionaries were frequenting Orang Asli settlements even in the deep-jungle areas (Means & Means, 1981; Means, 1985; Abdullah, 1979/80). Even during the Japanese Occupation some Christian missionaries stayed behind in the jungle areas to render humanitarian services to the Orang Asli (Means & Means, 1981; Means, 1985). Despite their proselytizing efforts, Christian conversions among the Orang Asli of Perak prior to the 1960s were minimal. The Methodists recorded about twenty conversions in 1941 after which the war broke out and missionary/humanitarian work did not resume till the late 1950s and early 1960s (Ibid.). The Catholics recorded even fewer baptisms among the Perak Orang Asli before the 1960s, numbering only about fifteen persons (personal communication). The one Christian group that did achieve the highest number of converts, in contrast to the other Christian groups, were the Pentecostals. By the late 1950s there were at least two Semai villages, numbering about fifty persons, almost wholly baptized by these christian missionaries (see Singapore Standard 16.9.56
and personal communication with Wah Kenyet who belongs to the second village). As for the state-sponsored Islamic-proselytizing of Orang Asli, the Perak Department of Religious Affairs announced that forty-three Orang Asli were converted by 1956 (Straits Times, 22.8.56). And by the end of 1957 the number of Orang Asli Muslim converts in Perak had risen to 108 (NST, 14.12.57 in Nicholas, Williams-Hunt and Sabak, 1989:227). With regard to the Semai of Darat Legeb, for instance, there are no records of any villager embracing Christianity prior to the 1960s although Christian missionaries were working in their midst. It was only in the 1960s that many Semai began embracing not only Christianity but the Baha'i religion. In fact the majority of the Christian Semai in Canu and the Baha'i in Ini were all baptized in the 1960s.

There is a large body of literature on the practice of stigmatized minorities in many countries to adopt world religions that are both opposed to the religion of the dominant group and which offer a universalistic dignity and status (Kooiman, Muizenberg & Veer, 1988; Aronoff, 1984; Stoll, 1991). The conversion of poor peasants to Protestantism as opposed to Catholicism in Central America (Martin, 1990), the "untouchables" of India moving into Islam, Buddhism and Christianity for centuries (George, 1982; Yesudass, 1980: Forrester, 1977) are but some examples. Methodism, Catholicism and the Baha'i religion filled this same functional role for the Semai especially in the 1960s. The pioneer-converts to Methodism, Catholicism and the Bahai religion are all bluntly frank about a common denominator when recounting the circumstances of their conversion. Beh Salit is 65 years old and one of the first Ini converts to the Bahai religion:

... but Gob missionaries, they were allowed to enter the village... and they kept visiting us and persusah us to become Muslim but each time we refused... some of us even talked of going back ulu teow so the Gob cannot persusah us... It was during that time that many of us muit ugama (entered religion)... the headman of... [another village] explained how the Muslim missionaries stopped persusah his village when the villagers there muit ugama... each time after that whenever the Gob tries to convert them to Islam, the villagers would show them their baptism certificates to prove that they had already muit ugama... those who did not have the certificates would place crucifixes and and religious pictures in their houses... even those villagers who did not enter religion, they fixed these religious pictures and crucifix in their houses...when the Gob visited them the people will say we already masuk ugama (Malay for "entered religion")...soon the Gob stopped trying to convert us.

That these Christian and Bahai religions initially served a primarily functional purpose for the Semai is further evident in the reasons for the specific choice of religion of each village. When
questioned as to why the Canu villagers accepted Catholicism and Methodism the answer from several contributors was invariably "because these religious workers were the first to visit the Semai area as well as set up their centers in the nearby towns". When I asked Beh Cernem the reason I'ni villagers did not accept Christianity the same time the Canu villages did his response was:

No. We did not like Christianity. No one in I'ni wanted to be Christian. How could we when it was a Christian Pastor who sold our land to the mining company and we were forced to move here... only recently some I'ni villagers have joined Christianity because of marriage...

For the Semai, therefore, the need to be free from the persusah of the Gob missionaries was a prime motivating factor in their mint u gama of the Bahai/Christian. Moreover, as long as the Semai "did not have religion" the Muslim encroachment into their places would continue. In a sense, the Semai in "entering" these world religions afforded them a "protective dignity", a re-positioning of their villages on the social map. It was protection and social position the Semai customary religion could not provide them against a religion they did not want in their places. In addition, as, Beh Salit explained, the protection was even extended to the Semai who had not embraced one or other of the world religions.

Conclusions

In this chapter I continued a theme from the previous chapter which is the land rights (and geography of social relations) of the Orang Asli, the Semai in particular, and how they further deteriorated in the years between the 1940s and 1960s. Following upon Semai notions of places and place-making, I have chosen to examine the land rights issue in terms of the changing social relations of the Semai. For the Semai, as I have argued earlier, social relations are made in "people-places" which are interconnected with other "people-places". Borrowing ideas from contemporary discussions on the spatialization of social relations, I have elaborated on the Semai notions of place-making by including, especially, the significance of the range of scales of the place-making process. As with any work which attempts to look at social processes in their range of scales there is the danger of emphasizing one scale of practices to the detriment of others or what Said would call "out-of-scale images" (Said, 1994). Thus, in this and the
previous chapter, while my concern is with the constitution of social relations in a specific Semai locale, I have tried to examine how social processes on different scales in particular time-periods have come together to impinge on the lives of the Semai. More importantly, I hope I have demonstrated how the effects of these social processes or the social flows between different places have been concretely mediated through the social-cultural practices of the Semai in particular places.

My concern in this chapter was to show how state constructions of Orang Asli places - in the context of the Emergency, Malay nationalism and a global discourse of protecting-segregating-assimilating the indigenous - were translated into articulations of a joint control over Orang Asli identity and mobility. In these state-constructed Orang Asli places the limitation of Orang Asli mobility in terms both of identity and space has been a crucial means of subordination. And the rights in land, or lack thereof, which characterize these places play a crucial role in maintaining this joint control over the identity and mobility of these peoples. However, place-making practice was/is not a monopoly of just state or nationalist agencies. Semai place-making, during the period being discussed here was concomitant with the processes "from above" as it were. In addition, it showed itself as a form of resistance that can be usefully explained as the "back and front" zoning-practice of time-space relations.

The Semai struggles for land rights, their *masalah tanah* which is another significant effect of this process of place-making, is also a struggle at place-making. The struggles are not merely aimed at securing a piece of titled land. It is also a struggle against place-making forces coming from the state as well as beyond which are aimed at consigning/confining the Semai to particular places and fixing their identity in exclusive terms. It is to these on-going and concomitant Orang Asli place-making processes that I turn to in the subsequent chapters.