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Chapter · August 2016

DOI: 10.1007/978-981-10-2245-6_3

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Chapter 3

“Anthropologizing Human Insecurities”: Narrating the Subjugated Discourse of Indigenes on the Deterritorialized Landscapes of the Malaysian Nation-State

Zawawi Ibrahim

Abstract Following the latest emphasis in the discourse on mainstreaming “human security” in Southeast Asia which articulates a “people-centric” concern, this chapter is an attempt to “anthropologize human insecurities” by way of examining the “emic” database of subjectivities among Orang Asli and Penan indigenes experiencing deterritorialization on the margins of the Malaysian nation state. In attempting to explain further their “lived experiences” of human insecurity, it is equally important to link the micro-based perspective with the broader structural, development and nation-state political processes which generate deterritorialization onto the landscape of the indigenes in the context of a specific historical trajectory.

Keywords Deterritorialization · Anthropologizing human insecurity · New economic policy (NEP) · Malaysian developmentalism · Nation-state · Subjectivities · Indigenes · Orang Asli · Penan

3.1 Introduction

In attempting to mainstream “human (in)security” in Southeast Asia, it has been acknowledged that the discourse is beginning to shift its emphasis “from military and political issues to concerns that reflected the economic and social well-being of people and communities, from a primacy given to states to focus on people, and from national security to human security.” (Kraft 2012, p. 17) For members of ASEAN, the recent adoption in 2008 of the ASEAN Charter by the regional organization gave recognition to a rethinking of the above concern by privileging the language of “comprehensive security” even though “the region has yet to achieve the internalization of human security into the governance system.”

Zawawi Ibrahim (✉)
Institute of Asian Studies, Universiti Brunei Darussalam,
Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam
e-mail: zawawi.ibrahim@ubd.edu.bn

(Banpasirichote et al. 2012, p. 4) But in exploring how human security is contextualized and practiced in Southeast Asia, scholars have also shown interest on “the incidence of insecurity and vulnerability” and admit that “human insecurity” is “very much embedded in the kind of development most countries are operating in, that is, investment without a human face and thus without welfare.” (Banpasirichote et al. 2012, pp. 5–6) While they do not directly engage with or address “the broader legal and political aspects,” they recognize that “both these concerns are of high priority” in understanding human insecurity (Banpasirichote et al. 2012, pp. 5–6).

Hence an important thrust in this chapter is to offer a framework which will also address the broader historical, structural, and societal dimensions of human insecurity. At the same time, since human insecurity is fast becoming a “people-centric” discourse, it is equally pertinent to articulate a methodology of research that can unravel the subjectivities which reflect the “emic” world of those who are actually experiencing human insecurity in society. In the social sciences, anthropological “fieldwork,” packaged with its different forms of “ethnography,” has proven to be an effective tool of research utilized by scholars to uncover the “emic” world of “the Other,” i.e., the marginalized, the vulnerable, and indeed, the *Indigenes*, who are the subjects of the following study. Without a doubt, the subject of human insecurity among *indigenes* would constitute a relevant emphasis in the anthropological discourse on marginality.

Within western anthropology, notwithstanding its early functionalist and classical author-driven ethnography associated with the British School of Anthropology, there has also been a long tradition of reflexivity and auto-critique, from anthropologists such as Peter Worsley (1965), Kathleen Gough (1968), Dell Hymes (1969) and Talal Asad (1973), culminating in the postmodernist turn led by George Marcus, James Clifford and Michael Fischer (see Marcus and Fischer 1986; Clifford and Marcus 1986). This new wave of postmodernist anthropology drew inspiration not only from Edward Said but also from the deconstructionist ideas of Michel Foucault (Gardner and Lewis 1996, pp. 21–24). Postmodernist ethnography, which continuously emphasizes “the Other” as a partner, with their “own voices,” in research and in writing the ethnographic text, has since become in vogue, usurping the author-driven methodology of classical participant observation of functionalist anthropology (Fontana 1994; Tsing 1993).

Within postcolonial anthropology, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, representing the new imaginings of Maori indigenous anthropology, launches a vehement critique against colonial modes of epistemology and methodology that have rendered Maoris as mere “objects” of research. The “calling” by Tuhiwai Smith is to move the “indigenous” as “agency,” and “subjects” in their own right, thereby empowering them to determine their own “indigenous” research agenda through “decolonising methodologies” (Smith 1999). In this context, I believe that Smith has moved her methodology beyond postmodernist ethnography. Of the 25 indigenous projects that she advocates, they emphasize not only “storytelling,” but also “claiming,” remembering,” “indigenising,” “writing,” and “sharing” (Smith 1999).

In the discourse on anthropologizing “human insecurity” in this chapter, both Orang Asli and Penan *indigenes* living on the margins of the Malaysian nation state

will be telling their stories of “experiencing deterritorialization” and human insecurity. At the same time, the chapter will also critically examine the terrain of the broader historical and societal framework which encapsulates these lived experiences. With these objectives in mind, the discussion in this chapter is in several parts, as outlined below:

1. Problematizing “Indigeneity” in the Malaysian nation state: Orang Asli and Penan as nondominant “ethnies”.
2. Malaysian Nation state Incorporation of Orang Asli and Penan Communities
3. The New Economic Policy (NEP) and Malaysian Developmentalism
4. Deterritorialization and Human Insecurity
 - (A) Experiencing Deterritorialization and Human Insecurity: Orang Asli Case studies.
 - (B) Experiencing Deterritorialization and Human Insecurity: A Penan Case study.
5. Conclusion.

3.2 Problematizing “Indigeneity” in the Malaysian Nation State: Orang Asli and Penan as Nondominant “Ethnies”

On the question of “indigeneity,” in what is considered a groundbreaking report published in 1987, the United Nations special rapporteur José Martínez Cobo offered a working definition of an indigenous people:

Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sections of societies once prevailing in those territories or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems (Martínez Cobo cited in Muehlebach 2001, p. 421).

In the context of the Malaysian nation state, it is necessary to register a caveat to the above depiction of “equality” allegedly shared between the various indigenous communities. As Ramy Bulan reminds us, “considering the massive influx of ancestral Malays into the Peninsular in the second millennium A.D., they can equally well be seen as conquerors or colonisers who gained political control over the indigenous Orang Asli”. Trying to steer a middle path between these different perspectives she also recognises that while “it is acknowledged that the Orang Asli were the earlier inhabitants, it is contended that there can be levels of indigeneity in any nation; it need not be a question of mutual exclusion. (Bulan 1998, p. 131)

Bulan goes on to interrogate the concept of “non-dominance” as endorsed in the UN’s definition of indigeneity. She points out the incongruity of such a criterion given the historical experience of some postindependent states, including Malaysia:

It may be that in many societies the culture of most indigenous groups would be non-dominant. However this may not necessarily be true in some post-independent countries where politically strong indigenous groups have asserted their own culture as the national culture. For instance, the description of the non-dominant indigenous group is not reflected in the Malaysian situation where the political will and the power is in the hands of the dominant Malay majority who are also considered an indigenous people group. (Bulan 1998, p. 132)

Translated into the political narrative of the Malaysian nation-state, Mahathir Mohamad's *The Malay Dilemma*, first published in 1970 and regarded by many as laying the philosophical basis for the infamous pro-Malay affirmative NEP (New Economic Policy) emphasizes in no uncertain terms the dominant position of the Malays as the "original," "indigenous" (*Bumiputera*) and "definitive people" of the land as compared to the other indigenes. As he states:

The first conclusion from the study of other countries is that the presence of aborigines prior to settlement by other races does not mean that the country is internationally recognised as belonging to the aborigines. Aborigines are found in Australia, Taiwan and Japan, to name a few, but nowhere are they regarded as the definitive people of the country concerned. The definitive people are those who set up the first governments and these governments were the ones which other countries did official business and had diplomatic relations.....In Malaya, the Malays without doubt formed the first effective governments. The Malay states have been internationally recognised since the beginning of Malayan history. Trade, treaties and diplomatic representation by foreign countries were negotiated with the Malay-governed Malay states of Malaya. The *Orang Melayu* or Malays have always been the definitive people of the Malay Peninsula. The aborigines were never accorded any such recognition nor did they claim such recognition. There was no known aborigine government or aborigine state. Above all, at no time did they outnumber the Malays. It is quite obvious that if today there were four million aborigines, the right of the Malays to regard the Malay Peninsula as their country would be questioned by the world. But in fact there are no more than a few thousand aborigines....I contend that the Malays are the original or indigenous people of Malaya and the only people who can claim Malaya as their one and only country. (Mahathir Mohamad 1970, pp. 126–33)

Mahathir's testimony provides an initial lesson in the official Malaysian nation-state's discourse on indigeneity, namely that Malay claims to indigeness or *bumiputeraism* will always be backed by the "political shell" of the state (after Gellner, cited in Postill 2008: 217). Such a view on the indigenous Malays as a "dominant ethnic" within the context of the nation-state sits rather uncomfortably with Thomas Eriksen's (1993, p. 126) instructive insight:

Indigenous peoples stand in a potentially conflictual relationship to the nation-state as an institution. Their main political project is often presented as an attempt to survive a culture-bearing group, but they rarely or never envision the formation of their own nation-state. They are non-state people.

From the above discussion, it does appear that the special position of the Malays as an indigenous people being coterminous with that of the state, as envisioned by Mahathir, would perpetually relegate the "indigenous" position of the Orang Asli and, we may add, of other indigenous non-Malays as well, such as the Penan, to that of "non-state people." Hence any discourse on Malaysian "indigeneity" must

be predicated on an initial recognition that among its generic indigenous citizenry, there is a “dominant ethnies” which is backed by the “political shell” of the state. Equally, there are other “ethnies” which are not. The latter represents what Eriksen describes as “non-state” people.

3.3 Malaysian Nation State Incorporation of Orang Asli and Penan Communities

(A) Orang Asli

“Orang Asli” (a Malay term which means “original; people”) is the current official and acceptable term to describe the “Aboriginal People” of Peninsular Malaysia. The Orang Asli are by no means a homogenous ethnic entity. They are divided into three different ethnic groups—the Negritos, the Senoi and Proto-Malays—who in turn further can be further subdivided into different “tribal” groups. They are probably amongst the country’s poorest and politically marginalized communities. The official profile on the Orang Asli in 1993 only provides the following selective categories in relation to their income levels, but adequate enough to demonstrate their current underdeveloped economic status: 3.5 %—no income; 30.2 %—less than RMI00; 39.3 %—between RM 100 and RM 200; 11.5 %—above RM350 (*Unit Penyelarasan Pelaksanaan Jabatan Perdana Menteri* 1994). Another source cites only 20.9 % of the Orang Asli populace as being above the poverty line (cited by Long Jidin in Zawawi 1996, p. 105). Though they are citizens and are eligible to vote, and are also considered as *Bumiputeras* (sons of the soil) like the Malays, they are however also governed by a specific set of laws and come directly under the custody and control of a special administrative department, the JHEOA (*Jabatan Hal Ehwal Orang Asli*), the Department of Orang Asli Affairs.

In the history of Orang Asli-state relations, Orang Asli incorporation into the Malaysian nation state went through three distinct periods of state domination, i.e., from Malay feudalism to British rule under the colonial state and finally, to the current postcolonial Malaysian nation state since its independence in 1957. The marginality of the Orang Asli was initially rooted in the precolonial relations of Malay feudal society. In the traditional political economy of the Malay world (see Couillard 1984; Dodge 1981; Endicott 1983; Dunn 1975), the Orang Asli were often essential mediating links in the precolonial trading networks, especially those which spread to tap the jungle products. Though they enjoyed a certain degree of freedom in the jungle habitat, and therefore were subjected to less formal control from the feudal state as compared to the Malay peasantry, the Orang Asli were also incorporated into the precolonial stratification system as slaves (Couillard 1984; Endicott 1983). It was noted that in the 1870s, frequent raids were mounted by ruling class chiefs to hunt down Orang Asli young men for slaves and the young girls as *gundek* (kept women) (Akiya 2007). Relegated to the very bottom rung of

the traditional status system, their marginal position, both ethnically and culturally, was further compounded by their equally peripheralized location vis-à-vis the “Little” and “Great Tradition” of the Malay world, as presided by Islam which excluded the Orang Asli, but was shared between the Malay subjects (*rakyat*) and their Malay ruling class.

British colonial rule, while it abolished slavery, was paternalistic, and its policies and laws pertaining to the Orang Asli, though proclaimed with the most “noble” intention of “protecting” them, only served to further accentuate their existing stigma and marginality in the eyes of society. It was the British who established the JHEOA, initially calling it the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. It was also during this period of British rule that saw the beginning of Orang Asli “deterritorialization”—this was during the period of the Emergency 1948–1960 when after the Japanese surrender, the British returned back to reclaim Malaya from Japanese rule but only to face another internal jungle guerrilla warfare waged by communist insurgents who were once allies to the British in the war against the Japanese (Leary 1995). The British were resolute in their attempt to defeat the spread of Communism on home ground especially to protect British capital interests invested in the colony such as rubber plantations and tin mines, essential for the reproduction of industrial capitalism at home.

Being free inhabitants of the jungle and the fringes of Malay rural villages, the Orang Asli were caught in the middle of this internal warfare and were seen by the British as potential sympathizers and food suppliers to the guerrillas in the jungle. As a long-term strategy, the British resorted to a systematic large-scale project of resettling of Orang Asli in various selective “forts” which were given strict policing and control by security forces. In this initial phase of Orang Asli deterritorialization, Orang Asli were forced to live in an enclosed and structured environment with many strangers, away from their familiar jungle habitat. As a result, in the initial stage, many Orang Asli became victims of new diseases and perished. It was only later that the situation began to improve when the management of the colonial warfare strategy against the guerrillas took a different paradigm shift under the directive and command of General Templar (Leary *ibid*; also see: Rohini 1984; Iskandar Carey 1976, 1979; Khoo and Voon 1986). Hence, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, which was ostensibly set up by the British as a “custodian,” i.e., to “protect” the Orang Asli, was in reality aimed to “control” Orang Asli movements as they were seen as a “security risk” in the geopolitics of British policy in colonial Malaya of that time.

The postcolonial state of the independent Malaysian nation state did not change much in relation to Orang Asli governance. The JHEOA was continued under a different name. As a result, the Orang Asli have been forced to depend on the JHEOA in almost all matters pertaining to their life. This sense of political powerlessness, nurtured and conditioned through socialized dependence, is akin to a form of “internal colonialism” and has had long—term effects on the psyche of the Orang Asli people.

It is also interesting that both postcolonial and colonial modes of Orang Asli governance depend on almost the same set of legislation. In 1954, three years

before the granting of independence to Malaya, the colonial government made a move to bureaucratise its governance of Orang Asli via the passing of Aboriginal Peoples Ordinance 1954, which was revised with minor revisions in 1974 by the postcolonial government (see Sothi Rachagan 1990; M.B Hooker 1991).

Act 134 of the Ordinance defines Orang Asli and recognize their “rights” to movement and “occupancy,” and to “Aboriginal Areas” and “Reserves.” The Act also stipulates terms of land compensation (e.g., in cases of Orang Asli “occupied” land including ancestral land or *tanah saka* being taken over for development purposes, Orang Asli will be compensated **not** for the value of the land but only for the “trees” that grow on the land. This as we shall discuss, will always continue to be a contested exercise for the Orang Asli. Despite their so-called *Bumiputera* status, Orang Asli’s claims to “indigeneity” with regard to land rights and the law seem to nullify such a status. For them, even their status on gazetted Orang Asli Reserves is merely one of “tenants-at-will.” This is because the Act does not provide them rights to individual titles even on Orang Asli Reserves (as the Malays have on Malay Reserves), and the fact that by 1994, out of a total of 132,187.79 hectares of Orang Asli land area only 17,903.61 hectares had been officially gazetted (JHEOA 1994), always threatens their security on the land, especially in the context of rapid postcolonial development. It was observed that in a period of two years alone, 2,764 hectares of Orang Asli land had also been de-gazetted (Nicholas 1996, p. 169) and indeed, many of the applications by JHEOA to gazette Orang Asli land have remained as mere “proposals.” It is obvious that the limitations of the Act will continue to create further insecurity to Orang Asli livelihood on the land.

For instance, in the era of large-scale regional “development”, especially after the abolition of the Malayan Communist Party in 1989, there was a marked reorientation of JHEOA toward Orang Asli, from a traditional concern with “security” to one of “development”. This will have radical ramifications in terms of “capital” affecting Orang Asli social reproduction process, and deepening further encroachments and dislocations of Orang Asli traditional villages and land. Indeed, without their “occupied” *saka* land being fortified by some form of legal rights of “ownership,” their tenureship over such land would continue to remain in a state of perpetual insecurity.

It is pertinent to note in advance that the potential of JHEOA as the nation state’s bureaucratic arm to assume this new “development” orientation for the Orang Asli is also questionable. First, it is a known fact that while the Department often complains about its lack of funds about two-thirds of its fund allocation goes to feed its bureaucracy (Bah Tony William Hunt 1989, p. 11). Second, the traditional identification of Orang Asli with the JHEOA may also be a liability for the Orang Asli—other rural development agencies seem willing to offer a helping hand to the Orang Asli not as a matter of policy or principle, but out of sympathy when appealed to by some politicians or influential individuals.

For many Orang Asli current feelings about the JHEOA are quite ambivalent—the Department has not been able to display the required commitment, nor visionary and independent qualities of leadership for the new era of Orang Asli development.

Members have been too caught up with bureaucracy, and lately they have become too detached, indifferent, and for many, it is just a job. Orang Asli no longer look upon them with the same awe and respect. When I was researching in Pahang Tenggara on regional development, it was not uncommon to hear whispers among Orang Asli of corrupt practices and self-interest prevalent among some of the Department's officials. In the region, the period also saw the rise of POASM (Persatuan Orang Asli Semenanjung), the Orang Asli Association of peninsular Malaysia, led by educated and committed young Orang Asli leaders, which seemed to promise an alternative grassroots based leadership for these indigenes. The future will push POASM more and more into the political arena to renegotiate with the nation state Orang Asli's desire for security and well-being.

(B) Penan

The incorporation of Penan society into the Malaysian nation state was mediated through different stages, from the period of Brooke and the White Rajah (1841–1946), to the British colonial period, (1946–1963), culminating into the entry of Sarawak into the Malaysian nation state in 1963.

In the early phase of Brooke rule, “an ideology of preservation” extolling “Penan exceptionalism” prevailed, in which Penan were viewed as an “inoffensive” people. “Always reclusive and in need of special protection, both from headhunting raids and from exploitation by longhouse communities.” (Brosius 2000, p. 11) Through government-supervised trade meetings (*tamu*) begun in 1906, Brooke colonial officials met up with the Penan communities to convince them of the government's protective role and to engage in “dialogue sessions” (Brosius 2000, pp. 12–13). This stands in direct contrast to present day Malaysian nation state's style of governance when politicians or Malaysian state officials seldom make an appearance in their village, except during political elections (Zawawi and NoorShah 2012). At the end of the Brooke regime, there was a new rethinking about native “welfare” and Penan “development”—*tamu* then became more oriented toward “bringing these nomads together and convincing them that Government wants to help them but until they agree to give up their nomadic existence little can be done to help them” (District Officer Baram in a 1949 memorandum, cited in Borsius 2000, p. 14).

The British colonial period (1946–1963) began with the ceding of Sarawak to the crown in 1946 until its entry into the Malaysian nation-state in 1963. This period saw the beginning of a more explicit concept of development at work, specifically relating to what constituted “good administration and civil service.” It was also in the beginning of this period, that The Land Classification Ordinance, 1948, was passed by the colonial government, in which Native Customary Land, is defined as “land in which native customary rights whether communal or otherwise have lawfully been created prior to the 1st January 1958” (cited in Hong 1987, p. 48; also Ezra Uda 2012, p. 109).

This legal regime continues to have radical ramifications in terms of contemporary Penan stewardship and their rights to the land. Under the 1958 Land Code,

land cultivators are eligible to claim ownership over *temudas* (an indigenous term to describe land that has been cleared of the forest and utilized for cultivation) they had created before 1st January 1958 as “native customary land” but not so for the Penan, who had for a long time been traversing Sarawak as nomadic noncultivators and are newcomers to a sedentary economic life.

The 1975-post Malaysian period after joining Malaysia in 1963 ushered into Sarawak a discourse of development that was “ever more politicized,” being “tied to the goals of politicians” and together with this transformation was “an increased incursion of national development discourse,” the idea “that various “communities” should have to take their place in the mainstream of Malaysian society” (Brosius 2000, pp. 8–9). For the Penan, it implied the need to be “mainstreamed,” “to catch up” with the development of other ethnic communities in the state and nation state. At the level of Sarawak state, this was defined by the Chief Minister’s “politics of development” (Loh Kok Wah 1997) while at the national/nation-state level, it was identified with Prime Minister’s Mahathir’s “grand design” of “Malaysia Incorporated” and the push toward vision 2020—the emergence of Malaysia as a newly industrialized nation. The genesis of this transformation, as we shall see, was driven through the state-engineered New Economic Policy, (1970–1990) as a strategy to restructure Malaysian “plural society” via various forms of state intervention (Gomez and Jomo 1999) and the emergence of a “developmentalist state” in Malaysia (Leftwich, cited in Zawawi and Sharifah Zarina 2009, p. 48).

From the point of view of the Malaysian “grand narratives” of development, the Penan appear as “an ungrounded people who wander aimlessly through the forest in search of food, living a hand-to-mouth existence, a people without history and a sense of place” (Brosius 2000, p. 22), and officials spoke of Penan “attitudes” and “mentality,” and Penan “confusion” over what was best for them. Indeed “development” was “portrayed as an issue of convincing Penan of the benefits of development” (Brosius, p. 17). But the dominant development model propelled by the NEP-driven Malaysian nation state has been regularly contested and confronted by the “agency” of indigenous groups, including Penans (Aeria 2005, pp. 186–91). In response, the state—at both the federal (national) and regional levels—has consequently resorted to reassertions of its hegemony, the classical combination of coercion and consensus. On the one hand, as Aeria puts it, “the state has often acted as capitalism’s authoritarian handmaiden, protecting and securing it against all opposition.... [It] has on different occasions ... repeatedly intimidated whole native communities, enacted legislation prohibiting blockades of timber roads, prosecuted and jailed key local community leaders ... ignored the native customary rights of local communities, while nearly always supporting the concession rights of logging and oil palm companies.”

As we shall see, for the Penan, “development” was mediated mainly by state-approved systematic logging and the concrete loss of their forest, the ecosystem of their nomadic way of life. This was the ultimate in the process of their deterritorialization and human insecurity.

3.4 The New Economic Policy (NEP) and Malaysian Developmentalism

The state-engineered NEP (New Economic Policy) 1970–1990 (see Gomez and Saravanmutthu 2012) which was aimed at creating a Malay capitalist class and eradicating poverty across the Malaysian ethnic divide heralded the beginning of an interventionist developmental state in which the NEP objectives ultimately gave way to the legitimisation of almost all forms of capital and wealth accumulation in the name of *Bumiputera* (Malay) development. In the years before the launch of the NEP, the rural sociologist Syed Husin Ali had already observed the beginning of political linkages between “powerful state- and national-level politicians and bureaucrats” of the governing party, the United Malays’ National Organisation (UMNO). In this arrangement, “leader-brokers” (*penghulu* and party functionaries) in the Malay rural landscape of the peninsula, through the provision of “rural development programmes” became “more wealthy ... rather than providing genuine rural leadership” for the peasantry (King and Wilder 2003, p. 170). In his study of Kelantan, Clive Kessler observed that Kelantan Malays saw UMNO as embodying a concept of “progress only of bricks and cement, superficial and materialistic ... measurable in terms of the number of factories and land schemes that had been opened” (Kessler 1978, pp. 229–30) mediated by those with the right political connections and access to state patronage.

Both Marvin Rogers (1969, 1993) and Shamsul (1986) have also demonstrated that economic development following the NEP further strengthened the “political patronage” system in Malay rural society with a new instrumental basis of legitimacy. In short, support was given to leaders, patrons, or “big men” who could deliver the new economic goods in the form of “contracts” or “projects.” These were not necessarily men of knowledge or ideals; rather they had to have the right bureaucratic and political connections which linked them from the periphery to the center and vice versa. Already in the narrations of the NEP, then, the legitimacy of capital accumulation by an emerging Malay elite “on behalf of the Malays” was given fulsome endorsement. Mahathir’s *The Malay Dilemma* (1970)—upon which some of the NEP’s most fundamental rationale was built—testifies in no uncertain terms the license given to the few to become wealthy in the name of “Malay development”:

With the existence of the few rich Malays at least the poor Malays can say that their fate is not entirely to serve the rich non-Malays. From the point of view of racial ego ... the unseemly existence of Malay tycoons is essential. (Mahathir Mohamad 1970, p. 44)

With the above philosophical justification licensing intra-ethnic inequalities as an instrumental means to an end—and with the state bent on injecting the pursuit of materialism and capital accumulation into Malay cultural values in order to “catch up” with the non-Malays—it came as no surprise that under Mahathir’s stewardship of the NEP, “money culture” became a pervasive feature of the new political culture (see Wain 2009). With time, the pool of the “few Malay tycoons” was extended by

the creation of other “big men” through the political machinery. The NEP flagship fulfilled its own logical development and momentum. As the NEP ideational logic penetrated deep into the psyche of the Malays their political culture began to be infused with a “spirit of accumulation,” albeit one which stood in stark contrast to the “spirit of capitalism” as originally proposed by Max Weber. For this particular version is one which has been forged by statism, and hybridized by the likes of rentier capitalism, political patronage, and cronyism (see Gomez and Jomo 1999).

In an interesting exposition, based on Marx’s distinction between “land as subject of labor versus “land as object of labour,” Geoffrey Benjamin (1995, p. 2) differentiates the concept of “indigenes” from that of “exogenes”, insisting that “while exogenes think of territories as commodities (“object”), open to exploitation, indigenes think of land (and the places on it) as the foundation (“subject”) of their being. Indigenes and exogenes “see” different worlds.” Drawing on this insight, my contention here is that a new breed of “exogenes,” represented by a class of state-sponsored “bureaucratic-capitalists” (Jomo 1986) has arisen from the Malay “indigenes.” This has been propelled directly by the structural changes set in train by the NEP and the rise of its attendant model of “developmentalism.” Thus in the case of the Malays, it is clear that those who are closer to party patronage and state power have indeed rushed almost overnight to embrace the exploitative worldview of the “exogenes” as they strive to accumulate wealth. Their objective is straightforward: to seize advantage of the economic opportunities legitimized by the NEP in the name of *Bumiputera* (read, Malay) development. The NEP came as a comprehensive development package. Overnight a new identity became vogue—*Bumiputera* or “sons of the soil.” While the origins of the term are not rooted in any constitutional charter of the nation, and its initial definition was initially fraught with “official indecisiveness” (Maznah Mohamad 2009, p. 123), in the transformed post-NEP political landscape, *Bumiputera* has become a “legitimate” and officially engineered state-sponsored identity. It cuts across the collective citizenry. In the process it divides peoples and communities throughout the nation, on the basis of who should be given special preferences and privileges, and who should not. A number of scholars have noted that this simplistic version of the *Bumiputera* concept is little more than a “political strategy” based on “racial arithmetic” (Maznah Mohamad 2009, p. 123), which was purposively constructed by the UMNO governing elites in order to ensure the dominance of Malays and those “like us” in the new polity of Malaysia which merged West Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak Saravanamuttu (2004, p. 97). It is no wonder that over time *bumiputeraism* has lost its credibility as empowering the identity for most of the non-Malay indigenous peoples of the nation-state including the Orang Asli and Penan. In both Sabah and Sarawak, indigenous scholars have resorted to the term “*Bumiputera* minorities” to describe their current “othered” *Bumiputera* status (Zawawi 2013, pp. 307–311; also Lian 2003, pp. 313–14; Ongkili 2003, pp. 205–6; Sadiq 2009, pp. 28–30).

A second argument follows from this initial observation. There has been an extension of *bumiputeraism* from the “dominant indigenous centre” to the “non-dominant indigenous periphery” of the nation-state. Political elites, business people, and corporate groups, representing the class interests of these “exogenes”,

in collaboration with and supported by statism (specifically, a developmentalist state) and capital (including nonindigenous capital) have also taken advantage of the NEP to “exploit” these new “territories as commodities.” In the process, they have unleashed their own kind of “civilising projects” (Duncan 2008, p. ix) and “internal colonialism.”

On the relationship between nation-states and indigenous communities, Stavenhagen has argued that the tyranny of the nation-state unleashes itself through both “economic ethnocide” and “cultural ethnocide.” “Economic ethnocide” means that “all premodern forms of economic organization must necessarily disappear to make way for either private or multinational capitalism or state-planned socialism.” On the other hand, “cultural ethnocide” means that “all sub national ethnic units must disappear to make way for an overarching nation-state (in which) development and nation-building have become the major economic and political ideologies.” Thus for Stavenhagen, both economic and cultural ethnocide “have been ethnocidal in that they imply the destruction and/or disappearance of non-integrated, separate ethnic units. This is frequently carried out in the name of national unity and integration, progress and of course, development” (Stavenhagen 1994, p. 54). In the case of the Malaysian nation state, the process has been further exacerbated by the racialized justifications embedded in both the “dominant ethnic” and *bumiputera* discourses.

Elsewhere, similar views of the political and economic dominance of the nation-state in relation to indigenous peoples have been echoed by Howitt et al. in *Resources, Nations and Indigenous Peoples* (1996, p. 15), when they conclude that:

Nation states assert that the ‘national interests’ justifies usurping indigenous peoples’ rights to self-determination, to say yes or no to propositions affecting them and to have a decisive say in their own futures. Throughout the region, governments have claimed indigenous lands, seas and resources as fundamental elements of their territorial integrity and economic and political sovereignty. Indigenous peoples’ assets, interests and property have been sold, leased, traded and despoiled; communities have been dispossessed, displaced and impoverished; lands have been submerged, cleared, fenced and degraded; seas, rivers and lakes have been polluted, denuded of life, exposed to exploitation by commercial and recreational fishers, and appropriated as national heritage, and commodified as an economic good; and even indigenous people themselves have been classified, subjected to repressive legislation... In these processes, nation-states, their political institutions and the private interests favoured by them have been empowered in national political life and international political and economic base.

3.5 Deterritorialization and Human Insecurity

Magnaghi, one of the original formulators of the term “deterritorialization,” states that:

The interruption of the historical process constructing places occurs when one of the cycles of civilisation (the contemporary cycle) becomes independent from all the previous ones.

Here deterritorialization does not take the form - as in the past - of a phase of transition towards a new territoriality (a new form of jointly evolving relations between the human settlement and the environment). This time it has been determined by an intrinsically de-territorialised socio-economic system... (2005, p. 17)

He depicts a deterritorialized landscape as a “constructed place” or “new territory” which has been generated by an externally imposed structural and historical process that has no continuity of human settlement-environment relations between past and present.

In the following case studies pertaining to Orang Asli and Penan communities, our concern is with their “lived experiences” of human insecurity “on the ground” as impacted by the deterritorialization process, the latter being the outcome of both capitalist structural forces and the domination wrought by development and Malaysian political nation-state processes which take place in the broader society in a particular historical context.

(A) Experiencing Deterritorialisation and Human Insecurity: Orang Asli Case Studies

Uge butbet mase adeh, Mase singkat pek bertempat (Do not sleep now, time is short—we have no shelter).

Mai chak canak ante sedap, Hi chak canak ente emploit, Mai gui pekan hi gui darat, Susah hi pek bi pani (Everyone else’s rice dishes are delicious, we eat rice with salt. Other people live in towns, we inhabit the forest, no one knows about our hardship).

Hi neng neg lout teow mat bijot, Hi neng darat hi la bitod, Ku melog hi gui ru hi na bet (We look to the hills, we weep. We turn to the forest, its burning, where can we live, with whom shall we sleep).

(Tijah, a local female Orang Asli Semai poet/singer from Kampung Chang, Bidor, Perak, laments and sings the above song of her own composition).

Over time, increasing development pursued by the Malaysian postcolonial state, has engendered its own contradictions within both the physical and cultural/moral landscapes of the Orang Asli established communities. The expansion of capital in the 1970s and its attendant infrastructures into the rural interiors of Orang Asli habitat and territory (which have already been “squeezed” by merchant capital (Nicholas 1991) in the name of “regional development” (*pembangunan wilayah*) had not only made Orang Asli traditional settings and land increasingly vulnerable to encroachments by outsiders, but that apart from replacing the forest and its jungle resources with plantation crops, it had also made Orang Asli citizens become the target of dislocation as they were forced to be resettled into regroupment centers known as the RPS (*Rancangan Penempatan Semula*), as part and parcel of a planned development “from above,” and implemented by the various bureaucratic agencies of the state (Zawawi 1996).

In other contexts, the postcolonial state’s push toward development in its desire to embrace globalism and the NIC status, as part of the Vision 2020, had also encroached into the landscapes of long-established Orang Asli territory, social space and “communitas” in the urban peripheries in order to make way for the new international airport, new golf tourist resorts, and a new network of national-grid

freeways. Postcolonial development had also created a new crisis in the everyday livelihood, status, and identity of the indigenous Orang Asli. It had led to the feeling of dispossession of a kind. Dispossession in this context refers not only to a loss of land due to encroachments (some of which were justified as “legal” when such appropriation was conducted by the state). Indeed, for the indigenous people of the country, it conveys a sense of denied belonging—of being misappropriated from “indigeneity” in short, a feeling of being “the Other” in the context of an independent nation-state—a place in which since time immemorial, they have been told by their forefathers, and retold through generations, and even confirmed by their so-called “protectors”—that their rights to the land would always be honored, upheld, and secured without the necessity of owning a land title (*geran tanah*). Today, the poetics of such “otherness” has become the everyday lament of the subjugated Orang Asli voices “on the ground.”

Orang Asli definitely desire development but at times development terrifies the Orang Asli. Because of such development, Orang Asli living on the periphery of highways and towns will be pushed back, deeper into the interior. (Arief Embing, an Orang Asli Mah Meri leader)

We want a type of development which brings benefits to the Orang Asli community ... but the kinds of development that we have received, have made us lose out our land. Needless to say, all forms of development require land, be it the airport, or whatever. And we are citizens of Malaysia; we too want to live on land. But if we can stand on clouds, then we don't need land! (Dewi Malam)

At this moment, the Orang Asli that I'm referring to are people without power (*kuasa*) without knowledge and without capital ... Hence they suffer [*terseksa*]. Have we left them in their own period, the Stone Age? I don't think the Orang Asli would have suffered as much as now. It is unthinkable that a race [*bangsa*], a community called human [*manusia*] does not want development. (Achorn Luji)

Why is it that those who plan for the Orang Asli never thought of the dimension of human feelings and rights? They only plan according to their own dictates but not according to the wishes of the people. (Azizah)

Until when will Orang Asli society be left in this state of total impoverishment [*daif segala-segalanya*]? Are we fugitives in this country? Are we aware that Orang Asli are the indigenous people of this beloved country? (Ramli)

3.5.1 Regional Development

It was under the rubric of “regional development,” initiated in the state of Pahang, that the nation-state’s RPS development discourse for the Orang Asli was conceptualized to counter the alleged Orang Asli’s tendency to live “scatteredly” (*berselerak*) and pursue a “nomadic” living (*pindah randah*). In its thinking, the ideal scenario would be one in which most, if not all the Orang Asli “scattered” in their traditional villages in the Pahang Southeastern region (Pahang Tenggara), are

eventually resettled in these RPS centers, the latter being the focus of development and infrastructural inputs, built around a plantation crop (oil palm) as the primary source of economic mainstay for the rest of their lives and the generations to come. Altogether 9 RPS were planned for the whole Pahang Tenggara region. DARA, the Pahang Tenggara Regional Development Authority, formed in 1972 and representing the bureaucratic arm of the state (Federal government) was empowered to develop the virginal forest region (about 1 million hectares) in the above area. RPS was a way to “integrate” the 5000 or so of the Orang Asli dispersed throughout the region, which by 1972 were living in about 60 or so traditional Asli villages. DARA, via the role of other state agencies, coordinated the penetration of capital (private, including foreign capital, public and state capital) into the region, and in the process, had radically reorganized both the natural and human resources (including the indigenous Orang Asli communities which had for generations subsisted on their *saka* ancestral land) and the forest into plantations, industries, and urbanizing centres.

To a large extent, regional development in Pahang Tenggara tended to accentuate the existing problems of the Orang Asli rather than solving them. In many ways, the RPS approach avoided a real confrontation with some of the basic questions facing the Orang Asli at the grassroots level, i.e., their “tenants at will” status and rights to their land ownership on existing *saka* land “occupied” by the Orang Asli, and most of all, the continuous pursuit of improving their *saka* land-based economy toward sustainable development, which required continuous agricultural inputs from JHEOA and other government rural development agencies.

As a development model, the RPS is too singular. The choice of development for the Orang Asli becomes more determinate: it freezes all other options, alternatives, and possibilities of human development. It takes an either-or-approach rather than balancing the different choices that should be made available to the Orang Asli. It must be remembered that “Orang Asli” have always constituted an evolving “historical community” of indigenous people who have demonstrated diverse forms of economic adaptabilities and skills depending on different and changing environmental contexts (Zawawi 1995, pp. 5–17). The RPS development template, on the other hand, emphasizes considerations of rational economic choices, economies of scale, and economic integration—all these express capitalist forms of development in which there is no place for the small Orang Asli who wants to be self-sustaining on his plot of land. Indeed for the Orang Asli, he is worse off than his Malay peasant counterpart; under the current legal regime which governs the Orang Asli, he is not eligible to a personal title to his so-called *saka* land even after the land has been gazetted as Orang Asli reserve land. One can almost be absurd and ask how one can be dispossessed of land that one does not really “own.”

On September 6, 1990, Orang Asli traditional leaders (Batin) representing diverse “tribal” groupings from all over the country and their respective entourages, came to celebrate the launching of RPS Kedaik, the first of its kind for Orang Asli indigenes in the nation, the highlight being their presentation to the then Malaysian Prime Minister, Dr. Mahathir.

But RPS Kedaik is also a story based on “dispossession.”

On June 17, 1987, the new land allocated for RPS Kedaik, about 1746 hectares (i.e., 4314 acres were gazetted under Section 7 of “The Aboriginal Peoples Act of 1954” to be the Kedaik Aboriginal people Area for Rompin District of Pahang state) The status of old Kedaik as *tanah asal* (the original settlement) or what is going to happen to the *saka* land of the Orang Asli there were all questions that had yet to be resolved. The ideal situation would have been to combine the old settlement with the new, but the old Kedaik could not apparently be compromised in that way because of the discovery of tin deposits in the area.

Indeed on May 30, 1978, the Land Office at Rompin had already approved a company, *Permodalan dan Perusahaan Pahang Bhd.* (SPPB) to mine these deposits in an area totalling 280 acres in old Kedaik. The above land apparently included rubber and *dusun* (fruit orchard) cultivation of the Orang Asli and even some buildings to service the JHEOA. During the months of May and June 1978, the villagers of Kedaik, through their leader Batin Bah Suan, appealed to the Menteri Besar (Chief Minister) of Pahang state to intervene so that the Orang Asli did not have to be moved out of the village, that they too would be given a share of the wealth that was found on their land.

In July 1980, in desperation the villagers wrote to the then Minister of Internal Affairs. Part of the letter reads:

Kg. Kedaik has been an Orang Asli area since 1950; the government on its part has gone to great expenses to ensure the existence of basic facilities here, such as the village hall, school, clinic and hostel located on Orang Asli Reserve and we live here with our families and kinsmen, in peace and harmony, aspiring with dreams for a future and with hopes. but only to be dashed recently because our village [Kedaik] the Orang Asli reserve has been given to a company to mine in the area, for under the ground that we stay there is tin ore ... our crops have been dug and shoved away with no compensation, an act of inhumanity akin to that of a robber.

Honourable Tan Sri, we feel that from the perspective of justice as practised by the government, Orang Asli land and area must not be passed on to others but only to Orang Asli themselves since it is we Orang Asli who slogged to cut and clear the land. But when they found that our village had precious minerals then these capitalists whose habit is to always impose hardship on those who are already living in hardship would rush to accumulate their profits. Those who authorized to give them permission did not think of the consequences and the perpetual suffering it would bring on to the life of others. It is indeed a tragedy for us Orang Asli, always watching as mere spectators by the side as the natural wealth in our own land is being dug, loaded and taken away by those who are already rich; what is left for us to taste is dust and humiliation only, nothing less than that, and definitely so far away from justice. So we appeal to the honourable Tan Sri to have the mining in our village [Kedaik] discontinued and the mine closed down. This is the only village that has given happiness to our people, and one day, our children who will be educated will at least taste one drop of goodness after the rest has already been appropriated by those who are already rich and always wanting to get richer.

The Department of Orang Asli Affairs (JHEOA) on its part did try to support the rights of the Kedaik people and insisted that the company pay for all expenses to reallocate the Orang Ash in a new place, in addition to all the compensation of

losses experienced by them. The Department calculated that the company would gross about 7.5 million Malaysian ringgit in the years of its operation.

Well that is history now. The Kedaik people lost out—they were given no shares in the company—and on top of that, they still had to move out to RPS Kedaik where a new life, where a better future, was promised to them.

But for one Batin Bogi and his kinsmen, they persisted in the old village and refused to move out. The “struggle” had given him a sense of “agency” and sharpened his political consciousness somewhat; and he had no qualms about what being Orang Asli meant to him and his people. As he reflected

For me I regard my staying here as not taking shelter in someone else’s land. If other people can do as they please, I too can do as I please. That’s my resolution.

See the mine—we should have been rich! First they began selling the sand, then the logs they also grabbed. Now the tin deposits they also want to “eat” [makan]. I’m an Orang Asli like a dog, I bark at the mountain, it will not fall. If I don’t vote for Semangat 46 [the Malay opposition party which broke away from the dominant Malay ruling party, UMNO], I think I’ll be a stupid Orang Asli. The Barisan Nasional [Ruling Coalition] candidate has held this seat for the last 5 years—and not even a single development came into my village during that time. But I look at the representative here—5 years—during the election, as a candidate, he came to us and promised us this and that.

After he won, we never saw him again. If Kedaik people were to vote for Semangat 46 it is very apt. If I do not vote for Semangat 46, I am not human anymore! That’s how angry I feel ... but if people want to label me, go ahead, because our people are not from America, not refugees from Vietnam, or fugitive born here....I am very angry, really angry!

3.5.2 A Case of Everyday “Dispossession”

Sometime toward the end of 1990 in another part of Pahang, in Kampung Mencupu, its leader, the Batin had just found out that a lot of about 3 acres of land which had always been a part of his village area was granted by the Pekan district Land Office to a Chinese for the purpose of building a sawmill. What also angered the *Batin* was that one month earlier, he had already submitted an application to the Pekan district Land Office (supported by the JHEOA) for 142 acres of the village land the Orang Asli had been occupying to be given personal land titles (*geran tanah*), divided among 36 of the villagers.

As was often the case with Orang Asli “occupied” land, the whole area was recommended by the JHEOA to be gazetted as an Orang Asli “reserve,” but the legal process never took place. Hence it did not have any legal status except as a “reserve proposal” (*cadangan tanah rezab*), and nor would such a status carry any legal document for its residents to keep or show as proof. As a result, encroachments on such “proposed reserves” became a common occurrence, resulting in dispossessing the Orang Asli of the land on which they had lived for generations.

Encroachers and dispossessors would carry with them legal documents as evidence of their ownership supposedly granted by the Land Office.

As the *Batin* recounted his experience:

So I went to see the official at the Land Office, Tuan Haji A.D.O. [Assistant District Officer] but he too couldn't do anything...

He said: Anybody is entitled to apply for Orang Asli land because it has not been gazetted by the government –it is only proposed to be reserved!

So I went to consult JOA (the Department of Orang Asli Affairs); Wait, we will bring this matter to the higher authorities, they said but until today, I have heard nothing more.

We Orang Asli go back and forth. Maybe we ought to just leave everything and return to what to what we were. If Orang Asli cannot get back this land, then that's it. I will call all the Orang Asli in the village to move to Pekan town; there's no more place for us here—the forest, they have taken from us; it is easier and better for us to live as squatters in the town!

What clearly creates constant confusion among the Orang Asli is this—say at the Land Office, if Orang Asli land is only categorised as proposed reserve, then Orang Asli land will not be sketched on the plan. So if somebody else were to apply for land, when he sees that everywhere else has been earmarked, but this one [i.e. Orang Asli land] is not, then he will apply here— on which the plan shows “blank” [*kosong*]. He can apply for it even though there are already Orang Asli living here who own the rubber trees. So they will take our rubber trees and when we tap them they want to sue us.....

‘This is my rubber!’ They will say. But Orang Asli were the ones who planted them. In this way we will slowly lose our land! This is what is making me so uncertain about everything, so uncertain. Before, all this was Orang Asli land but I blame JOA because they never gazetted these Orang Asli proposed reserves.

It is always this thing that makes the Orang Asli want to shift, it's not because Orang Asli want to be nomadic (*pindah-randah*), but after people have encroached on their land they were forced to shift. That has always been their way. The thing that the Orang Asli cherish most is land. Orang Asli are not always nomadic, not so.....What you always hear about them always ‘shifting’ is when people ‘take away his rights’ then only he will move away. Orang Asli, on the other hand, are the ‘frightened type’—you only need people show them a piece of paper, even with nothing on it—and cheating them—they would easily get frightened. All you need to do is say to the Orang Asli, *Pak Cik* (uncle), this land does not belong to *Pak Cik*. We have already filled out our application” - that's enough (no need to show any more evidence) for the Orang Asli to ‘run away’ to another place.

3.5.3 Making Way for a University and Golf Resort

The problem of being “shifted around” or continuously relocated by authorities in the name of “development” was fast becoming a common everyday experience for the Orang Asli. At Bukit Tunggul Selangor, the *Batin* and his people (35 households altogether) were forced to make way for a golf-cum-bungalow resort. For his community of Temuan Orang Asli, this would be their second relocation. Back in 1950, his people had started a sedentary agricultural based community in what is

oldest Orang Asli permanent settlements in the area. It went through and survived the various phases of the country's history including the Japanese invasion and the war against the communists during the Emergency period. By 1991, three years before being relocated to the new site, it had a population of 400 people, consisting of 70 families. It had basic amenities of piped water and electricity, a public hall, a new school, a road, and two rubber smallholder processing centres. The village was also voted by both district and state authorities as a model village (*kampung contoh*) and was a tourist attraction. Its economy was also vibrant, with average monthly income levels per household being between RM 700 and RM 1000, with the lowest income earner making RM 400 per month. It took almost 3 years of negotiation with the authorities before the move finally eventuated. But the whole affair which started with so much optimism and hope however ended up in so much disappointment and sadness for the community.

First, on the question of compensation, being Orang Asli, they were governed by a specific Act 134, i.e., the Aboriginal Peoples Act of 1954 (Revised in 1974) (Hooker 1991; Chua Kim Wah 1990/91) in which, they would not be compensated for the loss of land (regardless of its "Reserved;" or "Gazetted" status), but only for the trees. Thus even though all in all, 2.4 million Ringgit of compensation was paid off to the community, there was much dissatisfaction with regard to how the authorities calculated the value of their trees in which certain unevenness and discrepancies occurred. The problem was that no standardized or centralized checklist was provided by the authorities to facilitate the personal calculation of one's own "trees" and "different types" of trees. It was felt that "our people" accepted the compensation under some pressure.

Second, the final choice of the new site (now named as the "new" Busut village. or Kampung Busut Baru) was never the choice of the Action Committee representing the village. In the beginning of their negotiation with the authorities, they thought that they could have a say in the choice of the new site but the Rural Department Planning (*Perancang Luar Bandar*) of the Ministry of Rural Development diverted their plan to an area of swampy peat which was prone to flooding, pledging that the JKR [Public Works Department] and the Rural Planning people had architects and engineers who could overcome the problems of swampy land so that it could be well drained—But sadly, almost a year after having shifted to the new area, all the above promises and assurance had come to nought. Nothing was done with the drainage system. During the rainy season, the area was easily flooded. It would take only one hour of heavy rains for the water to flood and overflow into the houses. Piped water and electricity were as yet unavailable, and the main road leading to the village needed repairs and upgrading. Apart from the houses, they were also supposed to be allocated 2 acres of land for their fruit orchard, and about 7 acres or so for the main agricultural lot. The assurance given by the authorities was that "before relocation, everything would be ready" (*sebelum pindah, semua dan siap!*). In addition, in the dilemma of waiting they had to disperse and try to find work outside "as coolies," as in the new site they were no longer self-sustaining on the land as before. Apart from the swamps and uncleared

land, they were also in the dark as to the allocation of their individual plots and the status of the land.

As the old Kampung Busut became only a remembered village, what was left was both sadness and a sense of betrayal, as lamented below by Dewi, one of their young and articulate leaders:

I was overcome by a feeling of grief because much was not completed as had been promised. So much of what we've been fighting in order to improve our livelihood has come to nothing. Actually our life just requires that little bit more improvement to be at par with the development of the old place. Now what I feel most sad is that we have to start from a very uncertain stage of development. We have to start again from a period that we had left behind, as if the Orang Asli are starting life from scratch.

We want our people now to wear neckties, with a language which is elegant—if possible we want to be able to speak the language of the better educated, not still struggling [*terkial-kial*] at the level of basic economic needs or trying to find work and so on. What I am sad is that not only did we lose our former livelihood, but the provisions of the new site are inadequate; education is affected—yes, there is a school, but the effects of the relocation have altered the situation... The land is unsuitable, but because no other alternative was provided for by the government, we were forced to accept it.

The most poignant fact about the whole aftermath was that it left a deep sense of hurt and a feeling of being betrayed by their own “protectors,” as Dewi continues:

What I am certain of is that after the Orang Asli have shifted, nobody seems to care anymore. Orang Asli are left in desperation to fend for themselves in order to find solutions to their problems. Till today, there's nobody we could approach. When we approached the Kuala Langat JHEOA [because we have now shifted to Kuala Langat area], their people said: “We don't know. Why don't you ask headquarters?” Then we referred back to Sepang, only to be told: “You've now shifted to Kuala Langat. Your *pegawai* [official] is now there!” So presently no one seems to co-operate here. It seems that now if that the Orang Asli have actually shifted, they don't want to listen to our current problems anymore ... they want to run away from realities!

The president of POASM, Majid Suhut, in his visit to mobilize the community's support for the Orang Asli Association, however, drove home into their consciousness a different set of realities and “truths” regarding the Orang Asli situation, as part of his unwritten speech reads:

In the old village, Kampung Busut Lama was able to actualize a very viable economy such that the income levels could go as high as four figures, but when you are shifted here, your incomes deteriorate, and you don't have proper work. What I observe is the negligence and the lack of concern on the part of the relevant authorities when planning for the resettlement and development of the Orang Asli.

So I don't consider Orang Asli as anti-development; till now they are still waiting for development, but the real problem is that where Orang Asli live in the proximity of urban areas, they will be the victims of development—they will be shifted elsewhere - the example is here. From an area which is comfortable [*selesa*], they have been moved to a swampy land, with an infrastructure that is un-systematized and underdeveloped. Because we are a minority, and we are not united, that is why the authorities pay scant attention to us. What I see in Selangor today really needs full attention because Orang Asli here are facing big problems as Selangor is developing at such a fast pace but Orang Asli have been marginalized [*tersisih*] from such development, and they have become victims of

development So we must unite ... if not, all our life, we will be marginalized by development and neglected by the authorities who deal with our problems. The problems in Selangor are at a critical stage and should not have occurred what with the government today which is so viable under the leadership of Dr. Mahathir. If I'm not mistaken, over the news last night, he asserted that there should not be any race marginalized from the development in Malaysia from enjoying its fruits of development. But what we see today is clearly the reverse. So where is the reality of his statement? Is development aimed at the people who can only be seen, or is it possible that these Orang Asli are not visible to those at the top because we are a minority group, a small group [*golongan kecil*]. But if we follow the text of Dr. Mahathir's speech, it is clear that he does not want a single race left behind by the current of development which is enjoyed by the country. But what we see is different from what he says. What happened here should be shared by all because it will not only be Busut Baru alone which will face this problem. One day, it is not impossible that other villages too will face the same problems as Kampung Busut ... so we must unite. The Association [referring to POASM] is important.

(B) Experiencing Deterritorialization and Human Insecurity: a Penan Case study

3.5.5 The Deterritorialised Penan landscape

Only a small percentage of Sarawak's 10000 Penans pursue the traditional nomadic life of full-time foraging and hunting in the rainforest. Most of them are now sedentary, involving themselves in economic activities which carve out a new way of interacting with the environment (Langub 1996). At the level of the nation-state's relationship with its indigenous minorities, this process is articulated via the language of "modernisation," in which the last of the rainforest foragers have been given little choice but to join the development fray. At the level of Sarawak state, this was manifest in the establishment of the Penan Volunteer Corps in late 1989 to assist fellow Penans through the transition. Since its inception, volunteers have been trained as multi-taskers but masters of none, with some training in carpentry, adult, and kindergarten teaching, hygiene, basic medical skills, and cultivation. In addition, they mediate between the Penan villages to which they have been posted and various government agencies under a special Penan Task Force led by a state minister. In concrete economic terms, the new orientation means shifting from hunting and foraging to cultivation and the eventual abandonment of the Penan's strategy of sustainable development of their forest resources through the practice of *molong* (Brosius 1986). *Molong* refers to the Penan way of ensuring "sustainable" development. For example, they practice cutting up the sago for their own consumption without destroying the whole plant; hence ensuring that the sago tree is able to regenerate itself for a later harvest. Replacing autonomy, viable traditional knowledge, and a balanced person-environment matrix, however, is a new form of dependence on the tools of cultivation and the knowledge and skills necessary for new interactions with the environment. "Sedentarization" leads to the subjugation of Penan economic and

political life to forces outside their control. In the new environment, it is increasingly difficult to fall back on the forest for daily needs or tradable products. Loggers have chased away the wild game, and much of the 17 jungle produce, like *rattan* and *gaharu*, has been destroyed uncontrolled by logging companies which had the support of the state. Penans now have to travel far to find these.

To cultivate the new staple, rice, they constantly have to negotiate with state agencies, through the Penan Volunteer Corps, for new equipment and tools. Even in their housing, the introduction of the permanent longhouse means dependence on the outside world for a supply of nails, planks, zinc, petrol (for generators and boat engines), and kerosene. The modernisation package also includes toilet bowls, water pipes, medical facilities, clinics, and schools. But these are not always available when requested and have constantly to be negotiated. The burden always falls on the Penan Volunteer Corps, and failure or delay causes the Volunteer to lose credibility in the eyes of the community. While there is a greater need for cash in their new economic life, Penans face the loss of commodities to sell that others want to buy. And because their environment is the jungle interior where access is through rivers or by foot, they have trouble marketing their products. So Penans are forced to make deals. The proactive seek to forge agreements with the logging companies—giving permission to the company to build a logging road through their land in exchange for the free supply of planks for their longhouse, petrol for their generator, and transport to market vegetables or other food at the logging camps. The companies do not always fulfill their promises. And of course there are Penan groups who refuse to make such deals, especially after being disappointed with their first encounter with the loggers, who “came without knocking on our doors.”

My own research undertaken in the Ulu Baram area of Sarawak took me to two Penan villages with two contrasting ideological orientations toward development. The first is Kampung Long Lamai, an earlier established Penan village, which refused to allow logging companies to come in with their bulldozers and roads as they felt betrayed after the first encounter. Their reluctance to expose their land to the above influence does not mean that they oppose other forms of development. Long Lamai has been known for its capacity in producing some of the early Penan teachers in Sarawak. In contrast, in the adjacent village of Long Beruang (located about half a day’s walk away), founded by breakaway relatives from Long Lamai, the community decided to make “deals” with the logging company. At the time of research, there was some concern that the “Company” was not fulfilling part of its promise in meeting some terms of the agreement signed between the two parties. Finally, the new environment ushers the Penan into a contestation between two sets of laws—the traditional notion of Penan stewardship and the modern legal order laid out in the Land Code of 1958, which recognizes “cultivation” (the felling of trees and creation of cultivated land, *temuda*) before January 1958 as evidence of land ownership.

At present, Penans have been allowed to settle and cultivate without resort to the Land Code through “goodwill” arrangements with other established, land-based, cultivating indigenous groups mediated by administrative officials. In some of these areas, disputes arise between the non-Penan claimants and the Penan newcomers.

Penans, however, tend to argue their claims on the basis of stewardship—their earlier physical movements through land they have traversed for generations—not “cultivation” or the presence of *temuda*. In fact, they can even show ancestral burial grounds which they have marked as evidence of their claim to stewardship over such areas. In the new deterritorialized Penan landscape, the call for official recognition of their rights to the land based on the principle of stewardship is becoming more urgent in the face of “large-scale mechanised logging and the dispossession of indigenous communities” (Brosius 1999, p. 345), to a point of desperation where some have been forced to resist by blockades and other foot-dragging forms of resistance (Brosius 1997a, b).

“Modernity” also entails new dilemmas for the young generation of Penans. They now have to seek a new mode of integration into the bigger society through the schooling system. For the children, it means leaving their parents to stay in boarding schools as early as Primary One as most schools are a distance away from the village, thanks to the absence of a developed infrastructural road system in the Sarawak rural heartland. Accessibility is predominantly by utilising its jungle tracks or its many interconnecting rivers. While logging roads built by companies to facilitate their “business” have also begun to make their appearance in the Penan landscape, its indigenous dwellers will have to become dependent on the company’s transport and goodwill to actually benefit from these roads. Thus for all kinds of reasons, cases of unschooled children abound among the various Penan communities throughout the interior. Even many of those who attend schools may not necessarily understand why they have to do so. On the other end, urban-based teachers who have been posted to these schools are often impatient and have little prior knowledge of Penan community and their cultural values. Consequently, they fail to comprehend the slow adaptation of these children to the school culture. Not surprisingly, school dropouts have become a common problem in the community. The situation is relatively better in full-pledged Penan schools such as the one built in their own village, at Long Lamai. But that is an exception rather than the rule. Even if a Penan pupil manages to “survive” his primary schooling, there is no guarantee that he or she will end up in a secondary school, let alone a university. Distance, lack of motivation, and financial support combine in many devious ways to make a Penan’s educational journey an anguished and frustrating one. At Long Lamai, the nearest secondary is in the Bario highlands, in Kelabit territory. The journey may take days with children and their accompanying fathers traversing the jungle tracks and rivers, before reaching the Bario. Normally, Penan children who attend the boarding school there often try to find some form of money-paying jobs in their free time in order to support their schooling and basic needs. A low level of educational attainment means that for the new generation of Penans, their social mobility into education-related occupations is very limited. The Penan Volunteer Corps recruits Penans of both sexes drawn from the lower secondary school echelons. While the few who have been “successful” in their educational journey have ended up as teachers; fewer still are able to make it to the university.

Many of the young, male, and female, would end up in manual work, either in factories, shopping malls or some form of contract work in the urban areas, such as

in the towns of Marudi, Miri or other small townships. Those who are willing to work hard can also earn an income by seeking various forms of employment in the logging-related activities in the different parts of the Baram. Those who still linger in the village may assist their parents on the land, but for many, their needs for the new consumer culture and their increasing dependence on the cash economy means that they continuously have to find ways and means to pursue exchange-values which can be converted into hard cash. The new Penan environment is fast becoming a commodified landscape. Modernization (read developmentalism) has created new dilemmas for the majority of the Penans who have been forced to join mainstream society. Inevitably, the process has transformed how they interact with their familiar locality and environment. Their well-being is now more dependent on outsiders, external authorities, and institutions. Many of the solutions and answers lie outside their control, especially with the state, the logging companies and the market economy. Under the “development project” promoted by a combination of statist law, political power and capital, the process of Penans’ deterritorialization from “locality” and “sustainability” (Magnaghi 2000) is now almost complete.

3.5.6 *Penan Storytellers and Their Narrations*

What has created hardship for the Penan is because the forest they have inhabited has been exploited, destroyed and devastated by others—rivers have turned dirty, polluted, days have become hotter; the Penan are living like animals surrounded by others who are much better off. Penan’s suffering has been increasing from day to day; many in Sarawak eke their living in poverty in villages like indigenes in other parts of the world.

Our land has been razed by machines, our trees are gone, our rivers polluted, we don’t have enough food, only our young men willing to work for the logging towkays have cash; many have died crushed by logs, others killed by log-bearing lorries, some have broken legs, broken arms; others have lost their unmarried son, their husband, and father; diseases are on the rise, the air is dirty, and the earth is prone to dangerous flooding with mudslides.

Why are these logging companies bringing hardship to our land and killing us? Many have perished; a lot of them were young; others, still healthy also died like frogs by the roadside. Hundreds of villages in Sarawak will suffer if the forest and wild animals are wiped out and we do not have a factory in the sky to reproduce them!

(Andereis Jimmy Mageri, a Penan Volunteer Corps, based in Long Lamai of Ulu Baram, Sarawak) What constitutes the pillars for us is the land and the rivers that we have. That aspect had not been reflected in the system of law... In Sarawak, land legislation had been initiated since 1951 but in 1958, they became more restrictive. According to these laws, whoever had cultivated land before 1st January 1958, the individual would have rights over it and he would continue to have control over that land until today. Hence *temuda* land became recognised by the government and the law, and that is the indicator that is applied to every ethnic group in Sarawak; including the Baa Kusan (Baram) area in which groups such as the Kayan, Kenyah, Kelabit, Iban and others had settled. But these are tribal groups who had been sedentary and living in their longhouses from the time of their ancestors; and

since they are cultivators, they own ‘temuda’. As a consequence, they have a stake and rights over land, in accordance with the above laws.

But we belong to the Penan; we don’t have ‘temuda’.

Since time immemorial, our ancestors had never cut down trees; they lived in the forest, foraging for food on what the forest could provide. Natural jungle plants and many other products of the forest- all these became our mainstay. That was how we lived our life. The Penan had a concept of an original territory, where their ancestors had conducted their life and traversed historically.... It’s true that the Penan had always moved and shifted around but they did so within the boundary of their own territory....(The government) had the knowledge of what there was to know but what they were unable to see was the way we lived our life here. What they know, what they hear is: ‘Yes, Penans move and shift from place to place’. What they understand is that Penans keep moving from here to there and everywhere, to Kalimantan, and even to Sabah, without any sense of direction. That is simply untrue! Penan have their own sense of permanent territorial boundary within which they move. Just like any other group who moves around in order to visit some place or to look for something – so it is the same with the Penan.

In the old days when Penan were tracking down wild game, say a rhinoceros, they would roam through a larger area, say from here moving across the border of Kalimantan in Indonesia. But after having caught the animal, they would return to their original territory. For that matter, even if they ended up in Brunei, they would still come back to the original area after their successful hunt. That was how the Penan lived.

What is at stake here is the struggle for our rights and control over land. We feel anxious after realising that our rights and control over our land are increasingly being marginalised. We are worried for the future generation. If the new generation were to lose this control, their life will be nothing more than an animal just lying in waiting for death to come, either tomorrow, or the day after, without even a sound.

(Penghulu Jamesof Long Lamai)

3.6 Conclusion

Words are fragments of discourses

(Foucault, cited in Macey 1995, pp. 124).

The above case studies demonstrate that the utilization of anthropological data based on subjectivities could be a useful method in gauging the internalization of human insecurity arising from deterritorialization wrought by development and nation-state political processes. In the social sciences, subjectivities can no longer be discounted simply as disembodied fragments of thoughts without their own genealogy of history or structure (Mama 1995). It is equally important however that the terrain on which the “subaltern speak” is not universalized or located in a vacuum (Spivak 1988). Hence, it is crucial, as this chapter has shown, to give these subjectivities their broader historical and political economic contextualizations, beyond the mere confines of the “weapons of the weak” perspective (Scott 1985).

I suggest that for the indigenes, experiencing human insecurity is intimately related to the deterritorialization process and both have become interwoven into the

poetics of the emerging Orang Asli and Penan subaltern discourse and notion of “agency.” Their discourse articulates their own counter-narrations against colonial forms of knowledge and mythologies about indigenous people (Alatas 1977; Cohn 1996). The contents of their subjectivities certainly demonstrate the abilities of the indigenes to deconstruct the prevalent authority-defined narratives of development (see Crush 1995; McMichael 1996) the “official” image about themselves, for instance, their alleged affinities toward a “nomadic” life as in the case of both Orang Asli and the Penan, and indeed their so-called “anti-development” ways. The storytelling narratives reflect their feelings of anxiety and uncertainty, and indeed the fear of human insecurity for the future of their society. These are telling in terms of the nuanced revelations of the indigenes concerning locality, space, territory, and place, of wisdom and knowledge in the face of deterritorialization of current developmentalism. In their minds, it is the dominant narratives of the state, its laws and officialdom which deny their own self-sustaining efforts toward achieving their own notion of development, notwithstanding the rhetorics of modernization, good governance and economic integration proclaimed by the state and those in power. Ultimately Orang Asli and Penan stories of human insecurity both reflect and articulate their respective “subaltern discourses” which “exist in contradiction to hegemonic ones” and “which subvert the dominant symbolic order and empower oppressed groups through their resonance with alternative ideologies and cultural practices. In other words, discourses not only transmit cultural content but also power relations, both relations of oppression and subordination and relations of resistance.” (Mama 1995, p. 98)

Acknowledgments The first phase of the fieldwork conducted in Pahang Tenggara was funded by IDRC, Canada as part of the “Regional Development and Indigenous Minorities” Project coordinated by Professor Lim Teck Ghee, Institute of Higher Studies, University of Malaya. The second phase of research in Pahang and the subsequent fieldwork in the Orang Asli communities in Selangor were supported by IRPA Grant, as part of the “Marginalised Communities” Project coordinated by Professor Hood Salleh of Universiti Kebangsaan, Malaysia. The author also acknowledges the invaluable support of POASM and the Orang Asli people for giving him their time, especially Majid Suhut, Long Jidin, Batin Bogi, Batin “Glamour,” Ramli, Dewi, Arief Embing, Yusoff and Ilam. For research on the Penan, I would like to convey my deepest gratitude to Ezra Uda, Penghulu James, Anderia Jimmy Mageri, Cikgu Balawan and the Penan communities of Long Lamai and Long Beruang for showing me the way of the Penan. I am also grateful for the funding by Toyota Foundation in supporting the “Penan storytelling research project” which was published as a book in 2012, titled: *Masyarakat Penan dan Impian pembangunan: Satu Himpunan Naratif Keterpinggiran dan Jantidir* (eds. Zawawi Ibrahim & NoorShah M.S., SIRD: Petaling Jaya).

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