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The Shaping of Malaysia

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Foreword by Malcolm Falkus

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Foreword

It is a pleasure to introduce this important volume of studies on Malaysia. The book had its origins at a Colloquium held in 1995 at the University of New England. That Colloquium showed, and this book confirms, how an interdisciplinary approach to a region can enhance our understanding of each particular aspect. Thus, the tropical wonderland which attracted miners, traders, and planters; which forged a unique ethnic and cultural demographic blend; and which today is one of the most economically developed and politically stable among Southeast Asian countries, had origins which can be traced back across the millennia.

The several authors of these studies are all experts in their fields, and all have had extensive research experience in Malaysia. Malaysia's economic growth described in the contributions by Amarjit Kaur and John Drabble has in part been shaped by the political structures and demographic patterns analysed by Alberto Gomes and Cheah Boon Kheng. But the economy and society which developed both in Peninsular Malaysia and in East Malaysia cannot be understood fully without consideration of the forest flora and fauna discussed by N. Prakash and Lesley Rogers. This, in turn, introduces one of the great dilemmas facing so many fast-developing countries today: how can an economy based on the exploitation of natural resources (whether by farmers, miners, industrialists, or tourists) continue to grow, without destruction of an environment which will in turn bring economic success to a halt. This is a theme developed by Gisela Kaplan. And it is salutary to reflect, as the chapter by Ian Metcalfe encourages us to do, on the extent to which Malaysia's present condition rests upon geographical and geological foundations established in primordial times. From this perspective what we call economic growth has taken place in but the bat of an eyelid, and the book serves to remind the present generation of its obligations not only to future generations but to its heritage.

Malcolm Falkus

Preface

The Shaping of Malaysia brings together for the first time studies on the geological origins and mineral resources, flora, fauna, peoples and cultures, political development, economy and society, environment and ecotourism in Malaysia and encapsulates the integration of the country into the wider international economy. The book also attempts to make Malaysia's current economic and political development more explicable by considering it in the light of these natural and human resource endowments and by exploring how they have changed over time. The book originates from the Ninth Biennial Malaysia Society Colloquium convened by Amarjit Kaur on 'Research on Malaysia - Recent Advances' at the Faculty of Economics, Business and Law, University of New England in October 1995. Unlike previous Malaysia Society colloquia which focused on economic and social issues, the Ninth Biennial Colloquium attracted participants from the sciences, reflecting diverse interests on the essential elements in the evolution of the country.

More than twenty papers were presented at the colloquium by scholars from Australia and Malaysia on their research findings and work-in-progress on Malaysia. These were organised by topics into eight panels covering: 'Economy and Economic Change'; 'Wage Labour and Social Change'; 'The Political Economy of Forest Resources'; 'Science'; 'Society and Culture'; 'Language and Literature'; and 'Politics and Ethnicity'. This book brings together six papers originally presented at the Colloquium and two invited papers. A number of the original papers strayed too far from the central theme of this book, or were too narrowly focussed to provide the necessary overview of the factors that have shaped Malaysia, and are therefore not included. Some of the original papers have been substantially revised for inclusion in this volume.

We would like to thank Malcolm Falkus for his support and Fay Hardingham for preparing the camera ready copy for publication. Ian Metcalfe computer drafted the maps and figures included in the book.

Amarjit Kaur & Ian Metcalfe
University of New England

Preliminary Note

The term Sabah is used in the text to refer to the modern state of Sabah. Prior to 1963, the state was known as British North Borneo. Although the current practice is to refer to East Malaysia as Sabah and Sarawak, the term East Malaysia is used here in its *geographical* sense to refer to the two Borneo territories.

The new spelling system adopted by Indonesia and Malaysia has been followed for Malay words; for example *pengiran*. The spelling of place names and rivers follows current practice; for example, Kuching and Rajang.

All dollar figures quoted (unless otherwise stated) are in Straits (later Malayan/Malaysian) dollars or *ringgit*. In the nineteenth century the value of the Straits dollar fluctuated, but in 1904 it was pegged to sterling at the rate of M\$1.00 to 2s 4d (about US \$0.40–0.60 in pre World War II terms). From 1947 to 1974 M\$1.00 was equal to about US\$0.33. After 1973, when Malaysia opted out of the sterling area and floated the *ringgit* against the US dollar and the British pound, the *ringgit* appreciated. In the wake of the Asian financial crisis, the Malaysian ringgit is (at the time of printing) worth US\$0.25 cents and £0.15.

Notes on the Contributors

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Dr Cheah Boon Kheng was formerly Professor of History at the School of Humanities, Universiti Sains Malaysia in Penang (1978-1994) and also lectured at the University of Malaya from 1972 to 1974. He obtained his MA and PhD degrees from the University of Malaya and the Australian National University respectively. His publications include *Red Star Over Malaya: Resistance and Social Conflict During and After the Japanese Occupation, 1941-1946* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1983) and *The Peasant Robbers of Kedah: Historical and Folk Perceptions* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1988). He is a Vice-President of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society. He is currently editing the volume on economy and society for the Encyclopedia of Malaysia.

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Dr John Drabble obtained MA and PhD degrees in History from the Universities of Cambridge and London, U.K., respectively. He was lecturer at the University of Malaya from 1968 to 1974 and then successively Senior Lecturer and Reader in Economic History at the University of Sydney from 1974 until his retirement in 1994. He currently holds an honorary research position at the University of Sydney. He has extensive experience researching the economic history of Malaysia (especially the Rubber Industry) and has published widely on this topic including *Rubber in Malaya 1876-1922: The Genesis of the Industry* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1973) and *Malayan Rubber: The Interwar Years* (London: Macmillan, 1991). He is currently completing a book on the general economic history of Malaysia.

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Dr Alberto Gomes is Senior Lecturer in the School of Sociology, Politics and Anthropology, La Trobe University. He was born in Malaysia and worked as an academic at the University of Malaya from 1977 to 1989. He studied at the University of Malaya for his BA (Hons) and MA and the Australian National University for his PhD in anthropology which he obtained in 1987. Much of his research and publications are on the

Malaysian Aborigines (*Orang Asli*) but he is currently studying cultural identities among Goan Indians. Some of his recent publications include *Modernity and Identity: Asian Illustrations* (1994) and *Malaysia and the Original People* (with R. Dentan, K. Endicott, and B. Hooker, 1997).

GISELA KAPLAN

Professor Gisela Kaplan is a social scientist who has lectured widely in Europe, the USA and in Australia. She has been joint editor of the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology* and also editor-in-chief of the *Australian Journal of Social Issues*. She became founding professor of the School of Social Science at Queensland University of Technology in Brisbane and is now Adjunct Professor in the Research Centre of Aboriginal and Multicultural Studies at the University of New England, Armidale, NSW. She has published eight books, amongst them: *Hannah Arendt: Thinking, Judging, Freedom* (1989), *Contemporary Western European Feminism* (1992) and jointly with Lesley Rogers an environmentalist/ethnological study entitled *Orang-Utans in Borneo*, Armidale: University of New England Press (1994). The latter was based on years of field work in Sabah and her research also resulted in a substantial number of publications in journals and the popular press. Her latest work, in press, is entitled *The Grieving of Australia. A Nation Ponders its Future*, Cambridge University Press.

AMARJIT KAUR

Amarjit Kaur was born in Kuala Lumpur. She obtained her BA (Hons) and MA from the University of Malaya and her PhD from Columbia University in New York. She is currently Associate Professor and Head, Department of Economic History at the University of New England, Armidale, Australia. Prior to joining the University of New England, Dr Kaur was an Associate Professor in the History Department at the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur, where she taught Southeast Asian and Malaysian History/Economic History from 1978 to 1990. She has researched extensively in this field and her publications include four sole-authored books, three edited books, one multi-authored book, book chapters and articles in professional journals. In 1983-84, she held an American Council of Learned Societies/Fulbright Fellowship at the Economics Department, Harvard University. She was also a Senior Associate Member at St Antony's College, Oxford University in 1989-90; Visiting Fellow at Clare Hall, Cambridge in the first half of 1994 and Visiting Fellow on secondment at the Australian National University in

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IAN METCALFE

Ian Metcalfe is currently an Associate Professor in the Division of Earth Sciences, School of Physical Sciences and Engineering, University of New England. He was Lecturer and Senior Lecturer in the Geology Departments of the University of Malaya and the National University of Malaysia, and in the Institute of Advanced Studies, University of Malaya from 1977 to 1989. He has extensive teaching and research experience on the geology of Malaysia and Southeast Asia and is regarded as one of the foremost authorities on the geological evolution of East and Southeast Asia. During the last decade he has made significant contributions to global palaeogeographic reconstructions of Gondwanaland, Pangea and the eastern part of the ancient Tethys Ocean. He has over 120 publications including: 1 research monograph, 2 edited books, 4 book chapters, 59 refereed journal articles and 2 edited journal volumes. He obtained his B.Sc. (Hons) in Geology from the University of Durham, U.K. in 1971 and holds a Ph.D. from the University of Leeds, U.K. (1976). He was Australian Science Coordinator for the International Ocean Drilling Program (1992-1995), is on the editorial boards of a number of journals including the *Journal of Asian Earth Sciences*, is a member of the Australian Academy of Sciences Committee for Solid Earth Sciences, and was Co-Leader of the International Geological Correlation Program Project 'Gondwana Dispersion and Asian Accretion' (1991-1996). Assoc. Prof. Metcalfe is also currently Secretary of the International Union of Geological Sciences Subcommittee on Carboniferous Stratigraphy, and Editor of the *Newsletter on Carboniferous Stratigraphy*. He has held visiting positions at Nottingham, Oxford, Australian National and Macquarie Universities, a Visiting Professorship at the Université d'Orléans, France, and is currently Honorary Research Fellow at Macquarie University, Sydney.

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LESLEY ROGERS

Professor Lesley Rogers holds a Personal Chair at the University of New England, Armidale, Australia. She has a strong international reputation in the field of brain development and behaviour and has made special contributions to the understanding of environmental influences on brain development and function. Together with her colleague Professor Gisela Kaplan, she is conducting research on the behaviour of orang-utans: their jointly authored book *Orang-utans in Borneo* was published by the University of New England Press in 1994. Lesley Rogers has published over 200 publications, including 4 books. She obtained her first degree at Adelaide University and a D.Phil. from Sussex University. In 1987 she was honoured by the award of Doctor of Science from the University of Sussex. She is Past President of the International Society for Comparative Psychology and co-edits the *International Journal of Comparative Psychology*.