

The Politics of "Sustainability" In Sarawak

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Adoption of the New Economic Policy (NEP) more than two decades ago and affirmative action processes for *Bumiputras*¹ fuelled and continues to influence debates as to whether ethnicity or class propels the policy process in Malaysia. Looking at the context of forest resource policy this paper explores the way in which *Bumiputrais* works (or not) for the bulk of native people in Sarawak, East Malaysia. It argues that ethnicity may not be an important category in propelling forest resource policy.

Recognising that policy is not developed and implemented in isolation but is in fact a result of specific social, political and economic processes, the concern is to explore the context of policy, that is the policy milieu. The paper analyses the complexities of the political economy of timber in the state of Sarawak by drawing on the larger picture within which policy is framed; namely, the politics of Malaysia's federalism and ethnicity (*Bumiputrais*).

Policy in this article is not confined to what is written (for example, the Sarawak Forest Ordinance and its numerous amendments). Written policy is useful in the sense that it provides a 'norm' for practice. Policy decision, however, are a result of struggle and are made at multiple levels, namely at the institutional, organisational and individual levels, as well as at the national, regional and local levels. Consequently, it is useful to view policy beyond what is written to include those that are enacted and stated (Fulcher, 1989:8). Inevitably what is written up as policy, what is enacted and what we say we do may be inconsistent with one another. Professional, for example, foresters, may say they are conserving non-wood or non-timber resources but their management practices actively support (enact) the protection of timber resources at the expense of the former. Similarly, governments pass legislation in favour of conserving forest resources and express their serious intentions by deploying specialists, but may not allocate sufficient funds for the purpose, thereby frustrating its full enactment.

Moreover, policy decisions are subject to an endless process of interpretation and contestation, so that those made at 'higher' levels (within parliaments, cabinets or

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responsible ministries) may or may not be more binding than those made at 'local sites' (for example, within professions, localised bureaucracies and business corporations). The idea, however, is not to reject the importance of institutions such as the state. Sufficient insights have been generated in the studies of institutions and the nature of institutionalisation to suggest that organisational structures leave their imprint on decisions and decision making processes (Skocpol, 1980; Powell and diMaggio, 1991; Hall, 1986). As pointed out by Hall (1990:168-69) the garnering of sufficient state power is key for organising a central political project, for then the state can be used to "plan, urge, incite, solicit and punish, to conform the different sites of power and consent into a single regime". In this regard, the imprint of Malaysia's federalism on the policy process is an important aspect of the policy milieu and forms the crux of the discussion in the first part of this article. Neither is it useful in the context of Malaysia's political culture to underestimate the role of political elites and the web of patron client relationships that they spin around themselves and their supporters.²

In natural resource policy, however, so much more are taking place. The timber industry since its expansion in the 1970s is estimated to provide Sarawak with 50 percent of its revenue (World Conservation Union-IUCN, 1991:203). Production (largely of raw logs) is for world markets, especially those of East Asia. In 1992, Japan, Taiwan and South Korea consumed close to 43 percent, 22 percent and 12 percent of Sarawak rawlogs respectively (Perkasa, June 1993:12). It was estimated that if timber harvesting continued to be carried out at 1990 rates, Sarawak's old growth forest would become depleted by the year 2001 (International Tropical Timber Organization - ITTO, 1990). Consequently, there arises the question of 'sustainability' of forest resource use in Sarawak.

In the global discourses of 'sustainability', however, there is very little agreement about what needs to be sustained. Since there is no agreement as to what needs to be sustained in tropical forests, or whether sustainability is at all possible with use, 'sustainability' is a contested terrain.³ In fact, there is an explosion of 'sustainability' discourses (within economic via ecological economics, within ecology via sustainable--as opposed to sustained yield--management, to name a (few). Such an explosion provides space for local expressions of policy alternatives. Through advocacy and strategic manoeuvring the issue of 'sustainability' has expanded beyond biology and economics to the realm of native rights, especially the rights of endangered *Penan* groups. This article looks at the use of that space by environmental non-government organisations (NGOs) in Malaysia.

Precisely because 'sustainability' is a contested terrain, to explore only federalist political structure and elite politics misses much of the contested nature of the policy process. Furthermore, by looking only at the power to dominate we miss seeing the 'creativity' that local power relations produce, that is the power to resist and/or accommodate domination (for example, by way of rejection, embellishment or negotiation of the symbolic order (Fraser, 1989; Game, 1989). Such resistance occurs at many levels (federal, national, local) and at many 'local sites'.

Recognising the power to resist does not mean a reversal to a pluralist conceptualisation of power. Moreover, the power to resist control and domination are not equal. Specific historical notions equating 'development' with economic growth provides timber interest (national and multi-national) with an armory for resistance. Often, timber interests responsible for forest exploitation are regarded as national saviours, not environmental vandals. This point is discussed in the middle part of the article in the ways business 'invests' in political capital. By contrast the work of NGOs is constrained by relative lack of resources and the realities of operating within an increasing 'authoritarian' state (see footnote 2). At the level of practice, forest management in Sarawak continue to treat the well being of forests and forest dependent native peoples as mutually exclusive (ITTO, 1990; United States Congressional Staff Study Mission to Sarawak, Malaysia 1989). Practices of surveillance and control have in fact tightened by way of policy measures introduced in 1987 and 1993 that made blockading of logging roads and merely being present at such blockades an indictable offense.⁴ Within the confines of control and surveillance, the last section of this article explores the limits of NGO power. However, despite intensified control and surveillance, the issues of native rights continue to occupy space in mainstream discourse of forest management (see for example, International Tropical Timber Organization-ITTO, 1990).

Given the above complexity, there appears to be a need to recognise a multiplicity of sites of struggle, without undermining the significance of the struggle against forms of exploitation (via class) and domination (such as ethnicity, sexual, cultural or professional).⁵ It means assessing the ways that power at 'local sites' intersect, articulate and rearticulate in order to bring about the effects of broad structural dominance. For while the state is not monolithic, its power operates as a network not as a collection of isolated points, and that it operates on the basis of other existing power relations (Pringle and Watson, 1990), for example of knowledge (Said, 1978; Escobar, 1985). Existing power networks such as the family, kinship, knowledge and so forth as well as micro-powers that exist at 'local sites' are what the state operate on.

Federalism and Regionality

Under Malaysia's federal system land and forests are a state responsibility. However, decision-making processes in Malaysia show a tendency towards increasing centralisation (Anderson, 1988; Shafruddin, 1987; Musolf and Springer, 1979; Milne and Mauzy, 1978; Tilman, 1976). Federal government exercises leverage over state via its financial powers, especially control over development funds. It could (and has done so in the past), exercise control via the party machine or by using its emergency powers.

Undoubtedly, the state of Sarawak, (as it is for Sabah) has more 'independence' than other states located in the Malaysian Peninsula. Such independence is associated with the special conditions attached to the Malaysia Agreement signed in 1963 on the eve of British departure from both states which sought some formula for the

harnessing of fears harboured by the two states about being, overwhelmed by the economically and politically more developed Peninsular states.⁶ Even so, the 'independence' of both states and their guaranteed autonomy over forestry matters cannot be taken for granted. It could be curtailed through centralised planning and implementation machinery that tend to be manipulated from the centre (King, 1988). Specific to forestry, federal intervention could come for example, via the exercise of import powers (for example preventing the import of machinery for harvesting timber that 'wastes' 40-60 percent of forest during harvesting). Or, it could intervene by exercising its jurisdiction over exports. For example, in recent years, the Federal government has interfered with the timber industry in the eastern Malaysian state of Sabah. Claiming that logging in that state was excessive, the federal government used the Timber Board Act of 1960 to prevent Sabah's custom and excise department from issuing export licenses (the Star, 8.3.'91).⁷

In Sarawak forestry, such intervention has not happened.⁸ This is particularly interesting since international attention on Sarawak forestry has been such that it carried the potential to affect other industries in other parts of Malaysia, such as tourism. Moreover, given that the legitimacy of governments in Malaysia is grounded on their seeming ability to deliver 'development' programmes to the people (Ratnam and Milne, 1974; Rogers, 1986), federal governments' apparent disinterest in the affairs of Sarawak is a puzzle.

Ethnicity, The New Economic Policy and Bumiputraisim

The term *Bumiputra* in its sense, means "sons of the soil". In administrative and political terms, in Peninsular Malaysia it refers to people who identify themselves as Malay and/or as being Muslim vis-a-vis other races who are not Malay (such as the Indians and Chinese and who are also largely non-Muslims). Demographically, Malays are said to make up approximately 48 percent of the population, Chinese 36 percent, Indians 9 percent (Bowie, 1994:168 citing Nether, 1991). The political nature of the term *Bumiputra* must not be under-estimated. It has been extended whenever politically convenient to include among others, Muslim Filipinos fleeing the civil disturbance in Mindanao into Sabah as well as Muslim peoples from the Southern part of Thailand. The identity of being *Bumiputra* is important not only to political elites for purposes of political representation and of upholding or strengthening the *Bumiputra* power base in the coalition government of Barisan Nasional, but also to the *raayat* (the people). In the complexity of ethnic politics in Malaysia, it is important to the people because *Bumiputraisim* carries with it certain privileges, especially economic. It means preferences in education (usually in the form of a quota), in the tendering for government development projects and other similar treatment. In forestry, especially in the Peninsula, timber licences are usually given out to *Bumiputras*, although what *Bumiputras* do with these licenses is a separate issue and will be dealt with later. In the state of Pahang, for example, licences were awarded to a range of different groups. Licences were awarded to groups ranging from the members of the Pahang royal family to some *penghulu* (village headman), former high ranking

members of the armed forces (generals), dignitaries especially *Datuks* and *Tan Sris* as well as non-ranking members of political support groups, especially around election times (Majid-Cooke, 1994). Of course, the kinds of forests awarded vary so that members of the royal family are more likely to acquire the 'primary' or timber-rich forest, while others may have to be content with logged over ones (*kawasan sudah kerja*) or some combination of both (Majid-Cooke, 1994:430-432).

What developed in Peninsular Malaysia, then is ethnic politics based on the fear of the group in the majority of being treated as minority citizens. This fear was based on evidence of real economic dominance by some members of the Chinese community, a fear that culminated in inter-ethnic rioting in 1969. Although many saw the inter-ethnic rioting as a class phenomenon (Lim Mah Hui, 1985; Mehmet, 1988), at the policy level it was interpreted as an issue of ethnicity. The fear of the 1969 incident repeating itself, gave birth to affirmative action strategies and restructuring of the economy in favour of *Bumiputras* under the umbrella of what was known as the New Economic Policy (NEP). Since then the debate as to whether class or ethnicity propels development or economic policy in Malaysia and whose interests the NEP actually represents has not subsided (see for example, Jomo, 1986; Lim Mah Hui, 1985 and Mehmet, 1988).

Nevertheless, there is broad agreement on some points. First, that its implementation afforded a degree of concentrated power in running the economy to technocrats, or the politico-bureaucratic group often associated with the ruling parties (Jomo, 1986; Mehmet, 1989; Gomez, 1990). Second, approximately twenty years after the implementation of the NEP, the fruits of affirmative action and economic restructuring have spread fairly widely but it has led to the formation of a "differentiated capitalist stratum and a differentiated bureaucratic elite" (Khoo Kay Jin, 1992:62-67). Big Malay business which have benefitted initially from the NEP through clientele links with the dominant ruling party, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), may be trying to chart an independent path in the corporate world. But the medium to small scale Malay business interests may wish to maintain patronage links as an insurance for survival. The bureaucratic elites, on the other hand, are divided between those who control or monitor the activities of government-owned public enterprises (through whose medium *Bumiputra* interests in the corporate wealth are largely channelled) and those who run them. Thirdly, the benefits of the NEP are felt less acutely in Sarawak (and the other East Malaysian states of Sabah) (Jayum, 1990; King, 1988). In Sarawak, where development funding tends to register a distinct urban bias, the majority of people in rural areas would still experience relative poverty (Leigh, 1980; Searle, 1983). The next section examines how these assertions may or may not be applicable in Sarawak. More specifically, how does *Bumiputraism* work in the context of Sarawak's development of the timber industry.

The Timber Industry, Bumiputraism and Native Rights in Sarawak

Sarawak is one of thirteen states in Malaysia. From 1841 to 1946, it was 'ruled' by the Brooke family, British adventurers who went there via Singapore (Kaur, 1995). From

1946 to 1962 Sarawak was made a British colony and, in 1963 (together with its northern neighbour, Sabah) merged with Peninsular Malaysia to become 'partners' in the formation of Malaysia. Since 1963, the pace of economic and political change has been unprecedented in Sarawak's history (King, 1990:110-29). Since 1963, social and political mobilisation in Sarawak has been concerned mainly with keeping abreast of the pace of economic development set by the more industrialised and politically experienced Peninsula, and maintaining some form of regional autonomy yet avoiding peripheralisation (King, 1990:116-20; Milne and Mauzy, 1978:111-14). It is changes after 1963 that concerns us here.

In 1990, there were 23 ethnic groups and 10 subgroups (Sarawak Forest Department, 1991:2), approximately 70 percent of whom qualify as *Bumiputras*. The bulk of the *Bumiputra* population are *Dayak*⁹ peoples who are not Muslim. A small proportion of the *Bumiputra* population who are Muslim are largely of Malay or *Melanau* origins. Ethnic Chinese form an even smaller group. In aggregate terms *Dayak* people form approximately 43 percent of the population, Malay/*Melanau*, 26 percent, and ethnic Chinese 29 percent (Annual Statistical Bulletin Sarawak, 1986).

The timber industry which, since its expansion in the 1970s, has opened up forests in Sarawak's hinterland, is usually presented in official discourse as providing one vehicle for catching up (development). As is often the case development is equated with modernisation. Modernisation is associated with wage labour, mass production using improved technology and high level consumption. The value is deemed to lie in exposing rural people living at different levels of subsistence to mass consumption as benefits 'trickle down' through employment, education and social services (Government of Sarawak, 1990 cited in Asia Pacific Forest Industries, December 1990:8). Seen as pioneering development (for example through road construction and employment creation) the timber industry fits into what is perceived to be modern. Conversely, native subsistence lifestyles are perceived to contradict modernisation. Through job creation (50,000 created in 1990), the timber industry is expected to form the bridge between the modern and subsistence sectors of the economy. The industry also generates government revenue, some for spending in the rural sector (Government of Sarawak 1990, cited in Asia Pacific Forest Industries, December 1990:8). This is a particularly important point working in favour of the industry compared to say, the oil and gas industry. The oil and gas industry, although more capital intensive and more lucrative, is controlled from Kuala Lumpur and is largely foreign owned. Only 5% of petroleum royalties are shared by the Sarawak state government (Cramb and Dixon, 1988:12). Moreover, the nature of employment in the industry calls for highly skilled, high technology personnel (mainly imported from overseas and/or originating from the Peninsula), hardly affecting the largely unskilled Sarawak labour force. It should come to no surprise therefore if logging companies were to be looked upon as financial saviours rather than environmental vandals.

The groups experiencing the most pressure were and still are native peoples who mostly inhabit rural regions of the state (INSAN, 1989). They are not a necessary component in the production relations of timber in Sarawak. Partly, this is because timber production is capital intensive and more importantly, the industry is inscribed with a whole system of domination and exclusivity (to be explained in the next section). In terms of labour participation, native stake in the timber industry is tenuous, being unskilled and easily replaced by relatively cheaper labour from neighbouring regions such as Kalimantan and other parts of Indonesia. Moreover, participation in the timber industry is not seen as a viable permanent alternative to subsistence agriculture (*sawah* or *ladang*). The seasonal nature of employment and the sensitivity of such employment to market fluctuations within the industry makes for irregular employment. For some *Kenyah* groups, employment in the timber industry was an interim route to follow, useful for those who were preparing to marry or to separate from the stem household (Lian, 1987:168). However, they regard such employment as a good, quick but one-off way of accumulating cash. *Kenyah* involvement in the timber industry is perceived by them as striking while the iron is hot since they realise that the forests around them will soon be gone and that may not be able to prevent its appearance (Lian, 1987).¹⁰

Wealth from timber is created by entrepreneurial groups largely dominated by a few individuals and families in a sub-group of the ethnic Chinese community, the Foochow. Most of them are actively involved in politics, either directly by becoming politicians themselves, or indirectly by having family members in politics or by supporting politically powerful (usually *Bumiputra*) patrons (to be discussed in the next section). Native peoples are largely excluded from direct production in the timber industry (except as unskilled labour). Yet, they 'own' vast tracts of forest land (see below).

From the perspective of native *Bumiputras*, the crux of the problem lies with the state. With recognised exception, the state appropriates all land as 'state lad' (ITTO, 1990:106; Cramb and Dixon, 1988:9). Recognised exceptions are those land that are 'properly-gazetted for various purposes such as the categories of 'permanent forests', reserved land', or 'communal reserves'. Any 'high forest' not gazetted as permanent forest is called 'stateland forest'. The problem from the native perspective is that the so called 'high forests' could be old-growth forests or forests left to fallow (rotation) under shifting cultivation; they could also be 'ancestral forest'. The latter two categories may appear sufficiently 'primary', but are in effect, 'owned' by native groups although often, not officially registered. Such geographical and legal ambiguities are the cause of many present day disputes, especially when 'stateland' of other 'unowned' forests become incorporated into forest reserves and subsequently, licensed out to loggers. Given inadequate landuse surveys (Brookfield et al, 1989), the possibility of land under customary rights being incorporated into the state permanent forest estate (PFE) is real indeed. In this regard, approximately 0.5 million hectares of forest land are being disputed (ITTO, 1990:9).

Disputes involve forest land 'owned' by all native groups, not only those of the *Penan*. Ambiguities of the Sarawak Land Code adds confusion to the disputes. The Sarawak Land Code defined state land (in the colonial period, "crown land") as "all land for which no document of title has been issued" (Cramb and Dixon, 1988:8). However, the Code recognises land claimed by native peoples under customary rights (acquired usually by felling primary forests), as native area land. For various reasons, most native area land are not titled. So, there lies one area of ambiguity. Another area of ambiguity appears in the form of a clause which stipulates that native area land can only be considered as such if customary rights were exercised prior to 1958. This clause limits customary rights even further. Native *Bumiputras* who felled forest land after 1958 in theory, have no hope of making customary rights claims.

To summarise then, 1958 appeared to be a key year from the point of view of land administration. For native peoples, it is the year around which the rights of citizenship (of access to the means of subsistence) were validated or rejected by the state. Administratively, the validation of rights is never automatic, and is easily suspended. For example, in 1984, a government directive restricted the rights to make NCR claims because of the suspicion that "permits were being indiscriminately" (ITTO, 1990:105). Validation of NCR rights is further contingent on the discretion of the District Officer and the approval of the Forestry Department (International Tropical Timber Organisation - ITTO, 1990:105-6).

In theory, and because of an enabling clause in the Sarawak Forest Ordinance, forests under sustained yield management and licensed for timber harvesting are accessible to native *Bumiputras*. In practice, however, access is in fact limited because of the concern for maintaining timber species and the fear that native forest dwellers may in fact destroy commercially viable species through slash and burn practices or through making use of valuable timber species for 'private consumption' (for example, boatmaking or building community longhouses). Production for 'private consumption' is not actively encouraged, especially if productive activity involves using forests (other than those designated as communal or community forests), because such 'consumption' is regarded as detrimental to a generalised concept of 'public' good. Indeed, the consistent claim of industrial forestry in Sarawak (as it is in Peninsular Malaysia) is its contribution to national income goals (Sarawak Forest Department, 1991:3; Thang and Masran, 1991:1).

In practice, there is a further restriction. Native access to 'managed' forest is contingent on the goodwill of individual loggers (Pancar Penemu, various issues, 1991/92) who may be less concerned with maintaining species than with short term profit margins. Thus, the techno-bureaucratic orientation in forest administration, although originating from different political positions than that of the timber industry may in fact carry with it similar effects.¹¹ In fact, as late as 1986, forestry administrators typically regarded disputes between native *Bumiputras* and loggers as academic since the former are considered 'illegal' occupants of the permanent forest estate (PFE). To illustrate we cite a forester:

If the natives are either participating in the land development project through the Native Customary Right Land or be resettled for those without land (sic), the threats to our Permanent Forest Estate will be reduced. At the moment, however, there is a rather serious problem of the landless natives illegally clearing, burning and occupying the Permanent Forest Estate.

(Lim, 1986:382)

The claim of the hunting and gathering *Penan* to their forests is more tenuous than those of the sedentarised shifting cultivators. The *Penan* management system is one that is said to ensure subsistence security - that resources are continuously available, not depleted. The concept of *molong* is crucial to this system (Brosius, 1992; Langub, 1989). It is more than a system of preserving or fostering a resource. It is a system not of ownership but of monitoring information on the availability of resources over vast tracts of land, and of enhancing their long term availability. In this system the rights of current and future generations are respected. As they move from one clump of sago to another and from one forest section to another, mature sago are extracted but the young sago are *molong* (marked or preserved). In addition, there is a hierarchy of rights of individuals or families to be respected as well as a hierarchy of rights to different kinds of products being used or preserved (Langub, 1990:6).

Under the Sarawak Land Code, the *molong* does not signify a right. Section 5(2) of the Land Code specifies six methods by which customary rights (NCR) may be acquired: felling of virgin jungle and the occupation of the cleared land; planting of land with fruit trees; occupation or cultivation of land; use of land for a burial ground or shrine; use of land of any class for rights of way; or any other lawful method (Bian, undated:3). Since *Penan* claims based on *molong* do not entail the clearing or felling of forest land, nor the marking of burial sites, the Land Code in effect renders illegal such claims and invalidates *Penan* rights. It leaves the *Penan* extremely vulnerable in a legal sense. These forces are juxtaposed against the increased concern for such rights internationally and for indigenous forest management systems generally. Consequently, despite their vulnerability in a legal sense, the *Penan* are well-equipped in terms of claims to a 'moral economy' in the midst of elite politics in Sarawak.

In sum, Sarawak is different from the Peninsula not only in its historical, political and development experience, but also in terms of ethnic and cultural composition. The Malay/*Melanau* Muslims in Sarawak are urban and politically dominant, the Chinese economically dominant, while the native/*Dayak Bumiputras* who form close to half of the population are neither economically nor politically dominant. In Sarawak, then, we have a situation wherein the largest single block of citizen group is accorded treatment normally thrown at minority groups. Since such treatment is meted out despite their *Bumiputras* status ethnicity does not appear to be a sufficient factor in influencing affirmative action policies on a large scale as has happened in Peninsular Malaysia. An analysis of the dynamics of the timber industry in that state gives an insight as to why this might be so.

Timber Harvesting and Ali Baba - Whither Bumiputraisim?

That elite politics in Sarawak is about timber is well known among observers of Sarawak politics (Roff, 1974; Ratman and Milne, 1974; Leigh, 1980; INSAN, 1989). Commenting on Sarawak politics in the 1970s, Leigh (1980:371) wrote:

Politics in Sarawak is concerned essentially with the control of land, timber and minerals. A consequent of the quest to gain power is the accretion of wealth from these natural assets.

There are a few constants in the characteristic of timber politics in Sarawak. The control over timber wealth is disbursed by state elites to a select few, usually political supporters, friends and relatives. This is not a new development; the precedent was set in colonial days:

...the departing British authorities bequeathed to carefully selected indigenous leaders valuable licences to extract timber. Thus financed and (once they were elected to government possessing unprecedented power, East Malaysia's political leader had much to disburse by way of patronage, and undoubtedly used this to build support for themselves and their policies.

(Roff, 1974:8)

The first few politicians to emerge in Sarawak especially Temenggong Jugah (native leader) and James Wong (an ethnic Chinese and currently, Minister of Environment and Tourism), acquired timber wealth in colonial times (Ratnam and Milne, 1974:318).

There are a few constants in the characteristic of timber politics in Sarawak. The control over timber wealth is disbursed by state elites to a select few, usually political supporters, friends and relatives. In the 1990s, more than twenty years after the time of Leigh's writing, the conditions surrounding state patronage has not changed. As noted earlier, timber licences more often than not are awarded to *Bumiputra* influentials, although non-*Bumiputras* may also be given licences especially if they are favoured logging contractor. What has changed, however, is that timber licences are being awarded to increasingly narrow circles. Most *Bumiputra* influentials in Sarawak who are given timber licences increasingly are members of the dominant political party of the state, the Parti Pesaka Bumiputra Bersatu - PBB. Among these influentials a high proportion would be non-native (*Malay/Melanau*) *Bumiputras*. Members in other parties in the ruling coalition may be awarded a few licences but on a less frequent basis. Moreover, these licences are contracted out to a few major timber magnates who are also logging contractors (personal interview, senior member, PBB, 30.10'91; Asian Wall Street Journal - AWSJ, 7.2.'90). This is an arrangement that is referred to in Malaysia as the *Ali Baba* system. It is a practice that is widespread in the country, including Peninsular Malaysia (Majid-Cooke, 1994). Under the *Ali Baba* arrangement (the *Bumiputra* *Ali* and the Chinese *Baba*), licences issued to *Bumiputra* individuals of interests are normally sold to logging contractors, the majority of whom are ethnic Chinese. Using nominees, both the incumbent Chief

Minister and his uncle, the former Chief Minister, gave away timber licences to companies formed by their political allies, families and friends over a broad spectrum (Sarawak Tribune, 11.4.'87) and People's Mirror 12.4.'87). For example, in 1987, licences issued by the former Chief Minister alone was worth US\$4.2 billion (Wall Street Journal, 22.7.'87).

The four biggest timber interests in Sarawak are the Rimbanan Hijua group owned by the family of Senator Tiong Hiew King, the WTK group owned by Wong Tuong Kwang, the Samling group owned by Hiew Teck Seng and the KTS group owned by the family of Lau Hui Kang. Among Dayak politicians in the Opposition, there is some fear about Chinese business influence on government decision making, rendering it difficult for rural Dayak interests to be heard (personal interview, Minister for Works, Leo Moggie, 23.12.'91; personal interviews, politicians from Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak - PBDS 23.20'91 and 25.10'91). This is because, there is evidence that timber wealth and political power are linked.

At different times over the lifetime of Rimbanan hijuan business associates had included a former speaker of the federal senate and James Wong, Sarawak's Minister for Tourism and the Environment (AWSJ, 7.2.'90). Among the business associates of Wong Tuong Kuang (WTK) was a former state Assemblyman from Marudi. WTK also has a son who is a senator Wong Kie Yik. Similarly, among Hiew Teck Seng's alleged business associate was an Assemblyman from Matu Daro cum prominent businessman. Lastly, Lau Hui Kang of the KTS timber group is also Chairman of the Sarawak Timber Association (STA). As Chairman of the STA he is consulted on a regular basis by politicians in government. Establishing business associates would not be a problem for him. He is said to be close to the Chief Minister Taib (Asiaweek, 25.11.'88:59).

Elite alliances are mutually rewarding. Conflicts of interests were not considered important issues in this overall context. Neither would ethnic differences appear to be a problem. For Chinese timber magnates, non-Chinese associates were considered "worthy to do business with, though they happen to be politicians or are family members who are in politics" (AWSJ, 7.2.'90 citing Tiong).

Moreover, Chinese financial support is important to Sarawak *Bumiputra* political elites. Because of the rural and dispersed nature of the electorate, election campaigns can be expensive. To reach electorates in the isolated hinterland would require months of slow and expensive travel, largely by river. However, during the 1991 election campaign, the Chief Minister's party enjoyed the "benefits of ... seemingly limitless funds and a fleet of helicopters to criss-cross the jungle-clad terrain" (Far Eastern Economic Review, 10.10.'92:19). In the 1987 elections Malaysian \$62 million was said to have been spent on chasing 625,000 voters (Colchester, 1989:32). In the 1991 state elections, some local party candidates were given Malaysian \$2 million each to spend on their constituencies (personal interviews, Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak - PBDS and PBB politicians, 25.10.'91 and 30.10.'91).

Although the timber magnates enjoy patronage, ultimate power remains in the hands of the Chief Minister. The power to issue or revoke licences was demonstrated in the events leading to the 1987 elections. Because of political animosity, twenty five timber licences previously issued by the former Chief Minister Rahman to his family and political allies were revoked by the incumbent Chief Minister (People's Mirror, 12.4.'87). When licences were revoked, timber harvesting was forced to stop until new ones were issued in their place. Since licences were quite often contracted out or 'sold' to timber contractors in *Ali Baba* arrangement, the contractors were the group of people more at risk in these situations. They cannot risk falling out of favour. Some timbermen were shrewd, and 'invested' in both groups of opposing politicians (personal interviews, PBB and opposition politicians, 10.11.'91; 12.11.'91; 30.10.'91). A few, however, were caught because they backed the group that turned out to lose the elections. Nevertheless, in time, these timbermen managed to come back into favour with the help of intermediaries in government. For example, Hiew Teck Seng's Samling Timber at the time was a contractor in the Belaga district for *Lembahan Mewah*, owned by the former Chief Minister's family (INSAN/Sarawak Study Group - 1989:24). By contracting for the former Chief Minister, he was in effect viewed as working for the incumbent Chief Minister's political opponent. As a result, he fell out of favour with the incumbent. In years subsequent to the 1987 elections, whichever course of action Hiew Teck Seng took must have worked, since he managed to remain in the Chief Minister's favour. His timber interests in the 1990s have become among the biggest in Sarawak.

Despite the *Ali Baba* business practice, awarding licences to *Bumiputras* has not brought on a dynamic *Bumiputra* entrepreneurial community in Sarawak.¹² It could be one reason why beginning about the mid 1980s, timber licences were dispensed to even fewer clients or at times, direct to contractors, circumventing some licences. The Chief Minister has defended this practice in terms of efficiency. He claimed that he wanted the licences awarded only to people who had sufficient capital to build logging roads, purchase expensive timber harvesting equipment and who possessed expertise to engage in logging (People's Mirror, 12.7.'91; NST, 14.4.'92:4). Federal government policy of encouraging logging interests to engage in value added manufacturing of timber would have made such a claim even more valid.¹³

Domination via Discourse

The importance of timber money goes beyond elections to the task of shaping discourse of 'development' and patronage through the control of the print media. Because timber harvesting is seen as effecting change not only in the material conditions of native life but also in their value system (bringing natives into mainstream life and providing them with the benefits of 'civilisation' are a few examples of rhetoric on value change), control of channels of information flow becomes important. Ownership of media outlets provide timber interests and politi-

cians with an avenue for controlling the choice of issues for media discussion and for steering these discussions in particular directions. Consequently, the English language daily, the Borneo Post, is owned by the Lau family of the KTS group (Records of the Registrar of Company, Kuching, Sarawak, 1991). Malay legislative assemblymen were listed as directors of the Borneo Post (Sarawak Tribute, 9.4.'87:1). Listed as shareholders of the Sarawak Tribune were *Bumiputra* interests (Kakan Sendirian Berhad) among whom were *Bumiputra* politicians (Records of the Registrar of Companies, Kuching, Sarawak, 1991). The Chinese language daily, Sin Chew Jit Poh, is owned by Rimbunan Hijau (personal interview PBDS politician, 15.10.'91).¹⁴ When electioneering, control over media outlets becomes even more crucial. During the 1991 election campaign, media space for opposition politician was controlled. For allowing opposition parties more print space during the campaign than was thought appropriate, reporters of the Star (a Peninsular Malaysian newspaper) was ostracised and almost sent out of Sarawak (Pillai, 1991).

Control over the choice of issues and direction for their discussion in the public arena is evident in the way environmental issues are presented. Because environmental issues are inextricably linked with native livelihood issues through logging, environmentalists claim that press releases they issue concerning native land get distorted when published in the local press (personal interview, Harrison Ngau, 15.10.'91). Mostly the press releases are ignored. In the period preceding the 1991 state elections, environmentalists and activists who worked on the native land issue and who stood for elections under the opposition (PBDS) banner, were presented as unpatriotic allies of foreign environmentalists (People's Mirror, 17.9.'91; Sarawak Tribune, 20.9.'91). Voters were warned against them.

According to Soguk (1993:374-76), political actors in government who engage in the 'hegemonic project' of imparting notion of modernity and progress in the 'Third World' attempt to provide the conditions for not only economic or material change but cultural ones as well. Consequently, great emphasis is placed on ensuring that citizens are politicised into identifying with the broad goals and aims of government. However, it is impossible for dominant discourse to reach all parts of all people, subjection is never total. The incompleteness of subjection may be threatening to those engaged in the 'hegemonic project' and who view such creativity as a form of obstacle to their modernising project (Soguk, 1993:374). Control and suppression is resorted to.

Accusations and Surveillance

Via practices of accusation and surveillance the space for opposition is preempted. Accusations and surveillance are made in a variety of contexts and take a variety of forms. There is insufficient room to outline the entire process here. The forms range from relatively weak innuendos, insinuations, rumours and smearing, to stronger forms of vilification and defamation.

Moreover, verbal accusations (of being anti-development, or anti-government) have nothing to do with breaching the law and are seldom made in court. In Sarawak 'anti-government' acts can range from advocating native rights, to opposing land claimed under native customary rights from being used for plantations or for speaking against logging at overseas fora. Thus, Harrison Ngau, a *Kayan* activist turned parliamentarian was 'anti-government' for expressing views about native rights (Borneo Bulletin, 17.2.'90), the political party Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak (PBDS) was 'anti-development' (and by implication anti-government) for opposing the creation of large scale plantations in instances where native resistance to such development was rife (Borneo Post, 22.6.'90), and native community organisers were 'traitors' for networking in Japan and Europe in their struggle to induce a pause to logging operations in Sarawak (Japan Times, 22.11.'90; Mainichi Daily News, 17.10'90; New Straits Time, 25.2.'92). Such 'traitors' may further be labelled 'communists' or "terrorists" (Sarawak Tribune, 16.6.'91).

Being charged in court is a rare occasion. When it occurs activism can be crushed via an extreme form of surveillance of the soul and domination of the body - a jail sentence, a criminal record and the implications that such sanctions have for a community organiser's subsequent life chance. Charged with criminal activity in the Sarawak court, Anderson Mutang Urud, a *Kelabit*, preferred to leave the country. He was 'guilty' of managing an 'unlawful' society - the Sarawak Indigenous People's Alliance (Borneo Post, 20.6.'92). Urud had been involved in many logging demonstrations, and one day, committed the ultimate 'anti-government' act of all - of drawing the attention of a Canadian parliamentarian to the plight of native peoples, when the latter visited Sarawak (Pancar Penemu, March 1992:3; Straits Times, 26.1.'92). Urud was sentenced but was freed on bail (Radio New Zealand, Asia Pacific News, 5.3.'92:6.50 a.m.). He fled the country soon after his release.

In the face of accusation and surveillance, other forms of resistance were resorted to. Precisely because 'sustainability' is a contested terrain, opportunities present themselves in various guises. At one level, the knowledge claims of scientific or sustained yield forestry if being problematised. This has been dealt with in a separate paper (Majid-Cooke, 1995). What may be more difficult to suppress is the emergence of counterdiscourse by way of appropriation by activists of the discourse of 'sustainability'. Such an appropriation has the effect of lifting 'sustainability' out of the realm of 'expert' knowledge to include other forms of knowledges, especially those grounded on the live experience of native peoples. The group that carries the greatest potential for the project of expanding the 'sustainability' discourse is the *Penan*.

Expanding 'Sustainability': Non-Government Organisations and the Penan

Concern among activists for the welfare of native peoples in Sarawak are rooted in the perceived social trauma and disturbance experienced by some of them as a result of the apparently tenuous nature of their prior claim to forests land under native

customary rights (NCR) arrangements, against the background of intensified timber harvesting. As logging proceeded into the hinterland forests of Sarawak, native access to forests was curtailed since the creation of permanent forest estates (PFE) with specific land use agendas for the different categories of forests often excluded or bracketed traditional forms of usage.

As logging progressed and native involvement in the market economy deepened¹⁵ and their exposure to other peoples and cultures more direct (for example, through workers at logging camps who came mostly from nearby towns or from neighbouring Indonesia), new sorts of anxieties developed. These had to do with doubts about the capacity of longhouse cultures generally, and *Penan* hunting and gathering groups particularly, to cope with changes at the level of meaning. As well, there were concerns whether such changes would fit into a coherent framework or contribute to various levels of schizophrenia (Hong, 1987; INSAN/Sarawak Study Group, 1989).

That the *Penan* have become the pivot around which claims and counter-claims are made, is useful for all parties involved in the conflict. For political actors in government the *Penan* issue is useful for drawing attention away from the widespread resistance exhibited by many other native groups in Sarawak. Also, the *Penan* issue could be used as a tool for diverting attention away from the involvement of political actors in the timber industry. After all, there has not been a public inquiry into timber politics along the lines of the Barnett Inquiry in Papua New Guinea. The Barnett Inquiry exposed the forging of direct links between political actors in government and the timber industry (Marshall, 1990).

Locally-based environmental groups such as the Sahabat Alam Malaysia (Friends of the Earth, Malaysia, or SAM) as well as the more broad-based Institute of Social Analysis (INSAN), and the internationally well-connected World Rainforest Movement (all three located in Pulau Pinang in Peninsular Malaysia) were united in their concern for the *Penan*. Their support, however, is accompanied by an awareness that the *Penan* were but one of many groups affected but the timber industry (Sarawak Study Group, 1989). SAM's offices at Marudi in Sarawak and at Pulau Pinang in Peninsular Malaysia as well as the World Rainforest Movement and the Asia and Pacific People's Environmental Network (APPEN- also located in Pulau Pinang), provide opportune vehicles for international dissemination of native issues through increasingly sophisticated and well distributed publications.

The *Penan* on the other hand, found in them responsive allies. Utting's (1993:153) observation about grassroots mobilisation in countries of Central America seems to hold for Sarawak. According to Utting (1993:153) groups affected by deforestation, encroachment and threatened loss of control over access to the means of subsistence, find it easier to articulate and publicise their grievances by allying themselves with urban-based ecology groups. urban-based groups tend to have greater access to the media, certain state agencies and policy elites and are deemed useful.

Not all Malaysian environmental activists link the two issues in as explicit a manner as SAM. Neither are they as closely involved with the native rights issues as SAM is. (These differences in NGO approaches and orientation in Malaysia have been analysed elsewhere — see for example, Tan and Singh, 1990; Woon and Lim 1990). Because of differing interests and concerns, constrained as well by the practicalities of having to spread limited resources over an extensive issue net, environmental activism in Malaysia is as fragmented as it is in other countries. However, the voice of native activism and environmentalism occasionally merge as in that of Harrison Ngau, an activist, a *Kayan*, formerly with Sahabat Alam Malaysia now turned parliamentarian, who said:

The natives of Sarawak and other countries are not only fighting for their property, their land and their forest. In fact, we are fighting for all humanity, for if the tropical forests are destroyed, life on earth will be irreparably damaged through the loss of human cultures, the loss of animal and plant species, through the greenhouse effect, the rise in carbon dioxide levels, the rise in temperatures, and the changes in atmosphere and world climate.

(Ngau, 1990:301)

The message in this voice is clear. Forest conservation is inseparable from livelihood preservation; ecological survival cannot be attained without due consideration of human survival.¹⁶

The popular journal the *Ecologist*, is one example of an avenue for international mobilisation. The *Ecologist's* concern for native issues, however, was part of a larger agenda of conserving tropical forests for purposes of biodiversity preservation. Nevertheless, for many years, the journal provided local environmentalists with an avenue for global exposure of local conditions (see for example, The *Ecologist* volumes 17 (4/5), 1987 and 20 (5) September/October, 1990). In these pages, issues of biodiversity reduction, timber production conservation of biological and cultural values are often linked. If, as Gismondi and Richardson (1991:64) pointed out, discourses of the environment were not about replacing a coherent or self sufficient world view with another, but rather the reworking, fighting over, shifting or abandoning of meanings, then the *Penan* issue has been useful for successfully reworking the meaning of sustainable forest management in Sarawak. For example, when discussing the issue of predatory logging and its implications for biodiversity destruction in the pages of the *Ecologist*, local environmentalists unfailingly brought to the fore the effects of timber harvesting on cultural diversity.

Complementing the advocacy work of NGOs are the work of researchers. Researchers from a range of disciplines including agronomy, geography and botany draw attention to the point that logging affects all *Dayak* groups, not only the *Penan* (Cramb, 1990; Chin, 1990; Lian, 1987). Their work serve two purposes. First, they provide a significant contrast to official portrayal of native communities as static entities, opposed to change, limited, ignorant or people in need of 'modernising' as

captured in the metaphor of *katak di-bawah tempurung* - a frog under a coconut shell (Lian, 1987). Second, they present a reversal of the image of native peoples as 'ecologically noble savages', a term which tends to laden them with the onus of being unilateral, natural conservationists. (see below).

Instead, they are presented as people actively involved in the cash economy at differing degrees of engagement, with a desire for a range of goods and services who may, when the opportunities are ripe, even exploit their forest environment (Chin, 1985; Lian, 1987). What is commonly stressed, however, is that forests are an integral part of *Dayak* subsistence. Apart from providing space that could be cleared for rice cultivation, forests are the source of other items of subsistence. These items include game, wild fruit and vegetables, forest products needed for daily use and for exchange (Chin, 1985; Lian 1987). The point is made that the resistance associated with logging among some native groups can be attributed to their anxiety over their loss of control over forests and forest products (Langub, 1990; Lian 1988).

In the late 1980s and early 1990s in the United States, the example of the *Penan* became an ammunition for a larger worldwide movement concerned about saving the tropical rainforests, not just in Sarawak but in the Amazon basin as well (Tan and Singh, 1990). However, in the midst of such support Malaysian NGOs, struggle on two fronts. At one level, they were struggling for the preservation of Sarawak's cultural and biological diversity. At another, they had to struggle for the continued recognition of inequality within and among countries, insisting that in critical situations the livelihood of humans would take precedence. In the context of differing material conditions in the development of environmentalism in the United States and Malaysia, this struggle meant expanding the agenda of forest conservation from concerns over 'wilderness' to include issues of uneven development, trade and aid (Tan and Singh, 1990:14). This trend is captured by Harrison Ngau:

...The roots of the problem of deforestation and waste of resources are located in the industrialised countries where most of our resources such as timber, oil and gas and fishery resources end up ... It is the throw away culture of the industrialised countries now advertised and forced onto Third World countries that is leading to the throw away of the world.

(Ngau, 1990:301-2)

In their struggle, however, international links prove crucial. International human rights and environmental organisations strengthened local causes. Harrison Ngau was able to express his views (cited above) at the awarding ceremony of the Goldman Environmental Prize in San Francisco where he was one among six prize winners for 1990. In 1990 as well, the secretary-general of the *Penan* Association of Sarawak was granted the Chico Mendes Award from the Sierra Club of the United States (Borneo Post, 27.10'90). The international human rights group Survival International, worked consistently in the international conservation fora, for expanding the concept of sustainability to include the issue of livelihood sustainability of forest peoples (Colchester, 1990:171).

According to Redford and Stearman (1993) international support is often double-edged. The advantage of such support is the strength that could be garnered from international networking, publicity and overall maintenance of the 'rights' issue in the global political agenda. In the process, however, there is a tendency to generalise tribal communities as 'natural conservationists' or 'ecologically noble savages'. For example, the Chico Mendes award granted by the Sierra Club to the secretary-general of the *Penan* Association was said to be in recognition of the 'extraordinary courage or leadership' shown at the grassroots level in the struggle to protect the environment (Borneo Post, 27.10.'90).

Similarly, concern about the *Penan* tends to generalise their vulnerability, presented as people who are unilaterally facing the brink of extinction. Their heterogeneity and complexity are under-represented. This kind of representation provides a contrast to ethnographic accounts of the *Penan* which, while not denying their vulnerability also acknowledge their capacity to negotiate change (see for example, Brosius, 1992; Langub 1992 and 1989).

According to Tsing (1993), the *Penan* story suggests the impoverishment of an urban imagination. This imagination looks to the *Dayak* peoples of Sarawak and especially the *Penan* to represent its adversary, its dying Other. In so doing, the Other is accorded deference but at the same time romanticised and fossilised. Undeniably, as hunter-gatherers, the *Penan*'s survival is more threatened by forest degradation than that of other *Dayak* groups. The painful effects of this change should not be ignored and has been dealt with in great detail by anthropologists (see for example, Langub, 1989, 1990; Brosius 1992).

However, the story of the *Penan* offers urban audiences something they can understand (Tsing, 1993:x). If the *Penan* were portrayed as less 'primitive', in fact 'modern' people left out by 'development', only shabbier and less educated than urban dwellers, then there is nothing to learn from them; international support would be lost as would be the case for establishing a *Penan* biosphere reserve (Tsing, 1991:x). By invoking the abyss between the primitive and the modern, the *Penan* provide a vehicle for the effort of lifting the 'sustainability' debate in forest management out of its narrow biological and economic tendencies. Embellishment of *Penan* rights is a detour into ideas of citizenship and social justice. The detour entails an embellishment of ethnicity or cultural identity/ies. Since in political theory, if not always in practice, an issue becomes a subject for legitimate state intervention only when it has been debated across a wide range of discourse publics (Fraser, 1989:166), 'sustainability' discourse is the terrain for contesting what may be 'political'. At the minimum, such a detour is a journey beyond the realm of 'experts' and 'expert' decisions into the realm of the political.

Conclusion

The article has pointed out the way in which the politics of forest resource use in Malaysia is located in a whole network of power relations that link local and federal

interests. Political and economic elites of both *Bumiputra* (especially Malay) and Chinese communities while espousing ethnic sentiments in order to retain electoral support of their respective communities and parties, effectively collaborate in the attempt to control and dominate the electorate and the timber industry by way of the *Ali Baba* arrangement. They collaborate to make decisions that affect *Bumiputras* and non-*Bumiputras* alike. In view of the importance attached to ethnicity in most analyses of Malaysian politics, the suggestion that ethnic considerations are in effect unimportant in the political economy of timber in Sarawak signals a need to change the way we ask questions about wealth, power and knowledge in that state.

That the timber industry does not enhance the welfare of the majority of native *Bumiputras* in Sarawak must be attracting federal government attention. The well publicised timber blockades could be useful in drawing federal government attention to native dissatisfaction. After all, among other complaints frequently expressed by native peoples against logging is their lack of participation in a profitable timber industry (Los Angeles Times, 18.3.'90:A9; ITTO, 1990:174-77). However, there are three possible reasons why Sarawak politics is not getting the scrutiny it deserves from the federal government.

Firstly, for as long as the party in government in Sarawak does not cause undue disturbance to politics at the Centre, for example, by threats to secede as was mounted by Sabah in the early 1990s, East Malaysian politics remains peripheral to political manoeuvrings in Kuala Lumpur. Sarawak political elites may realise that for as long as they espouse adherence to the national coalition line, they may in effect have free reign in the state.

Secondly, the plight of native peoples may be taken as an acceptable (short-term) cost to development. Precisely they are seen to be leading a 'primitive lifestyle' in Kuala Lumpur, the trauma they experience may, in a perverse sense, be considered a necessary dose of bitter medicine. This sentiment may be gleaned from the quote below:

If you look at their plight, you will understand what will happen to the Penan if they are kept in the forests ... to eat monkeys and maggots and caterpillars ... We believe that the Penan are humans like anyone else ... So what's wrong with us .. feeding them with the kind of culture that will make them like any of us.

(The Prime Minister of Malaysia quoted in the New Strait Times, 8.10.91)

The above statement suggests that native 'rights' are basically economic, namely the right to 'develop' and do not include civil or political rights, for example on deciding how to 'develop'. Deciding on the 'how' is presumably a government prerogative. This perspective of separating economic from political and civil rights and of communitarian over individualistic citizenship in Southeast Asia (Milner, 1996:224-252). Often though it is a view from the top or from the dominant political groups and is fiercely contested (Milner, 1996) by sentiments embedded in regionalism (for

example, of being Sarawakian) and ethnicity (of being *Iban* or *Orang Ulu* or *Bidayuh* and others). There are apparent contradictions within this perspective. One such contradiction may be gleaned in the way Malay *Bumiputras* in the Peninsula are excited by enhanced political interest in strengthening Malay identity (a point that is a sore issue with the new Islamic orthodoxy concerned with building an Islamic identity), but native *Bumiputras* are being encouraged to be 'more like us', in other worlds to negotiate or selectively downplay certain aspects of their identity/ies.

Thirdly, Sarawak elites are conscious of federal or Kuala Lumpur's need for support in encouraging the timber industry both in the Peninsula and in Sarawak to engage in more value added manufacturing (personal interviews: official, Sarawak Timber Industry Development Corporation, 12.11.'91; Minister of Environment and Tourism, Sarawak, 13.11.'91). To enable value added manufacturing to take place and in view of the anticipation in Peninsular Malaysia that her need for raw logs would come from Sarawak, political elites in government in Sarawak can afford to do very little about both excessive logging and the native land issues. Federal government, in turn, may have to turn a blind eye to the plight of native *Bumiputras* in that state. After all, given the complex network of linkages and relationships among political elites and logging interests, Malay *Bumiputras* are ultimately in control of decisions regarding timber wealth.

From the perspective of native peoples, the problem lies in how to present a moral argument (as *Bumiputras*) to redress the apparent differences in the citizenship rights of native and Malay *Bumiputras* in Sarawak. Urban-based environmental groups form responsive allies. Given the realities of domination and control through wealth, power and knowledge, these groups exercise the power to resist and negotiate domination. Through narratives of native resistance the discourse of 'sustainability' in Sarawak has been hijacked to embellish the issue of native rights.

Success associated with the expansion of the discursive context may be difficult to measure especially if the signs of success were to be sought in a sea change of policy. However, that the discourse has broadened, in itself may be a measure of success. That the discourse has broadened despite suppression and surveillance suggests that the state may not be monolithic. Nevertheless, given the web of linkages among elites and the power of control via the discourse of 'development' and practices of surveillance and suppression, it would be a mistake to fall back on the model of a pluralist state.

Notes

1. The term *Bumiputra*-sons of the soil or indigines - when used in Peninsular Malaysia is normally addressed to Malays and carries with it some amount of economic privilege via affirmative action (the *Bumiputra* policy). The position of the *Orang Asli* (aborigines) in the Peninsula is an ambiguous one. Constitutionally, the *Orang Asli* category is defined separately from the Malay but politically (for purposes of administration and economic planning) the category is often included with *Bumiputra*. In view of extensive clearing of forest land in the Peninsula and land resettlement schemes and encroachment via other economic activities including logging, *Orang Asli* access rights to forest land (except in those few reserves constituted as *Orang Asli* land) is tenuous.

2. In Malaysia, an awareness of state power is clearly seen in analyses about the increasingly 'authoritarian' state and of the will to power of social agents, especially some factions within the dominant wing of the Barisan Nasional coalition, the United Malay National Organisation (UMNO). These social agents are depicted as sharing, at a certain moment, a common vision concerning the project of intervention so that their power is seen in their ability to rework existing discourse about certain symbolic elements. These include the reworking of the *Bumiputra* identity, the Sultanate and notions of democracy, justice and the Court system, all of which are amended and rearranged to generate a narrower conception of 'national identity' political participation, governmentality and economic and political leadership (Khoo, 1992; Case, 1991; Fatimah Halim, 1990; Tan 1990; Jomo, 1990; Saravanamuttu, 1987; Barraclough, 1984).
3. For example, sustainable forest management in its techno-bureaucratic form takes into account the economic viability of forest resources use and the long term biological needs of the forest. In its classic form (sustained yield) forest management emphasises sustained timber supply at optimal biological and economic conditions. On the other hand, ecological constructs emphasise biodiversity maintenance and the sustainability of whole ecosystems. For the timber industry, 'sustainability' may be confined to even narrower parameters, namely, the maintenance of profits levels. 'Sustainability' for native peoples, however, often mean holding on to (in the face of pressure to destroy) their means or subsistence (Redford and Stearns, 1993).
4. In 1987 Section 90B of the Sarawak Forest Ordinance was introduced. This Ordinance which entitles the state to use police powers against civilians who blockade logging roads, has not proved an effective deterrent against resistance, and the arrest of many people has continued (World Rainforest Movement/Sahabat Alam Malaysia, 1989; Pancar Penemu, various issues 1991-92). In 1993, surveillance and control mechanisms were strengthened by a further amendment to the Sarawak Forest Ordinance. This amendment presumes guilty anyone found or arrested in the area where barricades have been set up, even if he/she does not actively participate in them or engage in putting barricades up (Sahabat Alam Malaysia, Sarawak Update, 10.1.'94:3).
5. This is a trend emerging out of 'Third World' analyses of domination and resistance. This tradition shares the Western hypothesis of modern forms of power as centring less in the forces of production than around the control of knowledges and information (Said, 1978; Escobar, 1985). There is, however, one difference. Postmodernists in the West, while welcoming the diversity of social conflicts and struggles would eschew attempts to impose alternative models of society (Papadikis, 1989:236-37). In many class based societies of the 'Third World' where challenges of modernity (especially of economic and cultural dependency) remain (Pennycook, 1990:53), scholars maintain that the struggle against forms of exploitation (via class) and domination take precedence (Escobar, 1985).
6. The specific Section in the Malaysian Constitution listing autonomy of the two States over forest and timber exports is Section 8(b) of the 9th Schedule and its amendment. See Malaysia, Report of the Intergovernmental Committee, 1962.
7. The official reason for such a move was to protect Sabah's forests from excessive logging but it was interpreted by the Sabah government at the time as punishing the state because its ruling party Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) pulled out of the national Barisan Nasional coalition in October 1990. PBS further aggravated Kuala Lumpur by teaming up with the opposition Semangat '46 headed by Tengku Razaleigh, the Prime Minister's political rival during the 1990 federal elections.
8. A qualifier is needed here. The International Tropical Timber Organisation (ITTO) conducted an enquiry into Sarawak's forestry (ITTO, 1990). The initiative to invite ITTO originated in Kuala Lumpur (personal interview, official, Ministry of Primary Industries, Kuala Lumpur, 20.1.'92) and may be seen as an indirect request to Sarawak government to enforce restraint. Sarawak government's willingness to cooperate with the federal government to invite ITTO, however, did not mean allowing it to control the agenda or the terms of references for the study mission. On its part, federal government was careful not to push Sarawak too far on the native rights issue (personal interview, official, Ministry of Primary Industries, Kuala Lumpur, 20.1.'92). The terms of reference eventually agreed upon for the ITTO mission were confined to assessing the capacity of the forest to uphold a continuing and

economically viable forestry and forest industry (ITTO, 1990:9-10). The native rights issue was deliberated upon (ITTO, 1990:8-9) but did not merit inclusion in the terms of reference. Predictably, the findings and recommendations were limited to issue of optimum management systems and harvesting levels.

9. *Dayak* is a term used to describe the various native groups in Sarawak variously composed of the *Iban*, *Bidayuh* and the *Orang Ulu*. The term, however, is externally introduced and of relatively recent development. Formerly - at least at the time of its initial formation - the Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak (PBDS) was thought of by the *Orang Ulu* as a mainly *Dayak party* (Lian, 1987:2). *Dayakism* is now a significant mobilising force, uniting the different groups, seen as a threat by state elites, although temporarily unable to acquire state power following losses experienced by the PBDS in the 1991 state elections (Far Eastern Economic Review, 10.10.'91:19).
10. My own research at Long Loyang in the Tinjar confirmed most of Lian's findings. Employment at timber camps was considered an important source of income and employment for the very young (personal interviews, head of households, Long Loyang, Tinjar, October 1991). Those observations together contrast government predictions that the timber industry would, in the long run, provide an alternative to shifting cultivation and ultimately, alleviate forest 'destruction'. Labour flow is not linear, that is moving, from agriculture to timber. In fact, there may be a two-way flow (Lian, 1987:196). Because of the insecure nature of employment in the industry, farmers were not prepared to abandon swiddening for good. What appeared to be happening was the apportioning of labour into swiddening and the timber industry simultaneously (going home or absenteeism at harvest was a well-known practice among native timber camp employees). Such an arrangement was feasible through the expanded use of labour-saving innovations such as fertilisers, weedicides and herbicides, and the use of modern tools like the chain saw. Another way to apportioning labour was to shorten the fallow period on swidden land bear the longhouse and in the revival of interest in planting wet rice, the *sawah*. In this sense, the timber industry has strengthened the agricultural sector rather than diminished its value (Lian, 1987). Precisely because the timber industry was not perceived as providing a reliable alternative to swiddening, some farmers engaged in full time logging activity only if and when households and subsistence security, usually after one or two good rice harvests (Lian, 1987:196).
11. For an analysis of sustained yield forestry's philosophical and political underpinnings see Majid-Cooke (1996).
12. A qualification should be made here. A study of contracting companies operating in the mid-1980s in the Belaga district indicated that one company, Raplex, had *Bumiputra* politicians as directors and shareholders. In addition, a former *Bumiputra* senior civil servant was a shareholder in a second contracting company (Sarawak Study Group, cited in INSAN, 1989:6-7). This suggests that although *Bumiputras* were mainly interested in the easy rewards from trading licenses, a few were extending their interest include contracting work. In his study area in the Tinjar, Lian noted that the biggest licence was given to a native (Kenyah) contractor (Lian, 1987:173). The Chief Minister's family involvement at different levels of the timber industry is also now evident. Archipelago Shipping is said to be one of the family's business interests. Indeed, listed as directors of Archipelago Shipping were siblings of the Chief Minister (Records of the Registrar of Companies, Malaysia, Kuching, 1991). The shipping company handles shipping arrangements for all ships that were loading timber from Sarawak ports, for a fee. Brothers of the Chief Ministers were also alleged co-owners of Sanyan Sendirian Berhad, a marketing arm of Sanyan Lumber. Sanyan Lumber was involved in a controversy with villagers in the outskirts of Lundu, at the foothills of the Gunung Gading National Park over logging rights (Wall Street Journal, 5.8.'90). Taking into account these exceptions, contracting for timber harvesting overall, remains a Chinese business domain.
13. The Federal Governments Industrial Master Plan promotes value added manufacturing in the timber industry by providing a range of incentives from fiscal to infrastructural (especially created industrial zones served by good transport, communication and other necessary facilities) (Malaysia, Industrial Master Plan, 1986-95, Vol. 2, part 4). One such industrial zone in Sarawak is the Kemena Industrial Estate which officials claim have attracted interstate and overseas capital (Perkasa, March 1993:14-

- 17). As at the end of January 1993, a total eleven mills were operating at Kemena, among which the biggest three investments were a joint venture between KTS (Sarawak), Marubeni (a Japanese sogo shasha) and Daiken (Japan); a conglomerate of groups from Singapore, Taiwan and Indonesia and, lastly, a joint venture between local investors and Japan (Perkasa, March 1993:14-17). Most investments are directed at primary processing (sawn timber and plywood), not the high level value added manufacturing (such as furniture and mouldings) that the Federal Government had hoped for.
14. Rimbunan Hijau has timber interests in many other countries in Southeast Asian Indo-China, South America and the South Pacific including Papua New Guinea. There, a similar business practice has emerged. Alliances are forged with PNG politicians and Rimbunan Hijau owns a local English language daily newspaper (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Radio National News, 25.6.'93:4.30 p.m.)
15. Living at the subsistence level does not exclude engagement in the cash economy, throughout history native peoples of Sarawak have actively engaged in trade in forest products or cash crops, especially rubber (Lian, 1987). Degrees of involvement in the cash economy, however, varies across groups and historical periods.
16. Observes of the politics of sustainable forestry in other countries such as Thailand and India point to similar trends; that is, forestry concerns are inextricably linked with issues of community survival, of access and equity and the rights of citizenship (Hirsch, 1993; Guha, 1991; Shiva, 1987). It does not imply a necessary anthropocentric bias in such politics but rather a recognition that taking into account the effects of human intervention to meet the needs of subsistence is a legitimate part and parcel of sustainable forest management, not an obstruction to it.

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