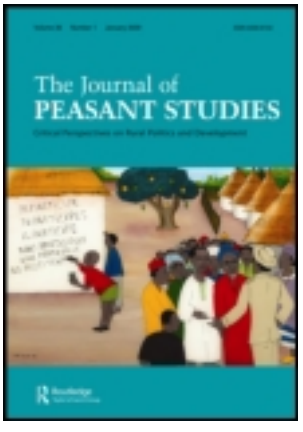

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Making spaces, making subjects: land, enclosure and Islam in colonial Malaya

Amrita Malhi

Land control struggles were central to multiple projects of enclosure in colonial Malaya. Indeed, enclosures created Malaya, a discrete geo-body constructed by bounding the Malay polities of the Malay Peninsula. It also underpinned technocratic regimes for managing land, forest and property, including in Terengganu, the last peninsular state to be colonised. Enclosure, however, was directed not only at territorialising landscapes; it was also a biopolitical project for bounding subjects and subjectivities, producing both Malayans and racially-constructed Malay peasants. One response by Terengganu cultivators, a holy war, was grounded in an audacious globalism, through which they rejected the enclosures which bound them in ever-tightening webs of discipline and control.

Keywords: Malaya; Islam; Terengganu; enclosure; land; forest; territory; subjectivity; colonialism

Introduction

Colonial struggles for land control were essential means for making Malaya and Malayans. They were also central to constructing one of the most durable political categories in the history of the resulting geo-body: the Malay Muslim 'peasantry'. From the 1780s onwards, contests for power over land and territory played out constantly over the Malay Peninsula (Figure 1 below), serving as key confrontations through which colonial state-making was conducted (Sivaramakrishnan 1999). British control over peninsular land was attained through multiple and multi-scalar enclosures, both concentric and overlapping, which thoroughly reconstructed the peninsular landscape. Over a century and a half, enclosure transformed the peninsula's Malay polities into bounded territorial units (Thongchai 1994), most of which lay within a single Malayan territorial self.[1] Enclosure was also essential to 'internal territorialisation' within those states and the geo-body as a whole (Peluso and Vandergeest 2001). Its various processes and technologies brought the peninsula's rich, forested hinterlands under technocratic government, and constructed new 'institutional' fences between zones of nature, or reserved forest; and

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[1]I thank Craig Reynolds for this turn of phrase.

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Figure 1. Terengganu's location on the Malay Peninsula in 1909.

zones of culture, or agricultural and settlement land (Agrawal and Sivaramakrishnan 2000, Peluso and Lund 2011). Further, enclosure also continued to work within newly-discrete spaces of cultivation. Here, it was essential to creating a regime of property, communicated by boundaries of right and exclusion (Blomley 2003), which replaced customary modes of regulation and established the colonial state as the sole and centralised arbiter over land and its distribution.

If Malaya's enclosures demonstrated the processual nature of landscapes, they were also evidence of the various processes in which subjects and subjectivities were enmeshed (Mansfield 2000).[2] Selected to remap peninsular space as a terrain of colonial power, enclosure's technologies were also inherently technologies of subjectivation (Vasudevan *et al*. 2008). Treaties negotiated to create borders also

[2]I thank Megan Vaughan for encouraging me to reflect on this point.

assigned Malay Muslims to their status as British or Siamese subjects; and land regimes built around systems of restrictions and incentives also allocated hinterland peoples to larger subject categories then under construction. Identifying as 'Malay', for instance, was associated with belonging in a regime of smallholder property located in spaces of culture, on which stable agriculture was practiced.[3] Land control struggles were therefore not only essential to creating new spatial disciplines; they were also biopolitical, restructuring the complex of relationships between the hinterland's Malay cultivators on the one hand, and on the other, the land, plants and animals they tended to sustain and reproduce life (Scott 2009).[4] Enclosure, therefore, not only contributed to creating Malayans in general, it was also a strategy for selecting certain hinterland groups for didactic peasantisation: in short, it shaped the creation of Malay peasant subjects.[5]

Reconstructing Terengganu

One such land struggle played out over the first two decades of the twentieth century in Terengganu, the last peninsular state to be bounded and colonised (Figure 2 below). Located in the interstices of power between Siam and Britain, Terengganu was gradually encircled by British territory until it was left isolated and marked for intervention in its own right. Terengganu was formally colonised in 1919, and its hinterland immediately became a new site for enclosures organised under rubrics of land reform, forest conservation and property rights. Here, the colonial state sought to create discrete categories of land: government forest, under the state's active management and free from cultivation activity; and agricultural land, divided into bounded plots which were privately owned and worked by smallholders.

This project was not simply a territorial enclosure, but also involved efforts to discipline upriver shifting cultivators into new kinds of subjects. Self-identified as 'Malay', the first such community in the state's sights resided in settlements along the Terengganu River and its tributaries (Figure 3 below). Its members grew rice and rubber on swiddens along these forested river valleys. These cultivators' mobile practices disrupted both the neat spatial categories being created by Terengganu's new land regime, and the subject categories constructed around colonial ideas of race, nature and livelihood. To limit this disruption, colonial officials drew on a repertoire of well-rehearsed practices of land control to exclude these cultivators from the forests they now claimed for the state.

Officials also worked to align shifting cultivators' practices with those of settled Malay agriculturalists located closer to the coast. Colonial offices governing land and forest access were established, as was a system of restrictions, permits, fines and prison sentences, all designed to severely penalise shifting. In parallel with these restrictions, smallholder property title was established, and a team of surveyors was deployed to demarcate titled agricultural plots away from designated forest areas. These parallel measures were implemented simultaneously, as one cleared cultivators

[3]Malays who lived in the forested hinterland were actively differentiated from other groups actively coded as forest-dwellers and pejoratively referred to as 'Sakai'. For more discussion on this strategy of ethnic differentiation, refer to Manickam (2009).

[4]For a discussion of colonial biopower and the biopolitical in the urban environment of Delhi, refer to Legg (2007).

[5]For a more general discussion of the multiple political processes by which the Malay peasantry was constructed, refer to Kahn (2006).

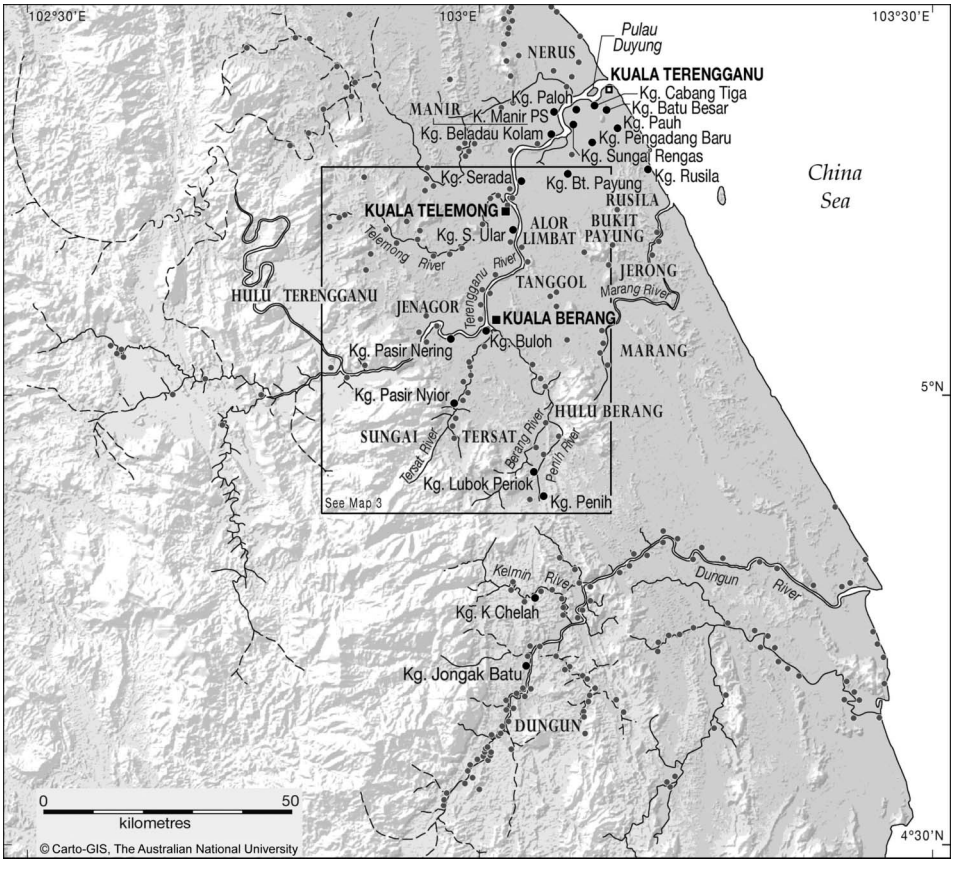

Figure 2. Terengganu and the Terengganu river system.

from the forest, while the other affixed them, by name and documentary title, to stable, cultivated plots of land. Colonial techniques therefore not only constituted a strategy for spatial regulation, they also aggregated Terengganu's Malay shifting cultivators with a broader Malay peasantry in the making (Malhi 2010).

Yet these techniques, rolled out over the hinterland through the 1920s, were enacted over a landscape already mapped within power struggles, notions of moral resource use and wider imaginaries of political space. Indeed, they were vigorously contested, first by the royal family, and later by a coalition of the colonised which rejected the bounded spaces – and the models of subjectivity – that enclosure was producing. As it developed, the discourse of resistance became increasingly and explicitly Islam-oriented, and it was most strongly articulated by a group of pious Muslim shifting cultivators, all close disciples of an esteemed Islamic scholar, Haji Drahman. Thousands of other cultivators strategically acquiesced to this discourse, and accepted members of the Haji's circle as their political brokers. Informed by Islamic notions of land use and resource entitlement, their practices of rejection and defiance quickly escalated in their frequency and violence. Cultivators, en masse, began to violently harass the personnel of enclosure: a government staff of forest guards, police officers, magistrates and district officers. The movement ultimately culminated in an armed uprising which 'exceed[ed] [the normal] rules of politics'

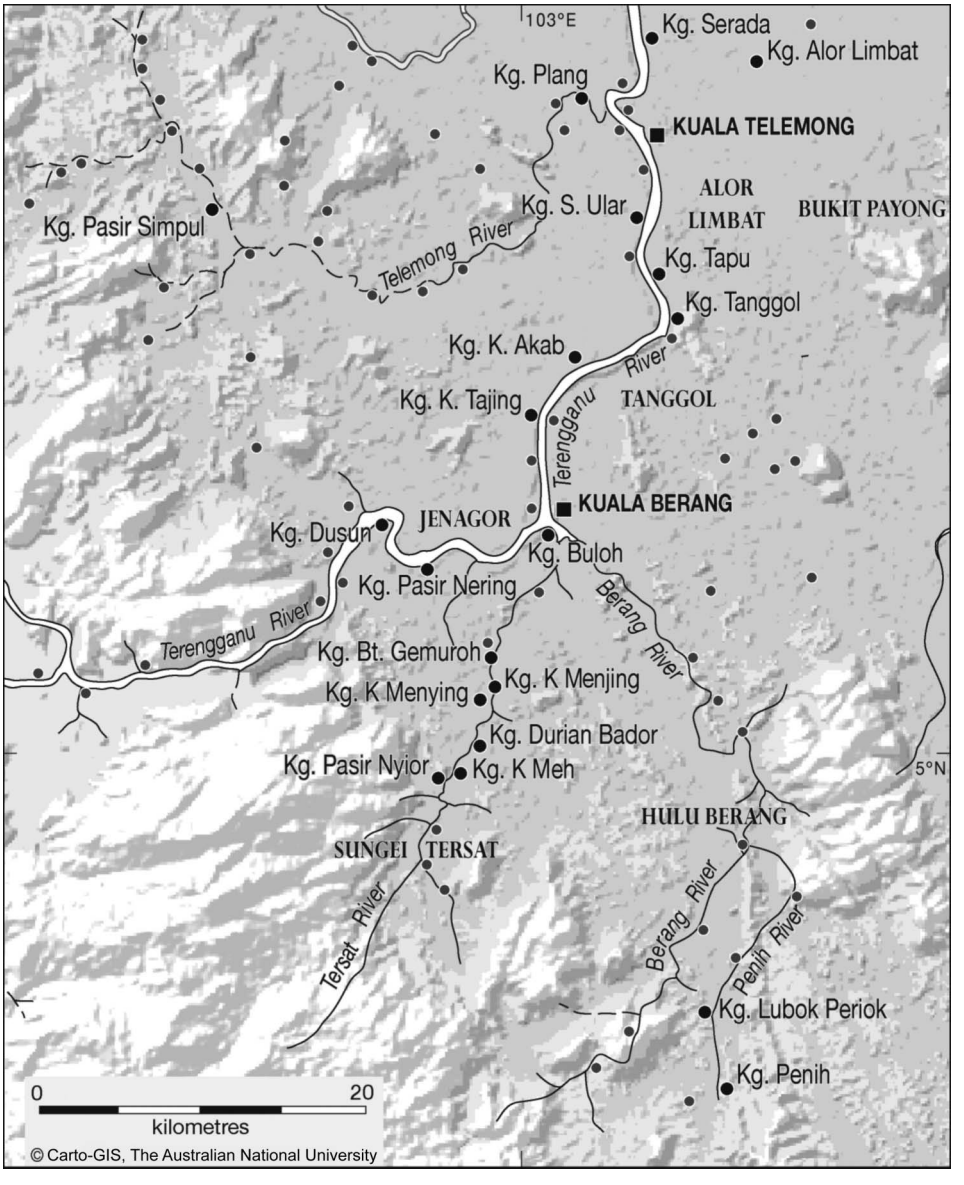

Figure 3. The Terengganu River's tributaries and settlements.

(Samaddar 2010): in May 1928, rebel cultivators launched an armed holy war (*perang sabil*) against the colonial state.[6]

In their idiom of rebellion rebels fashioned a subaltern politics (Guha 1983) through which they also refashioned themselves as subjects, invoking an expansive notion of political space and subjectivity that could not feasibly be enclosed. Their

[6]*Perang sabil* is a Malay colloquialism for *sabilillah*, or more fully, *jihad fi sabilillah* – an Arabic term for struggle 'in the way of God'. Its meaning approximates 'Holy War', or armed *jihad*. For more details, see Bosworth and Behrens-Abuseif (2008).

terrain of struggle was the entire Muslim world, and they spoke – entirely self-consciously – in the name of the *umat*, the global Muslim community which they posited as sovereign in that world. In doing so, they directed their action squarely against those they excluded from the *umat*: Terengganu's *kafir*, or unbelieving, colonisers. In advancing globalism against enclosure, the uprising constituted 'an experimental expansion of the possibilities of subjectivity in open defiance of the modes that [were] being laid down' (Mansfield 2000) around them by colonial power.[7]

For all its audacity, however, the uprising was violently put down by colonial officials and police, in a violent and decisive enactment of the boundaries of space and property (Blomley 2003) newly created in Terengganu. In this act of suppression, the colonial state succeeded in subjecting the last remaining section of peninsular territory to legal-technocratic rule. Through such colonial processes of subjection and subjectivation, officials founded a regime of nature, culture, property and peasantry that has been central to political space and subjectivity in Malaya and Malaysia since.

The battle of the survey pegs

In August 1914, E.A. Dickson, the British agent in Terengganu, applied to the sultan to reserve a parcel of land for a new British Agency. He had chosen a location which he described as an 'ideal site': slightly elevated, yet close to a new road and the Terengganu River. Located in Kampung Paloh, on the outskirts of the coastal capital, Kuala Terengganu, it also commanded a view of the nearby Losong Hills while providing easy access to the royal court.[8] Building an office and residence on such prime real estate would be a deeply symbolic act: it would create an enduring monument to Terengganu's deepening relationship with the British Empire. Indeed, it would emplace Britain's presence on the Terengganu landscape, and locate it directly at the centre of its map of power.

Yet precisely because of this symbolism and its associated public optics, Dickson did not receive a reply to his application. After waiting for two months, he wrote to the sultan, Zainal Abidin III (r.1881–1918), about the progress of his case, and pointed out his proposed boundaries for the land he desired. This time, his letter generated a semblance of action: within a few days the sultan had ordered the site's demarcation. Yet, as Dickson gradually began to realise, Terengganu's ruler did not intend to grant him the land, but to stall the application for long enough that it could be sabotaged by his loyalists. When, after five months, there had still been no result, Dickson wrote to the sultan again, only to receive the reply that he could not be granted the site. This was because the land was already claimed by Terengganu's Shaykhul Islam, the senior religious adviser in the sultan's court: a powerful courtly figure and a scion of a learned Hadhrami Arab genealogy. Formally named Sayid Abdul Rahman bin Muhammad al-Idrus (1817–1917), he was known colloquially as Tokku Paloh. He held this name because Kampung Paloh, where the Resident had applied for land, was both his home and the seat of his influence. Dickson was

[7]For a discussion of contemporary 'Islamist' political violence as a means for activating a global political community, refer to Devji (2008).
[8]E.A. Dickson, Report of the British Agent, Terengganu, August 1914, 8 September 1914: 1-2, CO273/412: 41389: 'Affairs of Trengganu'.

informed that Tokku Paloh had already had the land fenced off in advance of planting a tapioca crop.[9]

In March 1915, the matter was still not resolved, and had developed into an escalating symbolic feud in which both sides either deployed or sabotaged the technologies of enclosure. In retaliation for Tokku Paloh's fence, Dickson employed a surveyor to mark out the boundaries of his claim for him. Yet when he visited the site again, this time accompanied by the surveyor, he found that all of the survey pickets had been pulled out. Faced with this discovery, the surveyor admitted to him that he had encountered 'considerable opposition while making his survey of the site'.[10] This series of incidents demonstrated that gradually, through move after counter-move by agent and shaykh, the dispute over the Agency had developed into an ongoing, if undeclared, struggle for land control. Later, other unknown parties may have also joined the contest, claiming the space around the existing Agency in Kuala Terengganu. In May 1916, Dickson's successor, J.L. Humphreys, reported that the 'ten sandy acres' outside had been fenced off for coconut plantations, preventing him from entertaining official guests.[11]

Successive British agents' monthly reports told of their frustration with land-allocation decisions in Terengganu. They also obliquely revealed the efforts made by the royal entourage to demonstrate to Britain that they, and not the empire's agent, determined how land would be distributed in the state. The two competing sides conducted their battle using claims, counter-claims, crops, fences and survey-pickets. Yet the sultan would not cede control and the agents could not force him to, given their limited powers, notionally similar to those of consular officers. Yet at the same time, the very presence of British agents suggested that Terengganu's colonisation was looming.

Peninsular discipline

The agents' presence resulted from Terengganu's location within a complicated contest between Britain and Siam to dominate the Malay Peninsula. The state's royal house had witnessed this struggle waged around it for more than a century beforehand. This large-scale Anglo-Siamese competition was itself a struggle for land control, albeit waged on a far grander scale than the micro-battle which consumed the British agents and the Shaykhul Islam. This struggle resulted in the imposition of a form of territorial discipline on a peninsular landscape shaped by practices of territoriality which both large powers now found untenable. In particular, Siam and Britain both targeted tributary relationships pursued by smaller polities seeking larger regional powers as their protectors. As a result, Siam's southern Malay tributaries – the largest of which were Patani, Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu – became the primary sites on which competition for territory was played out.

Terengganu had been a Siamese tributary since its very foundation as an independent sultanate in the eighteenth century. Its relationship with Siam was

[9]E.A. Dickson, Report of the British Agent, Terengganu, January 1915, 9 March 1915: 1, CO273/425:16985: 'Affairs of Trengganu'.
[10]E.A. Dickson, Report of the British Agent, Terengganu, February 1915, 9 March 1915: 1, CO273/425:19310: 'Affairs of Trengganu'.
[11]J.L. Humphreys, Journal of the British Agent, Terengganu, May 1916, 31 May 1916: 7, CO273/445:32544: 'Affairs of Trengganu'.

founded on the *mandala* politics of alliance and protection which dominated the region in the pre-colonial period (Wolters 1999). Yet Britain found these politics too ambiguous to accommodate its strategic needs on the Peninsula, and, spurred on by Britain's presence, Siam too moved to incorporate its tributaries to maintain its peninsular position. Indeed, Siam had already demonstrated that it considered its tributaries available for annexation, namely when it absorbed Patani and ejected its sultan in 1785 (Vella 1957, Bradley 2009). To counterbalance Siam, other tributaries further south quickly began to seek relationships with Britain and its surrogates, and in 1786, Kedah leased Penang Island to the East India Company (EIC), firmly emplacing British interests in Siam's peninsular sphere. Almost immediately after creating its trading outpost on Penang, the EIC began a complex campaign to clarify the tributary relationships in which it was now enmeshed.

The EIC began its campaign by expanding its territorial footprint in Kedah, leasing a strip of its mainland territory facing Penang, which Britain called Province Wellesley, in 1800. Britain also worked to consolidate its southern position, and in 1819, the EIC secured a lease over Singapore. It consolidated its peninsular access in 1824, when a treaty between Britain and the Netherlands delineated these powers' respective spheres of influence in the region (Tagliacozzo 2005). Yet the EIC and the British government continued to find Siam's influence over the northern peninsula too great to tolerate. Britain now began its efforts to limit Siam's reach, which it pursued by means of a series of treaties, its primary civil technology for establishing a firm territorial and jurisdictional separation between its peninsular interests and those of Siam.

To this end, three Anglo-Siamese treaties were negotiated and signed between 1826 and 1899, all of which advanced a logic of geopolitical bounding. Each treaty was drafted in a didactic style, introducing this logic in stages, and framing Britain as the tutor and Siam as the recalcitrant student. In this vein, the 1826 Burney treaty established the idea that Britain and Siam each possessed interests which resided in separate territories, and that neither party was permitted to 'go and molest, attack, disturb, or take any place, territory or boundary' belonging to the other (Maxwell and Gibson 1924). In a manner redolent of the British agent and his surveyor nearly a century later, the Burney treaty introduced to Siam's southern tributaries the measures which Thongchai (1994) has argued are central to territorialisation: 'classification by area', 'communication by boundary', and 'an attempt at enforcing'.

Yet the Burney treaty did not define specific boundaries between Britain and Siam; establishing the idea that individual powers belonged in separate territorial spheres appears to have sufficed. Later, the Knox treaty of 1869 established the practice of demarcation, finally defining in detail the limits of each power's territorial claim over Kedah by delineating the area occupied by Province Wellesley. The rest of Kedah was deemed under Siamese influence. In 1889 in turn, an Anglo-Siamese treaty locked Pahang and Perak, immediately south of the Siamese tributary states, behind the British frontier. Now only Terengganu, and its northern neighbour Kelantan, lay outside the formal territorial control of either Siam or Britain. Terengganu's southern limits were also delineated by the treaty, and the Kemaman and Cendar rivers were used as boundary markers (Maxwell and Gibson 1924).

This gradual proliferation of treaties enabled a process of peninsular enclosure, an exercise in creating 'logics of inclusion and exclusion' (Vasudevan *et al.* 2008) which helped to realise the Siamese and Malayan geo-bodies. At the turn of the

twentieth century, however, Terengganu and Kelantan remained anomalies to these logics, remaining outside the new territorial order. Indeed, their position made them available as havens for rebels and refugees from Siamese Patani and British Pahang. Their capacity to shelter those who fled resulted precisely from their location – beyond the reach of complexes of law and property which were reconstructing territories behind the British and Siamese frontiers. In 1895, for example, both states became shelters for rebels from Pahang who had launched a guerrilla war against colonial officials pursuing land and taxation changes. British forces who pursued them were led by the Pahang Resident, Hugh Clifford, whose report stated that thousands of other Pahang Malays had also already moved to Kelantan, away from British authority and its new-found reach into the Pahang hinterland (Clifford 1992). Clifford later declared Kelantan and Terengganu the 'benighted lands' (Clifford 1927), located outside British systems of technocratic government over allocating land, managing population productivity, and calculating and collecting revenue (Scott 2009).

Clifford's journey through these states was not only a pursuit of fugitives; it was also an assessment of the risk the benighted lands posed to British Malaya and their value as targets for colonisation (Clifford 1992). The two states quickly became the subject of negotiations between Britain and Siam, yielding a 1902 treaty which simply appropriated their sovereign powers and abolished complicated tributary relationships altogether. To this end, it declared that the states were no longer Siamese tributaries but dependent territories under Siam's control. Logically, the way was now clear for a Siam–Malaya border, which was established in 1909 in a new treaty and boundary protocol. At this stage, Kelantan, Terengganu and Kedah were transferred to the British sphere, Malaya, leaving Patani in Siam. With the border now established, the tributary states had finally been disciplined and allocated within two discrete, contiguous and adjacent spheres of influence.

Emplacing British power

Vasudevan *et al.* (2008, 1642) have argued that processes of enclosure operate 'through a variety of spatial territories and networks', and 'across scales, sites and practices'. Indeed, the enclosure produced through the 1909 border operated not only at the large scale of the geo-body, but also at a number of finer-grained scales. In particular, now that British and Siamese spheres had been consolidated, landscapes on either side were framed as targets for multiple enclosures of their own.

One such enclosure operated at the level of the individual body, and of the individual self. It was carried out by means of classification by citizenship – one further aspect of the geo-body in addition to those set out by Thongchai, and aimed at affixing a specific and quantifiable population to its surface. The 1909 treaty required individuals to make their choices as to which side of the border they would live on. The treaty was thereby also a technology for governing the peninsular population by limiting human mobility to within the borders of the geo-body. Once assigned as Siamese or British subjects, the population on either side of the border would become available for projects of cultural transformation operating there.

Both Siam and Britain aimed to bring their borderland subjects under unified systems of administration. This incorporation was rationalised as an effort to 'modernise' the portion of the Malay Muslim population each power had situated

on its respective side of the border. Siam's measures framed this population as 'foreign and backward compared to Bangkok' (Loos 2006), while Britain's measures on its own side were also rationalised in similar ways: as bringing modern systems to backward people. In addition, the modernisation efforts of each respective side were identified with particular sets of cultural characteristics. Siamese Malay subjects, for example, were believed to be able to identify as Thai 'through education, economic security and government employment' (Loos 2006, 81). For their part, British Malay subjects were cast as economically and politically naïve, requiring targeted policies of protection and uplift.

The Anglo-Siamese project of enclosing the Malay Peninsula, therefore, was not only a matter of acquiring territory, but of shaping the peninsular population as subjects of Britain or Siam. Location and citizenship exposed individuals to specific and targeted projects of colonial subjectivation, shaped by the particular 'relationships of power and subordination' (Mansfield 2000, 52) into which they could now be drawn. From 1909, Terengganu's land and population remained the only portion of the peninsula that remained nominally outside these relationships.

A further enclosure operated at the level of the individual state: Terengganu. This was made possible by Kelantan immediately capitulating to direct British colonial rule in 1909, leaving Terengganu isolated and subject to increasingly precise delimitation from outside its realm. British officials began to map its boundary with Kelantan, from the Kelantan side, in 1914 and 1915; just as they had mapped its boundary with Pahang after the 1899 treaty. Terengganu was now a small geo-body in itself – 'a certain portion of the earth's surface which is objectively identifiable' (Thongchai 1994, 17). Yet it was also defined negatively: it was a state Britain did *not* control; the last missing piece of the Malayan territorial jigsaw.

Now, even while it remained external to Malaya, Terengganu was entirely enclosed and isolated within an expanded British sphere of influence: its east side was bounded by the South China Sea, and it was surrounded in every other direction by British territory in Kelantan and Pahang. Further, neither Siam nor Britain had consulted Sultan Zainal Abidin III about the 1909 treaty, under which Britain had been assigned 'suzerainty' over Terengganu, signalling the looming end of the state's relegated sovereignty. Terengganu found itself in the complicated position of remaining both outside British control and singly marked as a target for British intervention.

Terengganu's land and population were now specifically framed for enclosure at a smaller scale. Indeed, even before formal colonisation, British pressure on the sultan over these matters was already building in intensity. Britain had been making its interest in Terengganu's land resources explicit to its ruler since 1899, at which time they began to take exception to his grants of land to private German, Danish and Japanese interests. For this reason, the 1902 treaty was partly directed against Sultan Zainal Abidin III's freedom to independently allot land to private parties. Before making a grant, the treaty required him to first gain the consent of Siam, the power now granted sole control over Terengganu's territory (Maxwell and Gibson 1924).

Vasudevan *et al.* (2008, 1643) have urged further consideration of the 'differential consequences of enclosure for different social groups', and the 'means through which ... consent is produced ... or resistance configured'. At the turn of the twentieth century, these consequences and means were directly felt by Terengganu's ruling family and its entourage. The royal clique responded to British pressure with

a pre-emptive strike against their potential dispossession, aimed at defending royal prerogatives over land. Blocked from granting concessions to foreign interests, the sultan issued grants in perpetuity to his family and its entourage – all of whom were subjects of Terengganu – as permitted by the treaty. In this fashion, by 1910, he had issued more than twenty large concessions, all of which alienated large sections of Terengganu's forested hinterland, before Britain could assert its own control. Concessions were not bounded in area and could simply cover entire river valleys; rivers and their tributaries forming the structure by which knowledge about the state's interior was organised (Shaharil 1984).

The sultan's gambit to secure land for his circle was itself an exercise in territorialisation, as well as a move to disrupt Britain's ambitions inside Terengganu. In retaliation, Britain launched more aggressive efforts to emplace its new status as Terengganu's suzerain upon its delimited geo-body. After signing the 1909 treaty with Siam, British officials pressed for a British agent in Kuala Terengganu, and in 1910, Sultan Zainal Abidin III finally accepted one when he signed his own treaty with Britain. Granted, the presence of the agent did not constitute direct colonial rule, but under the treaty conditions, Britain was now allowed free access to Terengganu's sea and land territory. The treaty also required the sultan to furnish the agent with a piece of land for his residence free of charge (Maxwell and Gibson 1924). Britain would now be present – emplaced – on Terengganu's landscape.

At the time of this development, it appears that the Shaykhul Islam had already developed an Islam-oriented discourse against Britain's enclosure of Terengganu. With a group of other courtly officials, Tokku Paloh now instigated a new process of delimitation: this time over the sultan and the extent of his royal powers. This group authored a 'constitution' – a foundational program for Terengganu – setting out the principles that its sultans should be expected to follow.[12] The document drew on Islamic legal principles to establish Terengganu as a 'Malay Islamic state', and to publicly rebuke the sultan who had capitulated to that state's sovereign demise. Entitled *Convincing Kings of the Blessings of the Path*[13], the document stated that it was 'not permissible or valid whatsoever' for the state's ruler to surrender any part of its sovereignty to 'any government or power of Europe or elsewhere'. It continued that if a ruler 'should attempt to bypass this prohibition it will be deemed that he has broken the trust placed in him and that his actions are not valid'. The document's most incendiary statement followed: 'it will no longer be a requirement of members of the government and all the people that they remain loyal to him, and he should be removed from his throne and a replacement appointed in his place' (Sayid Abdul Rahman *et al.* 1911). The sultan signed the document, effectively granting a new political license to his subjects to overthrow him, or any of his successors, on grounds derived from Islamic textual sources and their interpretation by Terengganu religious scholars.

The sultan's power now bounded both by the British and the Shaykhul Islam, British officials continued to appropriate his sovereignty over territory. The first agent, W.L. Conlay, explicitly framed land control as a matter of gaining control of the state. Taking direct aim at the royal concessions, Conlay began to campaign

[12]I take this assessment of the document's authorship from Misbaha (1978).
[13]I thank Michael Laffan for this translation from the Arabic.

to limit existing perpetual grants by duration. He authored a report which recommended preventing 'concessions of indefinite area' from exceeding a duration of ten years. He also hoped to prevent the royal family from simply hoarding land to obstruct British control without using their concessions productively. He proposed that after ten years, concessions be limited to 'the area actually under cultivation', with the remainder reverting to the government, which could then re-issue it for 99 years (Shaharil 1984, 82). This policy would effectively remove large areas of Terengganu from the control of the ruling clique.

Conlay's proposals were naturally not accepted by the royal court. Yet his campaign would surely have confirmed the sultan's suspicions: Conlay intended to bring Terengganu's territory under Britain's control. To do this, the agent needed to gradually appropriate land to bring it under his own regime of property. Conlay's success would depend on establishing control over land that was, by definition, 'relational' – held by him against others, including in this case Terengganu's hereditary rulers (Blomley 2003). Conlay's actions bring to mind Said's comments (1993, cited in Blomley 2003, 128) that '[a]t some very basic level, imperialism means thinking about, settling on and controlling land that you do not possess'. It was in this context that Conlay's successors, Dickson and Humphreys, experienced such a lengthy campaign of sabotage against their attempts to gain land for an Agency. They did not realise, however, that their primary saboteur, Tokku Paloh, had withdrawn his legitimating authority from the sultan in the name of Islam immediately after their arrival. The question of land for an Agency was therefore no trifling matter: the survey pegs which announced Britain's arrival in Terengganu were removed on Islamic grounds by the court's most prestigious religious official himself.

Tokku Paloh and the sultan tried to obstruct British officials' work until their deaths in 1917 and 1918 respectively. The sultan's immediate successor, his son Sultan Muhammad Syah II (r. 1918–1920), came under enormous pressure from British officials. The reports of successive British agents had criticised a litany of poor government practices, and so in 1918, the Bucknill Commission was convened to investigate the sultan's 'maladministration'.[14] The Commission's interest was largely in the administration of territory, which its report made obvious by focusing on royal grants of mining concessions to Japanese firms, and the royal family's own land concessions. It recommended greater British control over Terengganu by upgrading Humphey's position to British Adviser, 'whose advice must be asked and acted upon in all matters affecting the general administration of the country and all questions other than those touching the Muhammadan Religion'. The adviser would also control the 'collection and disbursement' of all state revenues (Maxwell and Gibson 1924). Sultan Muhammad finally accepted the Adviser in a new treaty with Britain, which he signed in 1919 after attempting to resist and renegotiate it for a time.[15] Soon afterwards, he abdicated and was succeeded by his younger brother, Sultan Sulaiman Badrul Alam Syah (r. 1920–1942), a ruler who was more open to the colonial agenda. Now, finally, Terengganu could now be incorporated into the British Empire.

[14]Refer to CO273/474:6947: 'The Trengganu Commission'.
[15]Arthur Young to Colonial Office, 4 June 1919, CO273/487: 39802: 'Administration of Trengganu'.

Clearing the forests

Humphreys moved immediately to territorialise Terengganu's hinterland in the interest of the new colonial state. If peninsular enclosure had been framed in terms of 'Siam' and 'Britain', now, inside Terengganu, enclosure was enacted in terms of 'land', 'forest', and 'reform'. This was an 'internal territorialisation', a technology of power by which states 'divide their territories into complex and overlapping political and economic zones, rearrange people and resources within these units, and create regulations delineating how and by whom these areas can be used' (Peluso and Vandergeest 2001).

Creating Terengganu's new regime of space involved two sets of measures. The first involved subjecting the hinterland to a technocratic 'government of the environment' (Agrawal 2005), through which the state could refashion the systems by which land and forest resources would be understood, organised, accessed, and divided. The second involved introducing the Torrens system of property, already operational elsewhere in Malaya, under which agrarian smallholders would privately own parcels of land whose title would be recorded in a centralised register held by the state. Both components were enacted in new policies and regulations which, like the peninsular treaties, were designed to subject the landscape to techniques of spatial discipline. Again, both were also designed to discipline the population. Terengganu's forests, after all, were not wildernesses subject to management for the first time, but landscapes which were worked and cultivated by people.

Indeed, Terengganu's forests hosted complex patterns of shifting cultivation and the customary understandings of land ownership which governed its practice. They were sites of agrarian smallholding on rice and vegetable swiddens cleared by cultivators on a rotating basis. Some such 'swiddens' existed for much longer periods, planted with rubber for sale on the world market. The forests also hosted clusters of fruit trees, planted and tended in 'orchards' by their owners.[16] As a result, claiming the forests for the state would entail eradicating shifting cultivation and clearing the forests of its practitioners. Alongside this effort, creating fixed plots under Torrens title would transform customary landholders into property owners. In the Terengganu hinterland, therefore, environmental government and the regime of property would reinforce each other: mobile cultivators pushed from the forests would be immobilised, affixed to their smallholdings instead.

This was a wholesale restructuring of the human-environment complex as it existed in Terengganu's hinterland. Establishing a government of the environment in Terengganu was therefore also a 'calculated direction of human conduct' (Dean 1999): an exercise in subjectivation using spatial techniques. It was, in other words, an enclosure: an exercise in drawing boundaries over the landscape, and between the newly-empowered colonial state and its subjects (Sivaramakrishnan 1999). The demarcations of territory and of power which these boundaries represented were essential to British control over Terengganu's hinterland. The new boundaries would rationalise colonial officials' capacity to extract and exploit mineral, timber and other forest resources. Separating forest from cultivated land was central to this project, as was clearing the landscape of overlapping land claims.

To establish this capacity, the colonial state worked to extend its purview over land from Kuala Terengganu up the Terengganu River to Kuala Berang and the

[16]Refer to SUK T files, 1915–1930.

tributaries upstream from it. As part of this effort Kuala Berang was itself transformed: it had been the earliest known locus for Islam on the peninsula, and in the eighteenth century it had been the seat of the Terengganu sultanate. In the 1920s, however, it became a regional administrative centre. The site of a major confluence of three rivers, it was strategically located for transport up- or downriver, easing the work of regulation and compliance. For this reason, a commissioner's office was proposed for the confluence in 1921. The commissioner would be vested with the powers of a magistrate and would look after a small treasury. Regional land and forestry offices, and a police station, could be co-located with his office. These offices could then handle revenue collection, the delivery of forest products from further upriver, and the issue of permits for various forest activities.[17]

Indeed, a new system of permits had been designed in that same year, and would be overseen by the government staff which Kuala Berang would host. These were Land Office Permits, the centrepiece of new land regulations which converted Terengganu's entire forested area into 'government land'. As Humphreys made clear, these regulations were specifically designed to 'control the indiscriminate clearing of forest for gardens of hill paddy and other non-permanent crops [swiddens]'. To this end, the permits would limit and regulate access to forests by shifting cultivators, who were now cast as temporary occupiers of government land. Maintaining a pass required an annual payment of fifty cents per acre, and clearing forest without one was punishable by a fine of $100, five times the monthly wage of the forest rangers employed to monitor forest use. Yet financial penalties were not the only means of spatially constraining shifting, and prohibitions would also apply: no area of forest older than seven years would now be permitted to be cleared at all.[18]

Kuala Berang, therefore, was now a surveillance post from which the state's capacity to appropriate the forest would be established. Terengganu's experience mirrored previous appropriations in Selangor and Perak, where shifting had been banned as early as the 1880s to aid the creation of ordered forest zones for plantations, mining and logging (Kathirithamby-Wells 2005). The British template for governing Terengganu's forests, therefore, had already been perfected elsewhere, on territories previously gained through previous waves of peninsular enclosure. Indeed, British officials drew on techniques of enclosure developed in countless attempts to manage territory and population by precolonial and colonial states in Southeast Asia and beyond (Scott 2009).

Pioneered in colonial South Australia, Torrens too was a template, this time for establishing the rule of property. Under Torrens, boundaries and titles would be centrally-managed: the Land Office was granted the power to oversee boundary demarcation, issue land ownership titles, and collect cash revenues on private land. Landholders under customary entitlements (*adat*) were now cast in the position of claimants, a new relationship with the state which, once more, was established through its offices at Kuala Berang. Claims to land were to be made by seeking title documents from the Land Office, and if a claimant failed to obtain such a document, he or she could be prosecuted in the Terengganu Supreme Court, which could

[17]Deputy Chief Minister to Chief Adviser, 22 November 1928, MBT 203/1340: 'Hendak diadakan pesuruhjaya di Kuala Berang'.
[18]J.L. Humphreys, 'Report on Certain Matters Relating to Haji Drahman of Trengganu', 24 November 1922: 1, CO717/61:52432: 'Disturbances in Trengganu'.

overrule any claim to ownership of that land. Once landholders had established title, British officials then subjected them to an annual quit-rent, a form of tax on leased, non-alienated land common across the Empire.[19]

Enclosure rejected and enacted

These templates of government may have been familiar to colonial officials, but their application to Terengganu was not straightforwardly achieved, recalling Blomley's (2003) argument that regimes of property cannot be established simply by communicating them; they must also be enacted. Such regimes are 'material and corporeal', requiring that 'bodies, technologies and things must be enrolled and mobilised into organised and disciplined practices' (Blomley 2003, 122). For this reason, the 1921 regulations also privileged the technologies of Torrens, including central registers and the tools of cadastral surveying: the survey pegs which Tokku Paloh had removed were now themselves invested with authority, and tampering with them became a punishable offence. Changing or destroying registers, books or documents created to enact the legislation, whether by a member of the public or an official of the Land Office, carried a maximum sentence of seven years, a $1,000 fine, or both.[20] Further, a personnel of enclosure was recruited to subdue unruly customary claims and ensure cultivators kept out of the government's forest. The parallel processes of land surveying and the surveillance of land use were carried out by a staff of forest guards, police officers and surveyors.

The project of bringing government to the hinterland was therefore not only a spatial one. The results produced by the new technologies and personnel of spatial management were also profoundly corporeal and biopolitical. Pushing hinterland Malay cultivators out of the forest and into the system of property fundamentally reconstructed the ways in which they sustained their very lives. As complexes of mobile cultivation and customary ownership were dismantled, the connection between moving across the landscape on the one hand, and producing or generating food or cash on the other, was severed. The project of disciplining the landscape therefore also involved working to 'dismantle and reorganise the identification of subjects' (Radcliffe and Westwood 1996). By forcing shifting cultivators to reorient their practices towards production in fixed locations, colonial officials were effectively peasantising this group in line with prevailing racialist notions of Malays as smallholder peasants.

Many cultivators, however, refused to cooperate with government for fear that they would give away their rights by acknowledging the state's claim to their forest land.[21] They, and many others in Terengganu's hinterland, continued to illegally practice shifting cultivation. As a result, in 1922 a group of 43 cultivators was charged with clearing forest without permits, and the entire group was summoned to the Court of the Second Magistrate. A hearing ensued, in which the group was

[19]Undang-Undang Tanah Kerajaan Terengganu 1344 [1926], MBT 864/1344: 'Undang-Undang Tanah'. These regulations were in fact first introduced in 1921: refer to Wong (1975).
[20]Undang-Undang Tanah Kerajaan Terengganu 1344 [1926], MBT 864/1344: 'Undang-Undang Tanah'.
[21]Haji Abdul Rahman bin Abdul Hamid to Commissioner of Land, 2 Rabiulawal 1342 [13 October 1923], SUK T 599/1342: 'Wang yang dikirim oleh Haji Abdul Rahman berkenaan dengan pas menebang hutan'.

represented in court by one Haji Drahman, or Haji Abdul Rahman bin Abdul Hamid (1817–1917), a religious scholar who had been mentored and educated throughout his life by Tokku Paloh himself. Having rejected co-option by the colonial religious department, the Haji had begun campaigning against government in the hinterland. There he commanded a committed following from among the cultivators, especially from a group of religious officials who were also rubber smallholders, and who urged other cultivators to reject the government's regulations. Now Haji Drahman had acquired a license as a *wakil* (legal pleader), specifically to intervene in the hearing on the cultivators' side.

As the hearing proceeded, a striking connection emerged between Tokku Paloh's opposition to the British Adviser and his land claim on the one hand, and the case put by Haji Drahman in the cultivators' defence on the other. This connection was an argument against enclosure expressed in the vocabulary of Islam – a political move by the Shaykhul Islam's legatee which directly referenced his prestigious mentor and the position he commanded in the pre-colonial court. Just as Tokku Paloh had withdrawn his religio-political recognition of sultans compromised by colonial collaboration, Haji Drahman rejected the colonial government's very claim to law and authority.

Indeed, in court the Haji ignored British law entirely, and argued his case for the cultivators in terms of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence). The Haji defended their forest practices in terms of Islamic principles relating to land use, namely that the state acts only to administer the orderly claim and use of land, which belongs to God alone. Yet if only God could own land, how could the colonial government now claim to own Terengganu's forests? Further, if the state does not own land, it must therefore allow its productive use, or 'enlivenment' (*ihya*), wherever it lies uncultivated, and therefore 'dead' (*mawat*) (Sait and Lim 2006). According to the Haji, therefore, Terengganu's forests, dense, green and alive, should be thought of as dead land wherever they were not being actively managed or cultivated. As the Haji built his case, the hapless forest guard arguing for the prosecution was eventually 'overwhelmed . . . with Arabic texts', and when he was asked to 'prove that the land was State land', he 'admitted that he could not cope with this demand; and the case was dismissed for want of evidence'.[22]

The Haji's argument, like that mounted by Tokku Paloh before him, deliberately and strategically deployed selected principles of Islamic thought to reject the colonial state's very claim to control land in Terengganu. It deployed God's infinite authority against the finite powers enshrined in British law, on whose basis the colonial government made its claim. Further, the terms in which the Haji articulated this rejection, namely those of Islam against the colonial state, began to organise how enclosure was understood in the upriver forests and settlements. Cultivators began to take increasingly aggressive action against the forest regulations, and consistently invoked Islam as they did so. In 1925, for example, the Haji's circle of disciples organised a mass act of land-clearing over several days. There they were reported to have discussed violent resistance against the British, which they described openly as holy war, with which they planned to expel the colonisers, along with their collaborating sultan, altogether. In their place as Terengganu's rulers, they preferred to install a trio consisting of Sultan Muhammad, who had abdicated rather than rule

[22]J.L. Humphreys, Humphreys Report, pp. 1–2, CO717/61:52432.

under the British, Haji Drahman, their defender, and one Sayid Sagaf, Tokku Paloh's son.[23]

With these calls, a movement espousing mass forest clearing and the violent overthrow of the colonial state had evidently emerged in the hinterland. Its leadership invoked both Haji Drahman and Tokku Paloh: it rejected both British rule and royal collaborationism, and asserted its entitlement to overthrow the state's rulers in an idiom strongly inflected by Islamic modes of argument. Further, the circle around Haji Drahman was actively translating the contest between cultivators and the state into a language of confrontation between Muslims on one side, and *kafir* – unbelievers – on the other. In 1928, reports began to tell of police officers, magistrates, forest guards, and district officers being threatened with death in mass ambushes, from which they barely fled with their lives. All these staff – all Malay Muslims – were accused of being *kafir* for their roles in enacting the new regulatory regime. In addition, it was not only the enforcers of enclosure, but also compliant cultivators who were argued to have joined the *kafir* ranks. At this time, discussions in mosques and at public events in the upriver area included statements that even those who gained permits before clearing swiddens were guilty of leaving the *umat*, the community of Muslims, and joining the *kafir* instead.[24]

Then, at around midnight on 21 May 1928, the holy war began. Up to a thousand rebel cultivators occupied the Kuala Berang government offices and took the rifles from the police store. Afterwards, a group from Kuala Berang headed downriver for Kuala Telemong, the next similar outpost of government, where they planned to take over government offices once more. At around midday they converged there with groups of new reinforcements and headed for the police station. Before they could reach it, however, they were met by a line of police and government officials on Padang Kacung, an open field nearby. The police had arrived at ten that morning, around two hours before the rebels, acting on information from upriver officials and informers.[25]

As the crowd arrived, it was chanting loudly, declaring a holy war and repeating the Muslim affirmation of faith.[26] By framing their battle as one for *Muslims*, and not for Malays or 'Malay peasants', cultivators were weaving their local land and forest claims into a bold defence of the *umat*, the global community in whose name they had elected to speak. By doing so, Terengganu's rebels were taking their place in a political community which was planetary in scale, which could not be constrained by the Malayan geo-body, Terengganu's forest regulations, or the Torrens regime of property. The uprising was therefore a negation of the enclosures in which cultivators were enmeshed: through it, rebels momentarily asserted themselves as global subjects, located in the expansive political space afforded by Islam, and therefore notionally impossible to enclose.

After some remonstrations, the police fired on the crowd, killing eleven, wounding one in the leg, and causing the rest to flee. Later, an examination of the dead bodies and the litter left behind on the field found that many of the rebels were

[23]Statement by Penghulu Abdullah, 6 May 1925, appended to M.L. Wynne, 'Unlawful Assembly at Kuala Telemong', 6 May 1925, CO717/61:52432.
[24]Refer to SUK T 1295/1346: 'Report Forest Guard berkenaan orang-orang hendak melawan kerajaan di Terengganu'; and SUK T 1268/1342: 'Haji Musa bin Abdul Ghani menegah dan menghasut rakyat daripada menurut peraturan dan membayar hasil kerajaan'.
[25]Refer to SUK T 1295/1346.
[26]'There is no God but God and Muhammad is his messenger'.

carrying spare clothing and provisions of food. Government officials feared that they would have continued to attack and occupy government buildings all the way downriver to Kuala Terengganu if they had not been stopped.[27]

The violence meted out on Padang Kacung was didactic, an exemplary display staged by a state defending its claim over land and territory. It was an enactment of enclosure and the rule of property; indeed it was a 'foundational' act of violence, closing a decade of open contest over land and finally establishing colonial power over all of Terengganu's landscape and environment (Blomley 2003). To reinforce the disciplinary effect of the shootings, they were followed by police raids in the hinterland and an inquiry which resulted in sentences of five to fifteen years of hard labour for the uprising's organisers. Haji Drahman, for his part, was banished to Mecca on a modest government pension, and died there a year later.[28]

The uprising was over, and the colonial state quickly moved to reinforce its presence in the hinterland, increasing its access to cultivators and improving their visibility to the state. The government moved to hide customary claims from official view, making the landscape more immediately legible (Scott 1998) to its agents by empowering Land Office staff to adjudicate disputes directly while in the field.[29] Surveying efforts were stepped up dramatically, as demonstrated by the 1931 Malayan Census, which reported the presence in Terengganu of 66 'civil engineers, architects and surveyors', a heady 600 per cent expansion in employment in enclosure since the previous census in 1921 (Nathan 1922). Further, 51 members of this occupational group were Malay Muslims (Vlieland 1932). In addition, by 1929, cultivators were enrolled in road-building projects through the hinterland, alongside educational programs to increase their agricultural productivity, all the better to ensure compliance with Terengganu's new spatial regime.[30]

Conclusion

For a brief moment in Malaya's history of enclosure, Islam-oriented discourses of moral land use, law and authority, in addition to those of political space and subjectivity, all coalesced in a radical anti-enclosure politics. The Terengganu uprising's violent suppression, however, was a demonstration that the techniques and technologies of land control are not only central to colonising territory. Rather, they are also central to purposeful attempts to construct new kinds of subjects, whose ways of seeing themselves correspond with the spatial formations layered over landscapes by contests for power and their outcomes.

On the Malay Peninsula, struggles over land control were central to determining which proportion of the population would be selected and bounded as Malayan subjects. Such struggles also produced the sharp distinction between nature and culture that allowed marginal forest cultivators to be aggregated with the larger mass of Malay peasants. Struggles for land control were therefore productive and transformative, resulting in the spaces – literal political landscapes – into which the

[27]Refer to SUK T 1295/1346.
[28]Refer to SUK T 1295/1346.
[29]Land Enactment 1344, Amendment Enactment 1347, 11 July 1929; Land Enactment 1344, Amendment Enactment 1347 Objects and Reasons, 30 June 1929, CO 717/64:52433 'Terengganu Enactments 1347'.
[30]High Commissioner, Malay States to Colonial Office, 24 July 1929, CO 717/68: 62468: 'Conditions in Trengganu'.

peninsula was divided, and fashioning the political subjects who populated them. These spaces and their associated subjectivities remain essential to Malaysian political life, and undergird the politics of Malay uplift which so heavily influence contemporary public debate.

Archival Sources

This paper draws its observations from files in three collections of Malay-language (Jawi) archival sources, namely those of the Terengganu State Secretariat (SUK T), the Commissioner of Lands, Terengganu (CoL), and the Terengganu Supreme Court (MBT). I have also made extensive use of English-language colonial records, namely the Straits Settlements: Original Correspondence series (CO 273) and the Federated Malay States: Original Correspondence series (CO 717).

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