THE HAKKAS OF SARAWAK

Sacrificial Gifts in Cold War Era Malaysia

This book tells the story of the Hakka Chinese in Sarawak, Malaysia, who were targeted as communists or communist sympathizers because of their Chinese ethnicity in the 1960s and 1970s. Thousands of these rural Hakkas were relocated into "new villages" surrounded by barbed wire or detained at correction centres, where incarcerated people were understood to be "sacrificial gifts" to the war on communism and to the rule of Malaysia's judicial-administrative regime.

In this study, Kee Howe Yong looks at how these incarcerated people struggled for survival and dealt with their defeat over the course of a generation. Through extensive ethnographic fieldwork and archival research, *The Hakkas of Sarawak* provides a powerful account of the ongoing legacies of Cold War oppression and its impact on the lives of people who were victimized.

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This series, begun in 1991, focuses on theoretically informed ethnographic works addressing issues of mind and body, knowledge and power, equality and inequality, the individual and the collective. Interdisciplinary in its perspective, the series makes a unique contribution in several other academic disciplines: women's studies, history, philosophy, psychology, political science, and sociology.

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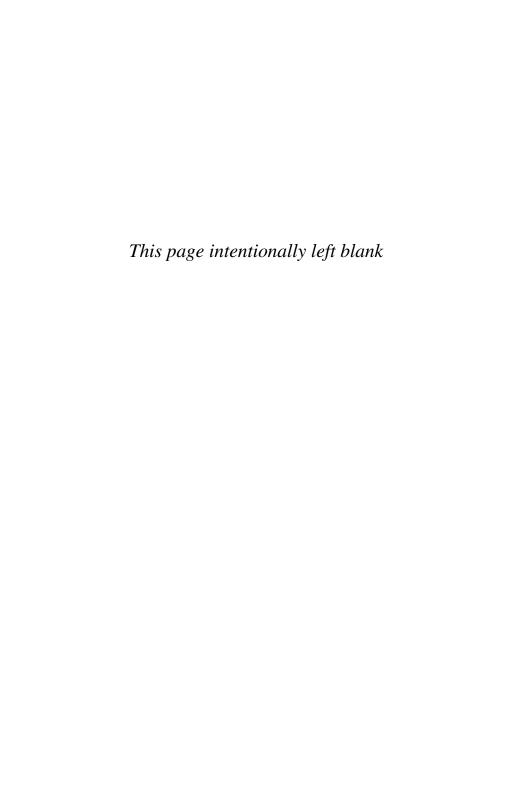
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Introduction

For the *three heroes* Wang Yong-zen, Loh Lian-chen, and Chong Yung-hwa, for we are also what we lost.

I have never met the *three heroes*, or the guerrillas who died in the jungles of Borneo, or those who were detained at correction centres or relocated into barbed-wire *new villages* in Sarawak during the Cold War. But through my journey of fieldwork over the course of twelve months, I learned about their sacrifices, their demise, and, equally important, the survivors who live to reluctantly talk about the ambiguities of the battles that they fought. In fact, the first time I heard of the *three heroes* was at a coffee shop by the Sarawak Omnibus Company (SOC) bus station in Kuching, Sarawak.[1] This was the morning I heard about the death of Ong Kee Hui, the former president of the Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP).

Interestingly enough, the topic that was immediately raised by some bus drivers and conductors at the coffee shop was whether there would be a funeral procession for Ong through certain streets of Kuching, as was traditionally the case for past Chinese leaders, including Ong's father and grandfather. But it was not to be. Ong's body would lie in state at the SUPP headquarter for two days and from there it would proceed to the Saint Thomas Cathedral for a memorial service before heading straight to the Kuching Hokkien cemetery.[2] There would be no procession, signifying perhaps that a certain landscape of memory associated with funeral processions for Chinese leaders through particular streets of Kuching was already on the brink of being lost – or of becoming history. The potentiality of this loss triggered those at the coffee shop to

recall a funeral procession that took place in the early 1960s – one that was not only extremely grandiose, at least in the way they talked about it, but that defied the power of the State.

This was the funeral procession for the *three heroes* – two males and one female communist guerrilla – who were killed by the government. I was told that they symbolized the "never-give-up" mentality of the communist movements in Sarawak. There was a massive turnout for the funeral procession, with people coming from all over Sarawak – from Serian and Simanggang and as far away as Sibu and Miri, journeys that took an entire day. Some twenty or more busloads of people made it to the funeral procession. As a bus driver affirmed, "They were an angry lot! Yelling and swearing at the police, venting their anger at the violence unleashed by the government on the rural Chinese populations. Ibans and Bidayuhs were [at the funeral procession] as well, including some Malays."[3]

Today, there is a monument for the *three heroes* at the 7th Mile Hakka Association cemetery located next to the Kuching-Serian Road. The fact that it is located on a Hakka cemetery ground would suggest some sort of connection between the Hakkas in Sarawak and things that might be interpreted as communist, a violent inscription that will be addressed in this book.[4] I bring up this episode at the coffee shop to shed some light on the undesirable state of affairs that most, if not all, of my subjects experienced as hyphenated citizens of Malaysia. From what I was witnessing that morning, it seemed as if everyone had become something of a "historian with an axe to grind … [They were advancing] a claim, to levy praise and blame, and to … condemn the existing state of affairs" (Scott 1985, 178). They were *context statements* about a certain event which provided a frame for discussing specific episodes of violence in Sarawak.[5] Their comments on both funeral processions materialized out of a complex set of narratives that were affected by a certain collective memory.[6]

French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs ([1950] 1980) claims that the collective memory of any society is determined by the interplay of both its historical as well as its contemporaneous frame of reference. In other words, it is our social environment – the circumstances and conditions of our remembering – that shape our capacity to remember or, in the case of Sarawak, the will to forget. Influenced by Halbwachs's work, Pierre Nora (1996) and several French historians came up with the notion of *lieux de memoire* (sites of memory). These are basically external props "that help incite our remembering … tangible reminders of

that which no longer exists except *qua* memory" (7–8). Borrowing the term of "loci memoriae" from classical mnemotechnique, Nora labels those places and events – artefacts, monuments, rituals, festivities, and funerals – as "sites of memory" that are capable of stimulating acts of recollection. Although Nora and his colleagues focus on the investigation of French history and society, one can discover similar trends and processes in other societies. This process is already visible in Sarawak. The inscription of (neo)liberal economic integration with its uneven economic development and new patterns of working relations are dissolving traditional structures and modes of living memory. In their stead we are witnessing the creation of archives, museums, and monuments – historical storehouses – that are imbued with all sorts of commemorative, even sentimental, value.[7]

As what happened that morning at the coffee shop, the signs and grandiosity of a previous funeral procession through a certain landscape of memory were the standard against which the funeral for Ong Kee Hui was assessed – along with the fact that he was not given the privilege of having a funeral procession through certain streets of Kuching. It was this absence that provided the stimulus for their remembering of an earlier event. As Paul Antze and Michael Lambeck (1996) remind us, "memories are never simply records of the past, but are interpretive reconstructions that bear the imprint of local narrative conventions, cultural assumptions, discursive formations and practices, and contexts of recall and commemoration" (vii). Narratives of the funeral procession and others that I have collected are useful for excavating certain Sarawak residents' pasts from being lost and, at the same time, offer a commentary on the contemporary conditions in Sarawak for certain communities.

Bumi Kenyalang

Known as *Bumi Kenyalang* (Land of the Hornbills), Sarawak is the largest state in the Federated States of Malaysia. It is located on the island of Borneo, which it shares with the Malaysian state of Sabah, the country of Brunei, and the Indonesian province of Kalimantan. Like other areas in Borneo under the Brunei Sultanate during the early part of the nineteenth century, Sarawak was in a state of constant battle among its different indigenous groups. However, Sarawak has a unique colonial history in that it was ruled not by a European empire but by a British family, the Brookes. When James Brooke, then a young English officer

with the East India Company, arrived in Borneo in 1839, the sultan of Brunei sought his help to subjugate a local rebellion. For that, James was not only awarded the title of White Rajah but a sizable territory in what was to become known as Sarawak (Runciman 1960; Walker 2002). This sizable territory is called Kuching today. Thus, when one talks about Sarawak in the historical sense, one is really talking about Kuching. Looking at the size of Sarawak today in contrast to that of Brunei will give one an idea of the relentless pressure the Brookes exerted on the Brunei Sultanate in pursuit of land and resources.

The Brookes dynasty lasted about a century. During this time the infrastructure of Sarawak flourished, especially in Kuching, its administrative capital. Kuching was a trading centre with settlers coming from far away. Over time, Chinese, Malays, South Asians, Europeans, and others joined with the many indigenous groups to create a vibrant and rich cultural heritage that is uniquely Sarawak. The Brookes dynasty, which started with James Brooke, lead to his nephew Charles, and finally to Charles's son, Vyner, ended when Japan invaded Sarawak in 1941.

Sarawak suffered much during the Japanese Occupation. Its economy was devastated and starvation was widespread due to the Allied blockage of the shipping lanes for the distribution of goods, especially rice. But what the Occupation did was send shock waves across the region as British protectorates and the Netherlands Indies fell almost without a fight. Southeast Asian specialist Harry Benda (1972) even went so far as to suggest that "history" was fundamentally changed by the Occupation, especially in the Netherland Indies "since the destruction of the colonial *status quo* directly led to the subsequent, and still contemporary, era of revolution, liberation, and modern nationhood" (148, cited in Reid 2005, 180). Others took a more detached view of the importance of the Occupation, arguing for the continuities between European and Japanese colonial policies and the subsequent development of Southeast Asian nationalism.[8] Regardless of the debate, all parties to the war in the Pacific understood it as a race war (Daws 1994, 17, cited in Reid 2005, 178).[9]

To be sure, it was not just a race war between Imperial Japan and various European empires. With a growing Chinese nationalist consciousness that had been spawned by modern education, which inculcated a uniform "Mandarin Chinese" identity, and buoyed by Sun Yat-sen's republican movement in China and the atrocities of the Rape of Nanjing, the Japanese Occupation was received differently by the Chinese

in Southeast Asia.[10] The Japanese military knew that many Chinese organizations were involved in anti-Japanese mobilization and boycotts, thus they were the main victims of Japanese military brutalities.[11] By contrast, nascent Malay nationalists in British Malaya and the Netherland Indies were given unprecedented opportunities through Japanese propaganda organizations, something that "widened and embittered the gap between Chinese nationalism and its local equivalents" (Reid 2010, 67).

When Japan surrendered in 1945, Sarawak was placed under the Australian Military Administration, and it was ceded to Britain in 1946. Sarawakians were divided on the cession, as witnessed by massive resignations of government officers and teachers as well as growing anti-cessionist movements. Eventually these anti-cession movements subsided and on September 16, 1963, Sarawak *became* part of the Federated States of Malaysia under the Greater Malaysia Plan that included the territories of Malaya, Singapore, Sarawak, and North Borneo (Sabah), a move that haunts the majority of the population of Sarawak and Sabah to this day.

Less than a year after Malaysia was formed, ethnic riots hit Singapore in opposition to it. A year later, Singapore was expelled from the Federation by the leaders of the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), the main proponent of the Alliance government in West Malaysia, and with it the delicate political and communal ethnic balance was drastically altered, arousing plenty of anxiety in Sarawak and Sabah.[12] Not only were their political leaders not consulted over the expulsion, the financial assistance for Sarawak and Sabah coming from Singapore was now curtailed. At the same time, there were calls within UMNO for more stringent citizenship laws for non-Malays and a speedier implementation of Malay as the sole official language of the Federation. The threat of increasing domination by UMNO became more alarming when the East Malaysian states were featured less and less in the political balance of Malaysia's communal equation, essentially becoming the perennial backwaters of Malaysia.

Many of the Sarawakians I met were aware of their backwater position and it affected their relationship with West Malaysians. But, backwater or not, the Sarawakians I met were extremely proud that Sarawak is unique from the rest of Malaysia in that not one identifiable ethnic or religious group makes up more than a third of the population. They were also proud of the region's abundance of natural resources – even as many of them were concerned about the plundering

of these resources due to rapid deforestation (massive concession of logging activities), the proliferation of oil palm plantations encroaching upon Native Customary Rights (NCR) land, the construction of close to a dozen hydroelectric dams (especially the controversial Bakun Dam that has no benefit for Sarawakians, not to mention the displacement of hundreds of local communities that goes along with it). Regardless, even in the face of all the plundering that has turned Sarawak into one of the poorest states in the Federation of Malaysia, Sarawakians remain proud of the broad swathe of their cultural and linguistic heterogeneity.

One of my favourite pastimes in Kuching was to walk along the riverfront of the Sarawak River. The river cuts right into the heart of Kuching. The areas north of the river are predominantly Malay *kampungs* (villages) while the Chinese occupy areas south of it. The common form of transportation to cross the river is the *sampan* – small, long, colourful wooden boats with hot tin roofs that crisscross the river. Riding on them is also a splendid way to catch a spectacular view of Kuching, with nineteenth-century Chinese shop houses along the Main Bazaar,[13] colourful Taoist temples, the Brookes-era buildings, the mosque, and the waterfront park on the south side of the river. On the northern side of the river you have Fort Margherita (originally built to monitor the river against pirates), the *Istana* (palace), and the Malay *kampungs*.

The population of Sarawak was around two million in 1999, with slightly more than half a million residing in Kuching. The Chinese are the predominant group in Kuching, followed by the Malays. In addition, there are more than twenty other indigenous groups – the Ibans, Bidayuhs, Melanaus, Kenyahs, Kayans, Kelabits, and others. There is also a small population of European expatriates. Sarawakians were also extremely friendly, whether I met them on the streets, at bus stations, in coffee shops, at food markets, in their homes, or, of course, at pubs. Although Sarawak is relatively peaceful today, it did have a violent past. It is this violent past that this book will focus on.

The Cold War and Development Discourse

Many studies of violent conflicts have pointed out that remembering and forgetting do change under different socio-political circumstances (Amadiume and An-Na'im 2000; Crapanzano 2004; Young 1990). Because of the need for social healing, there are times when there is a greater need for forgetting than remembering. This can be witnessed, for example, in the case of Japan, where the Japanese government has

been very reluctant to face the darker sides of its recent past (Yoneyama 1994), and in the construction of the two Germanys, in which war was treated as an aberration (Buruma 1995; La Capra 1994). Ethnographies dealing with the Hutus and Tutsis (Malkki 1995), Algerian Jews (Bahloul 1996), or Crimean Tartars (Uehling 2004) have also explored what happens when communities whose memory has long been suppressed suddenly gain a licence to remember. The recent outpouring of memories in Indonesia of the violence in 1965 not only magnifies the contrast between a pre- and post-Suharto era and points to the degree of self-censorship that most Indonesians went through (Zurbuchen 2005; Mrazek 2010), but also provokes us to think of more inclusive ways of embodying the experience of human memory within particular socio-political frames of reference (Radtke 1999). In fact, the collective memory of the Holocaust did not come into popular circulation until more than a decade after Israel was firmly established (Gillis 1994; Meister 2011).

But what about situations in which the political, social, and economic atmospheres remained relatively unchanged, situations that are less publicized but no less bloody? Despite gaining independence from British colonial rule more than fifty years ago, Malaysians have only known one ruling regime. The United Malay National Organization (UMNO)-led government has won twelve consecutive general elections, a feat that would be considered preposterous in any democratic country, or to any *managed democracy*. Under the realm of this regime, using the pretext of fighting communism during the Cold War, thousands of Chinese were targeted in Malaya and, later on, in Sarawak as communists or communist sympathizers and detained at correction centres or relocated into barbed-wire *new villages*, one of the modern state-inscribed spatialities. But the Cold War is more than just fighting communism.

In *The Accursed Share* (1991), Georges Bataille offers an important and alternative perspective on the Cold War. According to Bataille, the Cold War "is not essentially the struggle of two military powers for hegemony; it is the struggle of two economic methods. The Marshall Plan offers an organization of surplus against the accumulation of the Stalin plans" (173).[14] In 1949, during his inaugural speech, President Truman launched his famous Point Four Program, a technical-assistance project for underdeveloped countries as part of the American's anti-communist strategy. The project aimed at curbing communist nationalistic tendencies and applying similar "Marshall Plans" to the rest of the world, in

essence, by coming up with plans to rebuild upon ruins (Haugerud and Edelman 2004).[15] Immediately after that, the United Nations insisted on economic growth based on the expansion of international trade, free access to raw materials, and the return to monetary stability to bring about an improvement in the living conditions of the Third World – which meant, in fact, establishing an environment to "shape and re-shape the spaces of capital accumulation and commodity exchange, subjecting them, simultaneously, to processes of fragmentation, hierar-chization and homogenization" (Brenner and Elden 2009, 359). By the late 1950s, President Kennedy had launched the Alliance for Progress project in Latin America, which was soon reinforced by the Peace Corps to develop the Third World through the export of its natural resources as well as adopting measures that would stimulate the flow of private investment capital (de Senarclens 1997).

On the whole, this development project was well received by the governments of the Third World, for it corresponded to the image that the ruling classes had the attributes of state power and vision to mobi-lize all of its resources to stimulate growth. In other words, it created an environment to facilitate capital accumulation and to enhance po-litical domination. As Henry Lefebvre (1976; 1991) points out, what we have witnessed is the increasing role of the state in the production of space on local, regional, national, and global scales for the survival of capitalism since the second half of the twentieth century – in managing the crisis tendencies of modern capitalism through the production of capitalist spatiality.

In *The Production of Space* (1991), Lefebvre characterizes this new spa-tiality as "abstract space" and suggests that it represents a qualitatively new matrix of sociospatial organization that is at once produced and regulated by the modern state in compliance with the World Bank, In-ternational Monetary Fund, and regional development banks. A key characteristic of abstract space is that it appears to be homogenous, or an "appearance" of homogeneity in a way that is instrumental for both capital and the modern state – "it serves those forces which make a *ta-bula rasa* of whatever stands in their way, of whatever threatens them – in short, of differences." Abstract space "destroys its (historical) condi-tions, its own (internal) differences, and any (emergent) differences, in order to impose an abstract homogeneity" (Lefebvre 1991, 370).[16] In other words, abstract space is the political product of state spatial strat-egies – of administration, repression, and domination. One can think of the construction of ports and highways, the proliferations of free trade

zones and the production of a so-called homogenized cheap labour within these spaces, and, in the case of Malaysia, the production of *new villages* and their supposedly homogenized Chinese victims. These are inherently violent spaces.

Almost everywhere the correlation was made between processes of economic growth and political development that include a range of political actions concerning the mobilization of nationalism as an ideology, but also a whole range of state projects designed to shape and reshape territorial spaces into nationalized, nationalizing unities within a broader context defined by the world market, imperialism and its strategies, and the operational spheres of multinational corporations (Lefebvre 1991, 112).

Paradoxically, the enlargement of the United Nations coincided with the triumph of this development ideology, and since the early 1960s the United Nations Development Program has been the agent of this policy, insisting on its "moral" (if not colonial) mission to educate, train, advise, and give meaning to development plans. Meanwhile, no conceptual or operational linkages were made between its economic objectives and the social aspects of development.

To be sure, the Marshall Plan and the other developmental plans were/are not about aid, welfare (re)distribution, or growth – not when the Cold War and nuclear proliferation turned out to be the preferred examples of reckless waste (Bataille 1991, 188), and not after millions of casualties from the war on Asian communism (in China, Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Indonesia, and Malaysia), to be followed by the War on Terror combined with a war on drugs in South America and elsewhere, and a war on immigration disguised as a security concern. Similarly, the gestures of the Soros and the Gates in establishing charity "foundations" is not just a matter of philanthropy, it is also a necessary gambit of containment as they export their cyber-evangelism to the markets of Eastern Europe, South Asia, and East Asia (Hutnyk 2004). Or, as Zizek (2008, 22) puts it, "In liberal communist ethics, the ruthless pursuit of profit is counteracted by charity. Charity is the humanitarian mask hiding in the face of economic exploitation."

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, leaders of the Western world have been making gestures at conferences and summits regarding the need to address poverty, equality, and the latest buzzwords: sustainability and human rights (Meister 2011). Let us not forget that these conference junkets are also attended by multinational CEOs that are hardly known for their desire to redistribute the global share of surplus expenditure

for the welfare of all. As John Hutnyk (2004) points out, the liberal rhetoric of charity and the militant drums of war are basically the carrot and stick of capitalist hegemony. It is not about generosity when a gift is not a gift but a debt of time. Perhaps the same can be said about war – it is not war but profit. Indeed, back in 1933 Bataille had written of the bourgeois tendency to declare "equality" and make it their watchword. Written in the context of rising fascism in Germany, Carl Schmitt's ([1932] 1996) philosophical reflections deserve our full attention:

> When a state fights its political enemy in the name of humanity, it is not a war for the sake of humanity, but a war wherein a particular state seeks to usurp a universal concept against its military opponent. At the expense of its opponent, it tries to identify itself with humanity in the same way as one can misuse peace, justice, progress, and civilization in order to claim these as one's own and to deny the same to the enemy … The concept of humanity is an especially useful ideological instrument of imperialist expansion, and in its ethical-humanitarian form it is a specific vehicle of economic imperialism … It would be more exact to say that politics continues to remain the destiny, but what has occurred is that economics has become political and thereby the destiny. (54–78)

In a much more contemporary sense, Mike Davis (1984) also reminded us of the political economy of the Cold War: "it was multi-national military integration under the slogan of collective security against the USSR which preceded and quickened the interpenetration of the major capitalist economies, making possible the new era of commercial liberalism which flowered between 1958 and 1973" (9). Closer to Sarawak, Bradley Simpson's (2008) analysis of the political and economic aid that lay the foundations for the mid-1960s emergence of a military-led regime in Indonesia – a regime which was committed to the violence of modernization – deserves to be quoted at length:

> These forces included the U.S. and other Western governments, which provided military and economic assistance; philanthropic foundations, which trained economists and military officers in management and administrations; international financial institutions such as the International Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, which promoted early variants of what would later be called structural adjustment; and social scientists, who deployed theory to account for and legitimize the growing political and economic role of the military in the development process, not just in Indonesia but throughout the so-called third world. (3–4)

Critiques of the modernization theory, dependency theory, world system theory, and the corresponding violence of developmental discourse are well documented and to rehash them would be superfluous.[17] Simply put, an entry point for an analysis of the role of development as a violent discourse is the belief that modernization is the only force capable of eradicating poverty in Third World countries, despite any social, cultural, and political costs. The ingredient for modernization (i.e., exporting agricultural cash crops, industrialization, and urbanization) is capital, and capital has to come from somewhere. It has to come from abroad – and local governments and international organizations need to take an active mediating role in establishing a set of capital relations. To understand development as a discourse, one must look not at the elements themselves but at the system of relations established among them. It is this system that allows the systematic creation of state-inscribed spatiality/territories, objects, concepts, and strategies. In other words, the system of relations establishes a set of rules on who can speak, from what points of view, with what authority, and according to what criteria of expertise, and through these rules the discourse moves across the cultural, economic, and political geography of the Third World. Yet, despite these critiques, the processes that encouraged the development of authoritative regimes that have bred corruption, weak civil societies, nepotism, and a military culture of violence and impunity have not gone away.

A Violent *Gift* Economy

Among anthropologists, the idea of looking at military aid and development discourse not as a gift or generosity but as a violent exchange was adopted by Alan Klima (2002) on Thailand. But the idea goes back to Michael Taussig (1977) when he discussed the uneven and unholy penetration of capitalism into a Colombian peasantry. Both of these scholars owe much of their critique of "the gift" of military aid and development to Bataille, Derrida, and Deleuze, who in turn were indebted to Nietzsche. Without doubt, Mauss's *The Gift* is the text that initiates the modern reflections of gifts and gift giving, especially his thesis that although the gift might appear free and disinterested, it is in fact both constrained and quite interested. In the archaic societies he examines, Mauss finds that the gift is given in a context in which both its reception and its reciprocal return are obligated in terms of well-articulated social rules. In anthropology and related disciplines, the well-worked theme of the *kula* finds the Trobrianders engaged in a series of gift exchanges – of

shells and necklaces – which bind trading partners together in a circle of reciprocal gift relations, establishing (inherently asymmetrical) social ties and securing trading relations (Malinowski 1922). Whether it was the *kula* ring exchange or the festivals of destruction in North American indigenous potlatch ceremonies, the gift is about ostensible generosity, in excess of utility, given beyond what would be a practical and reasoned calculation of value. As such, there is also a political agenda in *The Gift*, for Mauss was drawing on an analysis of these archaic societies in order to offer some moral conclusions concerning the organizational principles that grounded his own society, which was enmeshed in the violence of the First World War and rising inequality.

But as Derrida points out, if the gift is never only a gift but the exchange of gift and counter-gift within the logic of exchange and contract that Mauss himself has identified, then generosity is impossible. For Derrida (1992), the basic, irreducible idea of a gift is that it is something given, and that is that. But if we reflect on what would need to be the case for such a simple and incontestable example to occur, then it emerges as deeply paradoxical (7). As Laidlaw (2000) points out, for Derrida, the condition implicit in the idea of a gift is that there must be no reciprocity. To prevent reciprocity, the recipient must not recognize the gift as a gift, and thus no sense of debt of obligation. Similarly, the donor must not recognize the gift, since to do so is to praise and gratify oneself; and lastly, as a result of the foregoing, the thing cannot exist as a gift as such. Derrida (1992) writes: "The simple identification of the passage of a gift as such, that is, of an identifiable thing among some identifiable 'ones,' would be nothing other than the destruction of the gift" (14). In sum, then: "For there to be gift, it is necessary that the gift not even appear, that it not be perceived or received as gift" (16). As soon as it appears "as gift," it becomes part of a cycle and ceases to be a gift.

In other words, if a gift is to be a gift there must be no exchange, no debt to be repaid, no reciprocity, not even the idea of a payback. As such, the *kula* or the potlatch is more like a contest, and a destructive one. For Derrida (1992) the unreason of the gift is that it is always a debt that is invoked; this is the paradox of the gift, the aporia of the gift.[18] To further illustrate this paradox, Derrida argues that what the gift gives is time – the possibility of taking time before repayment, whether that be a return gift or an even more extravagant potlatch. As such, there could only be a gift on the condition that the flow of time is suspended. And until we can do that, a gift is impossible (Laidlaw 2000).

According to Deleuze and Guattari ([1972] 1983), who elaborated on the violence of the gift when writing on colonial economy, the centrality

of the gift is not exchange and circulation but rather inscription: "The essential thing seemed to us to be, not exchange and circulation, which closely depend on the requirements of inscription, but inscription itself, with its imprint of fire, its alphabet inscribed in bodies, and on blocks of debts" (188). As for Georges Bataille, his economic reflections of the gift are much like those from Mauss, but he does so in order to over-turn the "restrictive" economic principles of the utilitarian calculation that defines the rationality of contemporary society. This overturning will make possible a different economic logic – one based on unpro-ductive expenditure of excess that defines the workings of a "general economy," of gift giving "without return." According to Bataille, this unproductive expenditure animates Mauss's potlatch analysis, and Ba-taille (1991) claims that modern economic forces of commodity accu-mulation obscure "the basic movement that tends to restore wealth to its function, to gift-giving, to squandering without reciprocation" (38). The gift and potlatch, argues Bataille, are part of a calculus which sug-gests the necessary expenditure of an organism that, generally, receives more energy "than is necessary to maintain life." Furthermore,

> excess energy (wealth) can be used for growth of a system … if the system can no longer grow, or if the excess cannot be completely absorbed in its growth, it must necessarily be lost without profit, it must be spent … glori-ously or catastrophically. (21)

In many ways, volume 1 of Bataille's *The Accursed Share* can be read as an attempt to provide a rationale for a political and economic policy of capitalist nations in the face of communism during the Cold War; and to explain how, in a master/slave dialectic with America playing the master, the country is willing to risk their wealth in the face of death (or nuclear destruction) in order to be recognized as having the superior economic system. As for the Marshall Plan, Bataille (1991) writes,

> In a paradoxical way, the situation is governed by the fact that without the salutary fear of the Soviets (or some analogous threat), there would be no Marshall Plan. The truth is that the diplomacy of the Kremlin holds the key to the American coffers … This truth dominates current develop-ments. (183–4)

These philosophers' reflections on the gift are inspired by Nietzsche's philosophy of the self/other relation as a debtor/creditor relation, and on his concept of justice. As Deleuze points out, the second essay of the

Genealogy is an attempt to interpret the primitive economy not so much as a process of exchange and circulation, but as an economy of debts in the debtor-creditor relationship. In fact, Nietzsche explicates the *burden of the debt* as the central problem in any debtor-creditor relationship. For him, the most fundamental social relation is the creditor/debtor relation wherein debts can be repaid through the body via a contractual arrangement between creditor and debtor – he notes that inflicting pain on another was "originally" a way of recovering a debt (Nietzsche 1969, 62–70). Nietzsche echoed the same sentiment on the relationship established between the giver and the receiver in "Thus Spoke Zarathustra" (1978). When Zarathustra came down from his cave to rejoin humanity, he cautioned his followers against the dangers involved in gift giving and told them to practise reserve in accepting gifts; Zarathustra "knows that the gift is a *pharmakon* (medicine and poison),[19] for those who benefit from receiving the gifts often feel beholden to the one who gave to them" (Schrift 1997, 3).

As Rosalyn Diprose (2002, 29–30) points out, for justice to exist in a Nietzschen creditor/debtor exchange economy, exchange would have to be a reciprocal exchange – one that is without loss or without a debt being incurred by either party, and one that assumes "approximately equal power" between creditor and debtor (Nietzsche 1969, 70; 1984, 64). What Nietzsche exposes in his genealogy of justice and the creditor/debtor relation is this erroneous assumption of sameness, where one reduces the other to the self. On the level of society, this equates to a community of conformists wherein any expression of non-conformity is taken as a hostile act, a refusal to return the gift. It is here that a debt is incurred and "the disappointed creditor, will get what repayment it can" through punishment and expulsion (Nietzsche 1969, 71).

It is in such discursive logic of the gift that I find it meaningful to talk about the Cold War economy as a gift economy whereby the recipients (postcolonial national elites) were inscribed with a debt and thus the obligation to sacrifice certain victims as some form of payment. In the most contemporary sense, one of the ideal gifts is the loan made by the World Bank, IMF, and other regional development banks to the underdeveloped and developing countries, which then felt obligated to reciprocate by *agreeing* to the conditions of the structural adjustment packages. It is my hope that more scholars will take up such discursive logic of the gift in terms of development and military aid as one way to debunk one of the oldest maxim of modern economics – our natural "human propensity to truck, barter, and exchange" – and by extension, the notion of "free trade."[20]

In the case of Sarawak, while the Malaysian government lurched forward on its warpath against communism, it reassured its population of *justice* (i.e., politicized justice) with the watchwords of security, democracy, and development that really meant death and despair to those on the wrong side of the fence. The construction of *new villages* (i.e., asylum and "aid" programs) was the appeasers' gift, appeasers who acceded to the Cold War gift economy and its excesses – civilian deaths, curtailment of civil liberties, and so on. This was a kind of gift whereby social categories like the Hakka speech group, their marginal socio-economic statuses, and their diverse ideological affiliations were reduced (or made to appear as homogenous) to a single denominator – communists or communist sympathizers – and forcibly relocated to the *new villages*. To borrow from Stanley Tambiah (1996), who wrote in the context of Sri Lanka, such a discourse could be called a "levelling crowds" discourse, targeting the rural Hakkas with anti-communist rhetoric – in essence, treating *Hakka-ness* as an object of criminality.

To be sure, the aggression against the Hakkas in Sarawak – whether social, economic, or political – had roots in the imperialist mercantile tradition. After all, James Brooke was an officer of the British East India Company, and one of the main objectives throughout the Brookes regime was the imposition of *free* trade, which all along had been one of a paternalistic kind: the promotion of British commerce, and the monopoly to exploit mineral resources, among them gold and oil (Chew 1990; Ooi 1997).[21] The War on Communism in Sarawak – as in other "low intensity" counterinsurgencies – was clear and sustained. Under the pretext of the Cold War, not only did it turn Sarawak into a society of control and sacrifices, it was a war for profit – one that not only reassures the superior status of the gift givers but also unleashes a terror of its own. It was war and plunder in pursuit of resources in ostensibly resource- and oil-rich Sarawak.

We can gauge how excessive the anti-communist operations were by looking at logistics. Immediately after the formation of Malaysia, the beginning of a series of lethal gifts – so-called developmental aid – started pouring into Sarawak under the supervision of British expatriates (Grijpstra 1976). Expenditure on the armed services in Sarawak from 1963 to 1975 alone was estimated at RM 1,023 million, with another RM 816 million spent on development in Sarawak during that period (see Porrit 2004). According to official estimates, there were more than seven battalions of Allied soldiers (Malay soldiers, British Gurkha forces, and some senior British officers) against fewer than 700

guerrillas in Sarawak (Sri Aman: Peace Restored in Sarawak, 1974). Not counting those stationed in Indonesia or Brunei, by 1962 some 22,500 Malaysian and Commonwealth forces were deployed to protect Sarawak from Sukarno's *Konfrontasi* policy and the activities of the communist organizations within Sarawak.

This excessive spending – of both materials and manpower – was an ideal potlatch in that the debt could never be repaid. It obliged the receivers (state elites) to give more, with heavy interest, not to mention sacrifices. This was a potlatch of a very destructive kind that continues to this day under the aegis of neoliberal capitalism – massive appropriations of natural resources and labour, the building of dams, extensive deforestation through loggings, the Green Revolution and its massive appetite for *cash crops*, the construction of the world's biggest aluminum smelting plant by Rio Tinto – or, more appropriately, as destructions marketed as excessive spending go on in the name of development.[22] The effect of the Cold War and its accursed share in Sarawak – as in other Cold War counterinsurgencies – is a curse of a sacrificial expenditure going out of control.

Figurations of Collective Assembly

… societies are nothing other than figurations of interdependent people … and individuals within a figuration can be amicable as well as hostile to one another.

Norbert Elias ([1969] 1983, 18, 161)

To understand the complexity of the situation during the Cold War in Sarawak, I looked at materials touching on issues of communism during the 1960s and 1970s at the Sarawak Museum Library. In the archives I reviewed newspaper reports from 1946 to 1970 – English newspapers, translated versions of Chinese newspapers, and the Malay editions of the *Sarawak Vanguard* and *Utusan Sarawak*. I also looked at other kinds of documents I felt were important for my work: reports of enquiry commissions, journals, and, of course, books. Of these, the *Sarawak Gazette* is the most comprehensive, but contains a colonialist bias. Taken "archeologically," most of the written records reveal layered strata of colonial and nationalistic views of Sarawak. Some of the recent attempts at writing Sarawak histories seem to me as if they were creating new layers that mirror earlier reports (see, for example, Fidler 1972;