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Bureaucratic Transition in Malaya

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Preface

The Federation of Malaya achieved political independence on August 31, 1957, and became absorbed into the greater Federation of Malaysia on September 16, 1963. Although the life span of the original Federation was only a brief six years and fifteen days, the period saw dramatic changes in the peninsula. Emergency operations against communist insurgency came to an official and successful close in July, 1960; social and educational development was proceeding at a pace unimagined during the colonial period; economic expansion and diversification was impressive; and—perhaps most important—the parliamentary system of government, introduced in stages during the colonial regime, was still functioning and was providing Malaya with one of the most stable political systems in Southeast Asia.

Within this framework of parliamentary government was also to be found one of the most effective and efficient bureaucracies in the area, a fact that in no small measure accounted for the Federation's success in executing its ambitious development plans. Moreover, by the time of the creation of the greater Malaysian Federation this bureaucracy was largely indigenous in composition, and the few remaining European colonial servants were working side by side with locally recruited officers and recently arrived foreign advisers. These happy circumstances were not entirely accidental, nor were they exclusively a product of the period of political independence. As this monograph will attempt to demonstrate, modern Malayan bureaucracy is a synthesis of the colonial experience as it acted, reacted, and interacted within the indigenous environment of a tropical, plural, Southeast Asian society. The attempt will be made here to trace this transitional