

ULASAN BUKU/REVIEWS

The Malays: Their Problems and Future

By Syed Husin Ali

Heinemann Asia: Kuala Lumpur, 1981.

Pp. vii + 142.

Price: \$6.35 (Paperback)

At a time when ethnic chauvanism and tensions run high in Malaysia infecting not only politicians and the popular masses but also the educated, a considered analysis which transcends ethnic parochialism is a rare commodity. Syed Husin Ali's book *The Malays: Their Problems and Future*, stands out as one of those rare commodities.

Even when the book does not pretend to be academic, written for popular consumption, it is a contribution to the understanding of the problems of the Malay community and the Malaysian society at large. The work is all the more admirable given the conditions under which it was written: during the period of his political detention; but this did not make the author compromise his views and beliefs. Under these extenuating conditions, it is understandable that some of the data and findings of the book are a bit outdated. For example, the extent of foreign ownership of the corporate economy, particularly in the tin and rubber sectors, has considerably been reduced in favour of state ownership.

The author surveys the development of Malay society from the earliest of time to the present, touching on various aspects of culture, religion, politics, social structure and economics. He traces the history of the Malay community, shows its threads of historical continuity, and dismisses the claims of those (notably the colonialists) who deny the Malays a continuous history of its own. Having established this fact, Syed Husin does not stop there and view all aspects of life and society from the prism of ethnicity. He demonstrates how within the Malay community, great social and economic inequalities and tensions existed between the feudal ruling class and the Malay masses, and how they continue today in different forms.

The author critically examines the concept of Malay unity and argues that this concept has been exploited by the present ruling class for their own interests and has exacerbated the ethnic tensions in society. In his words, "...it is clear that the political objective of promoting Malay unity and power are meaningless unless they are oriented to the type of ideology,

politics, and leadership that can really benefit the common people, especially the poor." (pp. 40-1).

In his analysis of economic development, Syed Husin argues that the country is still beset with the problems of poverty, landlessness, foreign ownership and control, and massive outflow of funds. The government has implemented various plans to solve these problems, but according to him, these objectives have hardly been achieved. It is not simply a result of ineffective implementation, but even more important it stems from the ideology and principles which prevent any effective solutions. In other words, the discrepancy between words and deeds, plans and results is not accidental but intrinsic. For example, in all the development plans, the author criticizes the government for not identifying the root cause of poverty which lies more with exploitation and lack of control over the productive resources and less with the problem of low productivity. The unwillingness of the present Barisan government to bring about any thorough-going land reform is a direct result of its own class interest in landownership.

Similarly when analyzing the problem of inequality and restructuring of the economy in terms of ethnic ownership, the author argues that it will benefit only a handful upper class Malays: In his words, "Of course the standard of living of a handful of Malays will rise, and there will be a few Malay millionaires among them; but the problem of poverty among the peasants will remain unsolved. It is not the intention here to say that the Malays should be discouraged from business and industries, but it must be noted that the encouragement given and the efforts carried out within the *laissez-faire* system will only perpetuate greater socio-economic inequality, exploitation, and poverty among the people." (p. 100).⁵

In discussing the ethnic divisions in society, Syed Husin, unlike pluralist theorists who emphasize only this aspect, contends that there exists just as much if not more social and economic divisions within each community (p. 117). He tries to correct the simplistic notion that Malays control political power and Chinese economic power, by showing that only a handful of Malays and Chinese hold political and economic power respectively leaving the majority of both communities powerless and poor, and that the dominant owners of the corporate economy are the foreigners. However, these class divisions are not readily perceived by most people in society and a deliberately obfuscated by the upper and middle classes who benefit from communal politics (p. 122).

In this context, the attempt by Syed Husin Ali to analyze the problems of his own community and society in a non-racial manner, is a welcome enterprise which other scholars could emulate.

Ma'Betisek Concepts of Living Things

By Wazir-Jahan Begum Karim.

London: The Athlone Press, 1981.

Pp. xv + 270. Appendices, Glossary.

Bibliography, Index.

Price: US\$38

The Ma' Betisek (called Mah Meri or Besisi in the older literature) are a group of Orang Asli who live on Carey Island and adjacent sections of the Mainland on the Selangor coast just south of Kelang. This book is based upon fieldwork done in three Ma' Betisek villages on Carey Island between 1973 and 1975. At that time, in spite of the existence of vast rubber estates on the island, the Ma' Betisek still practiced a diversified economy which included gardening and swidden rice agriculture, hunting and trapping wild game, fishing and shellfish gathering in the streams, mangrove swamps, and coastal mudflats, and cutting and selling *nibong* palms. Thus, their subsistence depended upon direct exploitation of their natural environment.

The religion of the Ma' Betisek, like those of most other Orang Asli groups, is firmly rooted in the world around them and in the mundane events of everyday life. Dr. Wazir's study focuses upon Ma' Betisek beliefs about plants and animals and their relationship to mankind. She immediately confronts the problem, all too familiar to students of Orang Asli religions, that these beliefs do not form a logically consistent, unified whole. The author argues, however, that the inconsistencies disappear if the beliefs are seen as forming two distinct complexes of ideas which come to mind only in quite separate circumstances. One set of ideas, which comes to the fore during economic activities, expresses the view that plants and animals are entirely distinct from humans and are meant to be exploited. This is termed the *tulah* view by the author, after the mythical curse (*tulah*) uttered by the ancestors to take away the power of the primordial plants and animals to assume human form. The other set of ideas, which is activated when people are experiencing disease or misfortune, emphasizes the continuity between humans and plants and animals. This is expressed in the beliefs that plants and animals were once human and that they are animated by recycled human souls. The latter view is termed *kemali* after the prohibitions that must be observed to avoid angering the spirits of the plants and animals and thus to prevent their sending punitive diseases and storms. The bulk of the book consists of a demonstration of how these ideas are expressed on the behavioral, ideological, mythological, and ritual "levels." In the process, a large part of what would normally be called Ma' Betisek religion, such as their cosmology and soul beliefs, is described and ingeniously fitted into this basic framework.

This book is one of the richest and most clearly written descriptions of

an Orang Asli system of belief and ritual in the literature. The research is thorough and detailed, each line of inquiry taken up being pursued to its conclusion. Only occasionally, as in the treatment of the complicated cycling of human souls (see pp. 45, 49-50, 75-79, 136), does the description become confusing. This is not, however, a comprehensive study of the Ma' Betisek religion as a whole. While it might have been impractical to extend such a detailed treatment to the entire religion, it would nevertheless have been valuable to have been shown how the beliefs and rituals concerning plants and animals fit into the broader system. The analysis is most convincing when it is unfolding the indigenous Ma' Betisek concepts and distinctions. Even the division into *tulah* and *kemali*' ideas, which is in a sense imposed by the writer, seems to emerge naturally from the native concepts. But some of the analytical concepts used, such as the nature-culture distinction from Levi-Strauss, seem somewhat intrusive, carrying connotations that are inappropriate in the Ma' Betisek context. The term "myth" is used, without definition, for any short narrative. One would like to know what are the genres of Ma' Betisek oral tradition, and how the author has distinguished the mythological "level" of facts from the ideological. Similarly, "ritual" is not clearly defined or distinguished from the "activities" (which are said to include healing and curing) it is supposed to express (p. 3). But the most important analytical device used — the idea of situational shifting between contradictory sets of ideas — is enormously useful in illuminating the Ma' Betisek belief system, and it promises to be a valuable approach in the analysis of other Orang Asli religions as well.

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Income Distribution dan Determination in West Malaysia

Oleh Tan Tat Wai;

Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1982.

Pp. xv + 364. Indeks dan Bibliografi.

Harga tidak disebut.

Oxford University Press, dalam usahanya untuk memperkenalkan dan memperluaskan hasil-hasil penyelidikan di rantau ini, kali ini telah membukukan tesis kedoktoran Tan Tat Wai. Buku ini memperlihatkan kegigihan dan kesungguhan pengarangnya walaupun sebahagian besar data-datanya adalah sumber-sumber sekunder. Ia disusun dan diolah untuk memperkukuhkan pendapat-pendapat yang diketengahkan oleh beliau.

Memang sudah diterima sebagai satu aksiom bahawa pembangunan yang dicerminkan menerusi hubungan pengeluaran sosial kapitalis tidak

dapat tidak akan menyumbangkan keadaan ketidaksamaan dan kemiskinan. Dalam hubungan ini pengarang cuba melihat secara terperinci untaian dan simpulan faktor-faktor yang membawa kepada keadaan tersebut dengan mengambil Semenanjung Malaysia selepas Perang Dunia Kedua sebagai latar penelitiannya. Walaupun kajian sebegitu rupa sudah dijalankan di masa-masa yang lepas, pengarang menyatakan bahawa pendekatannya cuba memberi satu pengamatan dan nafas baru yang akan membolehkan kajian lanjut dan mendalam mengenai beberapa isu penting yang beliau utarakan.

Secara kasar, buku ini dapat dibahagikan kepada dua bahagian utama. Bahagian pertama membincangkan persoalan-persoalan yang berkaitan dengan pengagihan pendapatan dan faktor-faktor penentuan. Bahagian kedua pula mengupas persoalan-persoalan mengenai pengagihan kekayaan dan impaknya terhadap pengagihan pendapatan.

Menyentuh balik bahagian pertama bukunya, pengarang di antara lain telah membayangkan pengagihan pendapatan di kalangan petani dan pekebun kecil. Mengenai pendapatan petani, beliau menyarankan bahawa saiz tanah yang dihubungkan dengan ciri-ciri sosio-ekonomi seperti hakmilik, umur petani dan saiz isirumah merupakan angkubah utama yang menentukan pengagihan pendapatan. Pengarang juga berpendapat bahawa pendapatan kecil di kalangan pengusaha dan juga penyewa menyebabkan mereka mencari kerja di luar ladang. Pendapat ini mungkin dapat dipertikaikan berdasarkan pada penemuan-penemuan dan kajian-kajian lain yang dibuat mengenai pertanian padi. Kajian Shand et. al. (1982) di kawasan Kemubu yang menemui bahawa pendapatan dari luar pertanian adalah agak besar mungkin disebabkan oleh purata saiz tanah yang kecil memperkuat lagi hujah Tan Tat Wai. Tetapi kajian Shukur Kassim et. al. (1982) telah menemui bahawa pendapatan luar pertanian di kalangan petani-petani di Barat Daya Selangor adalah kecil walaupun bebanah kemiskinan di kawasan tersebut adalah agak tinggi dan keadaan tersebut menjadi bertambah ironikal memandangkan bahawa Barat Laut Selangor berhampiran dengan kawasan Lembah Kelang.

Mengenai pekebun kecil pula, pengarang telah menimbulkan beberapa isu penting di sini. Menyentuh tentang daya pengeluaran mereka, beliau menyatakan bahawa kebun-kebun kecil tidak akan dapat menandingi daya pengeluaran estet walaupun jika kebun-kebun tersebut ditukarkan ke corak pengeluaran estet berdasarkan pada hakikat sejarah bahawa penjajah Inggeris telah memperuntukkan tanah-tanah yang baik kepada estet. Persoalannya di sini tidakkah daya kajian akan terbuang begitu sahaja sebab isu yang lebih memerlukan penekanan adalah hubungan sosial dan pemerasan yang timbul akibat hubungan tersebut. Menyentuh tentang cess dan cukai eksport, pengarang tidak dapat dipertikaikan apabila beliau menyatakan bahawa sehingga kini struktur

pengutipan cess penyelidikan dan penanaman semula membawa bebanan yang lebih kepada pekebun kecil.

Persembahan pengarang menjadi lebih padat dan menarik dalam bahagian kedua bukunya. Beliau telah dapat meyakinkan pembaca mengenai peranan kapital dan bahagian-bahagiannya dalam pemusatan pengumpulan (accumulation) nilai lebihan. Dalam konteks ini, bahagian-bahagian kapital tidak hanya bekerjasama bahkan bersaing di antara satu sama lain untuk menguasai penggerak-penggerak pengeluaran. Beliau dengan jelas menimbulkan peranan negara dan sikapnya yang berbelah bagi terhadap kelompok-kelompok sosial yang dibincangkan dalam bahagian pertama bukunya.

Pada keseluruhannya, buku ini sangat-sangat kemas dari segi kesarjaannya walaupun data-data datang dari sumber-sumber sekunder. Pergantungannya yang amat sangat ke atas sumber-sumber sekunder ini merupakan kelemahannya yang ketara sebab kesahan, ketepatan dan kebenaran data-data tersebut boleh dipertikaikan. Kedua, walaupun pengarang cuba menolak perspektif Neo-Klasikal dan Neo-Ricardian yang digunakan oleh pengkaji-pengkaji yang lepas mengenai isu yang sama, beliau masih lagi terjerat dan terjebak dalam perspektif tersebut. Ini berdasarkan bahawa beliau masih lagi terikat dengan kategori-kategori dan konsep-konsep perspektif tersebut. Penekanan beliau terhadap pertukaran memudahkan kepentingan pengeluaran, penentu hubungan sosial.

Sumbangan ini merupakan satu lagi langkah ke arah kesarjaan yang lebih bermutu dan kritikal di Malaysia. Usaha-usaha sebegini rupa patut menjadi pendorong kepada sarjana-sarjana muda.

Rujukan:

Shand R.T., Mohd Ariff Hussein dan Mohd Abdul Rahman (March 1982) *A Socio-Economic Study of the Impact of the Kemubu Irrigation Project In Kelantan*; Serdang, Selangor.

Shukor Kassim, D.S. Gibbons, Lim Teck Ghee dan Mustafa Najimudin (March 1982); *Study of Strategy, Impact and Future Development of Integrated Agricultural Development Projects*; Pusat Penyelidikan Dasar, U.S.M., Pulau Pinang.

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Understanding ASEAN

Edited by Alison Broinowski

London: Macmillan Press (In association with the Australian Institute of International Affairs), 1982

323 pp. Bibliography, Statistical Tables, Appendices.

Price: \$16.80

After reading this book conventionally from cover to cover I could not help feeling that its Introduction and Conclusion were surrogate chapters which bore little relation to the text or to each other. Indeed, Robyn Lim's bland commentary of East-West and North-South issues may have served better as an introduction and Prof. Wang Gangwu's grave pronouncements about ASEAN's modernisation, a more appropriate conclusion. One is also left wondering about the role of an editor who penned a mere three-page Foreword as her ostensible contribution whatever other efforts may have gone into securing contributions to the volume's ten chapters.

This minor criticism aside, *Understanding ASEAN* is a highly readable and useful primer on the subject by a group of Australian and ASEAN officials, journalists and academics, which makes up for content what it lacks in organization. The reader is led unencumbered by excessive jargon or statistics on a *tour de force* of the growth, fortunes, challenges and future directions of the regional body. Early chapters by Roger Irvine and David Irvine on the formative years of ASEAN (1967-1975) and its subsequently more active era (1975 onwards) lay the foundation for assessing the problems of economic cooperation which Amado Castro tackles competently, the tragedy and diplomatic complexities of the Indochinese refugees crisis on which Michael Richardson informs, ASEAN external relations which Allan Gyingell documents and further discussions of ASEAN's special relations with Australia and Japan on which Frank Frost and Alan Rix respectively provide details. Ho Kwong Ping's insightful survey of the ASEAN five appears oddly as Chapter Nine and may indeed have served better as an introductory chapter. (Another organizational oversight?). The only real quarrel with the book's coverage is the glaring absence of a special chapter on Vietnam and the Kampuchean Crisis considering the importance and seriousness of the subject.

The main criticism of the book, however, is that it is long on description but short on explanation. Prof. Wang Gangwu's cursory treatment of the tradition-modernity dichotomy seems somewhat outdated and divorced from the contemporary reality conveyed in the substantive chapters. Foreign relations specialists may have preferred a theoretical chapter on regionalism and integration theory, including possibly some references to the experience of other regional bodies and their applicability to the

ASEAN case. For example, given ASEAN's progress - demonstrated by the Irvines - from a mere consultative organization to one taking common political and security stances, one may have usefully invoked the Deutschian notion of a "pluralistic security community" for some further theoretical insights.

A related failing of the book lies in its lack of systematic economic analysis such as even a conventional treatment of the economic integration concepts of free trade area, customs union and common market and their applicability to ASEAN. Such minimal theoretical knowledge would have helped the reader better in appreciating the sustained discussion in Chapter Four of the Kansu recommendations for economic cooperation. More crucially, there is no proper discussion of economic development strategies despite the observation that constantly surfaces in many chapters that the ASEAN economies have recently forsaken import-substitution industrialization for the export-orientation alternative. Nowhere is there a systematic analysis of these trends particularly to show their relation to ASEAN's incorporation into the international division of labour of the present world economy and the consequences for regional integration.

Considering the raging debate in Third World circles about dependency and underdevelopment, one is justifiably irked that books on Southeast Asia such as this one appear oblivious or are apparently unconcerned about such crucial questions. Analysis thereby tends to be narrowly focused on internal (intra-regional) factors that hinder or promote development as if external (extra-regional) factors are secondary rather than crucial explanatory variables.

The narrow and authoritarian basis of ASEAN's political economy and its seeming emulation of East Asia's newly industrializing countries is left to journalist Ho Kwong Ping to comment thus:

ASEAN countries share some common development patterns with Korea and, even more importantly they suffer the same effects of a trade-off between rapid capital accumulation and political liberalisation. The forced-march pace towards economic growth ... produces Asia's economic 'miracles' - but also widen income gaps and produced social dislocations to which the political leadership responded by suppressing dissent. Governments extolling the material benefits of economic growth have not been able to gloss over the lack of civil liberties and popular participation in national life ...

Ho's contribution stands out as the only chapter that attempts a critical evaluation of ASEAN's less savoury trends.

The less than critical chapters of other contributors have been evidently influenced by editor Broinowski's stricture of eschewing "fixed ideological positions" in the interest of objectivity (or is it diplomacy?),

resulting very often in vague and weak commentary such as the following (on ASEAN's external relations):

The more difficult tasks now confronting the ASEAN members are to arrive at a new analysis of the nature of any threat to their security in the more complex regional environment of the 1980s, to identify more precisely the sort of regional order which they want to help create, and to work out ways in which these challenges can be met.

In short, for all its content and competent coverage of ASEAN affairs, a perusal of *Understanding ASEAN* leaves one frustrated that for the most part important, controversial themes have been sacrificed supposedly for informed objectivity.

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Race Relations in Malaysia

By Wan Hashim

Kuala Lumpur: Heinemann Educational Books 1983.

Pp. xvii + 127.

Bibliography Index.

Price: \$6.35

Wan Hashim's book is a useful although very condensed historical and sociological account of ethnic relations in Malaysia from colonial times down to the present day. It does not add anything new to our knowledge of the events, movements or personalities involved, but what it does do is to provide a kind of summary map of ethnic processes in a country where such processes have dominated political, cultural and economic relationships for many years. The intended audience is pre-university (sixth form) and undergraduate (presumably first year) students as well as the ubiquitous "general reader".

Methodologically the book is an interdisciplinary one - meaning in practice a combination of historical, sociological and political science approaches. Occasionally one feels that these do not fit together entirely comfortably, but one nevertheless applauds this attempt to view the whole ethnic problem in historical terms. The book begins with a setting out of some basic concepts - of "new nations", of modernization, integration and communalism. These provide Wan Hashim with his basic conceptual vocabulary for the rest of the book. He then passes on to a brief discussion of the nature of British colonialism and its role in creating a plural society in

Malaya in chapter two and to a summary of the emergence of Malay, Chinese and Indian nationalism and communal organizations in his third chapter, and of the role of the Japanese occupation in promoting a pre-independence political culture in chapter four. The next two chapters deal with demographic, economic, socio-cultural and political dimensions of contemporary ethnic relations in Malaysia and the final three with processes of national integration. Each chapter is very brief, but is supported by a useful list of references for further reading. For the kind of student audience for whom the book is written this is probably desirable, and the easy style makes the text readable.

There are however some fairly serious theoretical flaws, and since such a book as this is the sort that puts ideas in fairly young and uncritical heads these need to be pointed out and hopefully corrected in future editions. These I would list as follows: i) A simplistic view of colonialism which ignores the very ad hoc nature of British policy and practice, its own internal contradictions and the nature of precolonial Malay society with its own feudal social structure and ethnic attitudes. ii) A rather uncritical acceptance of the political ideology of "nation-building" without a corresponding grasp of the role of the post-colonial state itself in creating, maintaining and manipulating ethnic identities and relations. iii) No serious discussion of the concepts of race or ethnicity. Indeed it seems to me that the very title of the book enshrines and transmits an undesirable conception of the problem. It is largely impossible to discuss ethnic relations without first discussing ethnicity. To what extent for example does communalism stem from differing concepts of identity and different models of interaction and relationship? To lump these together as Wan Hashim does under "the socio-cultural dimension" of the problem is to miss the point: these are *symptoms* not *causes* of the problem. iv) The May 13 crisis really receives a very inadequate coverage given the insight and documentation now available on this incident - who really caused it? Are the usual stereotyped views of the crisis really accurate or valid? To tell us that the May 13 incident occurred because "the situation became anomic" (p.83) is hardly helpful. v) The putting forward of highly contentious arguments (eg. p. 89 that Malay culture - Malaysian culture as fact and a corresponding skipping over of the issue (raised by the author himself) of the real nature of Malaysian democracy. vi) A rather elaborate use of sociological concepts without ever really exploring their implications. For example we are told a number of times that modernization exacerbates communalism, but no real *explanation* of this is given, yet since Malaysia seems committed to a conventional path of industrialization *and* is multi-ethnic, surely this is a critical issue.

In short this could have been a better book if it had confronted the main issues more directly, critically and comprehensively. It tends to be very descriptive and is rather weak on explanation. Apart from reference to Rabushka's now very dated and selective work on ethnic interaction, there

is no attempt to explore actual, empirical patterns of ethnic relations, but rather the study pitches itself at a very general, rather abstract and mainly political level, which is perhaps a consequence of its being based entirely on secondary sources rather than on first hand research. The result is that it does not advance the debate very much. The author's solution to the problem of integration - socialization from childhood into Malay culture - is not likely to prove either particularly popular (even with the Malays, not all of whom by any means are unambiguously happy about the idea of being flooded out by other ethnic groups who have already proved to be very able to adopt the cultural markers such as language) or successful given the deep structural roots of the problem. What one might have hoped for would have been a bolder solution: again an attempt to go beyond symptoms to causes, and to approach those causes in an open-minded and imaginative spirit that could make Malaysia into a remarkable experiment in ethnic coexistence. Perhaps what Wan Hashim might do in the future is to go beyond the known into a more creative exploration of the possibilities as well as of the problems and their historical roots.

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*Ownership and Control of the One
Hundred Largest Corporations in Malaysia*

By Lim Mah Hui

Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1981

Pp. xiv + 190, appendices, bibliography, index

Price: \$23.75 (paperback)

This book, derived from a Ph.D dissertation submitted to the University of Pittsburgh, represents a largely successful attempt at elucidating the structure of ownership and control of the corporate sector of the Malaysian economy at a particular period of time, viz. the early to mid-1970's. In a series of brief, well-written chapters, Lim effectively documents the following picture of the corporate sector of that time: (1) that it was foreign dominated in terms of ownership; (2) that it was dominated (in terms of the usual criteria of revenue, total assets, etc.) by a few large corporations - the author's 100 largest companies; (3) that there was a high degree of concentration of both ownership and control within these largest corporations; (4) that there existed an extensive and intensive network of links (via ownership of shares and inter-locking directorates) between these companies such that there was a coalescence of companies and individuals into "cliques" and "interest-groups". In all, Lim was able to identify 8 such cliques.

In the course of arriving at these findings, the author makes some telling points against the Berle-Means separation of ownership and control thesis, although it must be noted that his case study of Sime Darby as a counter-example to this thesis is not altogether compelling. Nevertheless, it can be accepted that control, by a large, is based on ownership.

Of interest, too, is the observation that "banks tend to form themselves as nuclei to groups of companies which they interlock and control" (p. 44). This should be more generally tested in a study of the behaviour of banks. Indeed, all too little is known of the "real" operations of banks (as contrasted to their easily perceived functions of taking deposits) as was all too woefully obvious in the recent BMF/BBMB debacle.

However, the single most important observation to arise from this study which, unfortunately, could not be pursued within the compass of the book, is the role of the Malaysian state in the corporate sector. A cursory examination of the cliques identified in chapter 7 indicates that the greater number of them either were government owned and/or controlled, or came under such ownership and control in the course of the research or subsequent to it, or were government associated in more informal ways. Sime Darby and London Tin were taken over by PERNAS in the course of the study. Malayan Banking is owned by the government. The Kuok Brothers are linked to government through Perlis Plantations, amongst other things. Lee Loy Seng is linked to the state sector via, at least, Highlands and Lowlands. The Pan-Malaysia Cement clique was associated with the state sector through Gula Perak. It can be assumed that more thorough study will produce many more links. Such a study needs to be done in order that we may have a clearer picture of the changes that have taken place since the early to mid-70's in the patterns of ownership and control within the corporate sector of the economy.

The strength of the work under review is that it provides us with some base-line information. Its weakness, in common with other structural studies, is that it provides us with little sense of dynamics. It would, however, be unfair to hold it to account for something that it did not set out to do. The intention, here, is simply to point out the need for such a study of the dynamics of the corporate sector of the Malaysian economy. Such a study must do more than simply document the changes in ownership and control patterns (it can safely be assumed that these changes have not affected the structure of such ownership as far as concentration is concerned, except, perhaps to make it even more concentrated). It should provide us with some understanding of the implications of the structure and pattern of ownership and control for such basics as growth and employment.

It might be useful at this juncture to point to certain methodological shortcomings in Lim's work, shortcomings which do not detract from the

validity of his main findings but which should nevertheless be kept in mind in any follow-up study. Firstly, there is a certain degree of formalism in the selection of companies to be studied. This is unavoidable in so far as criteria such as fixed assets, revenue, etc. are really not sufficiently sensitive indices of "largeness" if by that term we mean significance in the economy. Size of assets or of revenue are necessary, but not sufficient, conditions for "largeness" in this sense. Thus, for example, at least three of the companies in the list of 100 are now defunct, but their demise apparently did not have much of an impact. As another example, Taiping Textiles appears in the list, yet it apparently does not command much consideration within the corporate world. In other words, one might well need a combination of "objective" as well as "subjective" criteria in order to derive a list of large corporations in the above sense of "large".

Secondly, the method of determination of links, too, tends to be formalistic leading, perhaps, to the discovery of formal links that are not of much importance, while missing out informal links of great importance. An example of this is provided in the case of the Kuok Brothers. The graph provided in Chart 7.7 (p. 105) does not indicate anything in the way of the close links that existed between Robert Kuok and the state. The accompanying text, however, notes some of those links. Besides those mentioned, there were a whole host of others that would have indicated the close ties that existed (and may still exist) between the government and the Kuok group. Furthermore, while Lim, on the basis of this connectivity and dispersion indices, claims that the Kuok clique is not tightly knit, this does not appear to be the opinion of those "in-the-know".

But such relatively minor quibbles aside, this work is an important contribution to a better understanding of contemporary Malaysia and has important implications for policy-making with respect to poverty and the re-structuring of society, if the latter phrase is taken to mean the creation of greater equality.

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*Singapore's Little India:
Past, Present, and Future*

By Sharon Siddique and Nirmala Puru Shotam.
Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1982.
Pp. xi + 174. Glossary, Bibliography.
Price: M\$25.00

Any reviewer of this book should not miss the point that it is not an

ethnographic study of an Indian community in Singapore. It is a study on "the evolution of Serangoon Road as a center of Indian community space". It is a contribution to the study of CMIO (Chinese, Malays, Indians, and Others) community space which is defined as "an area wherein one of the constituent communities provides the definitive identity" (p.5).

The authors study "Little India" (Serangoon Road area) through time, dealing with its past, present, and future. Chapter one is an excellent brief but informative description on the multi-ethnic nature of Singaporean society as well as the complexity and characteristics of Indian community in general and Little India in particular, all in fifteen pages only. The idea of community space is well presented.

The three fundamental characteristics of CMIO community space of Singapore outlined by the authors on page six form the theoretical framework of the book. First, "It serves as a focal point for migrants". Second, "community space serves as a focal point for community interaction, and therefore as a reinforcement of community identity which encompasses community members living outside this geographically defined community environ". Third, "it serves as a focal point for a larger clientele which transcends the definitive community". It attracts other Singaporeans, Indians from Malaysia and elsewhere as well as tourists from all over the world.

Chapters two and three are about Serangoon Road in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The authors describe the development of this area from the time when it was originally an area of cattle-oriented industries to the Indian commercial center of today. Chapter two is well illustrated with photographs of the past, maps and beautiful building plans. The oral history derived from the description of older informants in chapter three brings to live the experience of Indian immigrants of the early twentieth century, as well as life in the 1930s and the period of Japanese occupation.

Chapter four is about the present and is well illustrated with beautiful colored photographs. The authors describe Little Indian as a focus of community interaction. It expresses and maintains the identity of Indian Singaporeans. It is not only a place where Indians interact with fellow Indians, it is where all kinds of people, both Singaporeans and tourists, go to look for things "Indian", be they Indian food, spices, "made-in-Japan" nylon saris, or even buildings. It is a place where one can buy all kinds of things, whether "Indian", or "non-Indian". Little Indian is a commercial area. The authors have in fact described more about the economic life of the area rather than the social organization or religion of the Indian residents.

The last chapter (chapter five) discusses the future of Little India. The

public housing estates in Singapore have changed not only the physical environment of the people but also their social life. The dispersed relocation of Singaporeans in housing estates is detrimental to the economic, political, social and even psychological welfare of the minority. An Indian paraphernalia shopkeeper in Little India, for example, will not have many Indian customers in a modern housing estate since Indians account for only 6.4 percent of the total population in Singapore while Chinese form 76.9 percent. An alternative to the dispersed pattern of relocation is the concentration pattern like the People's Park Complex (Eu Tong Sen Street) which has some old Chinatown spirit. However, the best alternative for Little India is change, which is unavoidable, in the context of preserving the existing community space, that is the preservation of the area, the history and the life there. This alternative is possible only if the planners understand the significance of community space to the minorities. The authority should understand that change should be a humane process and it should be in a "growth-conducive and life-enhancing direction" (Kevin Lynch, quoted on p. 153).

On the bookshelf, many people may have the impression that this is another book for tourists and the many good photographs further reinforce this first impression. Yet the book is not merely for the laymen, it is also for scholars and planners. Anthropologists may be disappointed that it is not a community study like *Middletown* (1929, by Robert S. Lynd and Helen M. Lynd) or a detailed study of the social life of an area in a city like R.P. Dore's *City Life in Japan* (1958). But the authors do not pretend that this is a detailed community study. As I have pointed out, it is the study of Little India as a community space.

The study of community space in relation to community interaction is very relevant to sociological studies in Malaysia and Singapore. The concept of community space is, for example, very useful in the study of the Portuguese Eurasians in Malacca. There are also many areas which await the kind of study that Dr. Siddique and Ms. Nirmala have initiated. The "traditional" Baba area in Katong (Singapore), for example, deserves such a study. Similar study can be done in Penang, Kuala Lumpur, Malacca and elsewhere in Malaysia. A significant aspect of Dr. Siddique and Ms. Nirmala's research is interviewing informants about life in the early twentieth century. The collection of oral history of this nature is urgent because those informants who can tell us about events in the early twentieth century will soon die out, and with them their memories of the past. For example, there are older people who can still tell us about their experience of Japanese Occupation or their experience of migration from China, India and other Southeast Asian regions to Malaya and Singapore.

Singapore's Little India is based on historical and sociological research. It may not be a book that contains profound theories or in-depth

study of social life, but it is scientific and honest in approach; unlike some studies which claim to be scientific but actually contain lots of guesswork presented in the form of "facts" and "theories".

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