

ULASAN BUKU/BOOK REVIEWS

"Malay Peasants Coping with the World: Breaking the Community Circle?"
by Rodolphe De Koninck, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, University of Singapore, 1992.

The present volume is a recent addition to numerous PhD theses, monographs and books on the people and padi fields of the Muda Agricultural Development Authority (MADA) in Kedah, Malaysia. The research was conducted over a span of several years (1972-1987) and it covered two villages; one (Matang Pinang) village in a MADA area located in northern Kedah and the other (Paya Keladi) is a village in the irrigation scheme of Seberang Perai (Penang). The study employed a survey research method based on selected samples but the latter were interviewed over two time periods yet the study is written as if they were case studies observed over a period of time.

The general framework of the book is quite dated: it seems to argue, as was current among technocrats in the 1970s, that the green revolution in MADA is beneficial to all, rich and poor alike, because the development process generates new and expanding opportunities. Apart from similar opportunities available to both rich and poor in the two villages studied, there are new forms of employment and accumulation beyond the immediate confines of the community and region. The people of MADA, particularly the younger generation of peasants, spread themselves far and wide, and find opportunities far beyond those provided by the economies of padi and agriculture. De Koninck shows clearly that after completing their (basic, secondary or tertiary) education which in itself is an opportunity provided by the development of MADA and the country generally, children of MADA families take up wage employment in government and private (mostly manufacturing) enterprises around their villages and in the emerging industrial centres of Kedah and Penang. In short, there has been considerable social mobility and "fundamental social progress" among MADA peasants particularly those closer to urban centres.

To emphasise his point, De Koninck brushes aside several studies on MADA peasants which are critical of the green revolution. He asserts that negative impacts are either "unfounded", "yet to yield convincing results" or "have not been properly documented". He states at one point, for instance, that "currently in the Muda region, there is no solid evidence ... that the economic standing of the majority has deteriorated ... that the poor are being physically

displaced, or they are being proletarianized" (p.190). While he agrees that agricultural innovation favours larger operators, he emphasises that small operators have likewise been able to improve their social condition. One major reason is that landownership, once a major denominator of a good life, has given way to some other bases such as modern farming methods, capital intensity in farming, productivity based on technology, networking and entrepreneurship. De Koninck shows quite clearly that even with a small piece of land, a peasant in MADA today may improve himself by investing in modern agricultural machinery, operating additional land on rent, organising harvesting work as well as trading and providing services (eg. transportation). Of course landownership is still a major advantage but all this brings home the point that intensification of commodity relations engendered by the green revolution diversifies the bases of accumulation process among MADA peasants. This is certainly one major contribution the volume offers.

But is this unexpected? It would have been quite surprising had the findings shown the opposite to be the case. Considering the fact that economic growth and social development in Malaysia in the last two decades have been nothing if not impressive, one would expect to see even greater socio-economic improvement than what De Koninck describes. Furthermore, given the political commitment and thrust of the present development ideology particularly as they are expressed in the policies and strategies of rural development, one might even ask why is development still incomplete? Why are there still pockets of poverty, particularly hardcore poverty, in the villages? For instance, why are there still poor villagers who are even willing to do odd jobs for others and expect such things as *zakat* in return (cf.pp.57;114 and 147-8)? It is interesting to note that De Koninck alludes to problems and difficulties of people displaced by machinery but why does he refuse to acknowledge that such immiseration is caused by rural proletarianisation? Is it because he finds it difficult to define what proletarianisation is (p.191)? In contrast, he comfortably assigns 'entrepreneur peasant' and 'agricultural entrepreneurs' as capitalists (chapter 7). I find it quite odd for capitalists to emerge without proletariats. It is quite clear that this book emphasises new opportunities and down-plays the fact that the green revolution in Kedah, being part of the overall capitalist development in Malaysia has, by its very nature, its own inconsistencies and drawbacks as well.

De Koninck also blames the government: while it develops the rural sector through agencies such as MADA, it impedes further development by destroying local authority structure and imposes direct control on the people. At the same time it also competes with and undermines the position of local

Malay capitalists. In contrast, DeKoninck shows that Chinese capitalists thrive on but he has little explanation for this. Likewise he does not explain how the threatened Malay capitalists react. Do they seek assistance from other government agencies such as MARA and Farmers Organisation Authority, appeal to their political masters or simply join the opposition political party (PAS)? It is common knowledge that rural Malay petty bourgeoisie are created and sustained by the government through UMNO and I find it surprising that this socio-political aspect is absent in both villages studied.

Obviously the strength of the book lies in highlighting the rise and success of rural people in modern Malaysia. The Malay daily, *Utusan Malaysia*, does this quite regularly. The spirit is to show how capitalist development successfully transforms originally poor rural Malays into leading players in business and industry. In this sense, this book seems to document the success of the New Economic Policy (NEP) though the author shows a clear dislike for state intervention in rural economy. The case of Ramli and Fatimah from Paya Keladi (p.164-5) is quite exemplary: while the parents operate a rented parcel of land, tap rubber for wages in Bertam Estate and work for wages in padi fields, the children managed to obtain tertiary education with a son winning a state agency scholarship to study electrical engineering in Knoxville, Tennessee. It is common knowledge that there are thousands of beneficiaries such as Ramli and Fatimah in rural Malaysia today but the credit certainly goes to De Koninck for documenting the process in the two villages studied. I have not come across a national survey on social mobility thus far.

But what about those who fail to take advantage of the NEP? It is also well-known that the majority of poor rural children drop out of school from an early age. Chapter 9 of this book documents the process: they get married early, have a number of children, work the land as (but probably on smaller plots than) their parents did and in some cases, join the army, settle in Felda schemes, take up factory work in towns and pick up trades such as carpentry. They constitute a large army of propertyless people ready to join the working class population of the country. No doubt their employment also constitutes new opportunities, as De Koninck seems to suggest, but in terms of security, benefits, prospect and status of employment, theirs are quite different from that of the 'other half'. Certainly social differentiation and class relations are important aspects of social life but this book does not make an issue of it. As a result, the book touches on the emergence of classes, particularly of capitalists but misses out on the proletariats and thus on class dynamics at the micro or village level. Likewise it raises the issue of state interference in rural economy but leaves out peasant-state relations in village development. Considering that peasants are not simply furnished with new opportunities but

have to work for them, the politics of employment in the villages studied is missing and this makes the reading less exciting.

In general, I think this book tends to overemphasise the positive aspects of village development to the point that it does not bring out the dynamics of peasant development itself. To this extent, I believe the book falls short of dispelling some of the major neo-Marxist criticisms of the green revolution particularly when it uses neo-Marxist jargon to present a rather unMarxist analysis. The book, however, scores very well in terms of describing what and how people in the villages do in adjusting themselves to new local level opportunities engendered by the green revolution and the NEP. But for students of Malaysian village development, the book is a good reminder that village studies need more than a description of survey data.

Halim Salleh
School of Social Sciences
Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang

Javanese Shadow Puppets by Ward Keeler. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1992. Images of Asia Series. 96pp, 16 colour illustrations.

After a casual introduction to the Javanese shadow play (*wayang kulit*), in 1968 Ward Keeler spent two years doing anthropological field work, specifically studying the aesthetic principles underlying *wayang kulit*, and how that art form, "a very unusual and intriguing genre", fits into its particular cultural setting.

Following an introduction, in which various aspects of *wayang kulit* are briefly discussed, the first chapter of this book focuses upon a story, in this case, *Pandhu Crowned King*. The writer proceeds, in subsequent chapters to discuss the shadow play in Javanese society (chapter two), the *wayang's* repertoire and the structure of a performance he observed (chapter three). Chapters four and five deal, respectively, with interpretations of and approaches towards *wayang*, and the place of *wayang kulit* in the modern world.

The writer, representing perhaps a Eurocentric background as well as sensibility, and addressing his work one feels to a Western readership, brings to his study attitudes towards the *wayang* which are not necessarily always

the "correct" ones. Again, since this work highlights the writer's interest in the "sociological aspects" of *wayang kulit* rather than in *wayang kulit* as performance art, certain aspects of the *wayang* which a specialist in the field would highlight have been deliberately skimmed over.

For a start, a proper definition of *wayang kulit* seems to be lacking, and there is no indication of the fact that the book deals specifically with the classical *wayang kulit purwa*, the most important of the many Javanese shadow play forms, rather than with the shadow play in Java *per se*. Again, the description of *wayang kulit* as a "distant relative" of opera with "that art form's grand mix of music, story and extravagant stylization" is disturbing, particularly when one remembers that "opera" constitutes a particular variety of sung and spoken theatre performed by human actors that developed only in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (compared to *wayang kulit* which the author rightly points out possibly already existed in Java from about the 10th century!). The opera style is well represented in Indonesia by such examples as *ketoprak*, *arja*, *ludruk*, *bangsawan* and others.

The writer, like the average Western observer of *wayang*, is confounded at least initially, by the fact that an art form should be "based on shadows", by *wayang*'s "strangeness of format", and by its altogether different pace compared to Western theatre. What appears to him to be intriguing in the genre, however, is "the promise of aesthetic and even mystical riches." Unfortunately none of these get discussed in the work.

What makes *wayang* even more unusual for the writer is the fact that there is stylization in its figures. He refers in particular to the difficulty in distinguishing between male and female characters: gods, heroes and monsters who flout "the usual human capacities", the fact that puppets are only minimally manipulated, and the absence of scenery. But the writer decides that the *wayang*'s principles are "intelligible", even "sensible" to outsiders and "need not be unapproachably exotic."

Thus while attempting to create the impression that the genre is in fact "exotic", which it no doubt is to a Western newcomer, the author tries all the same to make it appear as if outsiders can gain ready access to it. The caveat is the term "puppets" and the connotations of that term to Westerners as well as the expectations of a Western audience. Comparisons to Western theatre styles, as well as to well-known characters or personalities, such as Punch and Judy and even Charlie Chaplin, though not altogether appropriate, occur here and there to enable a Western reader to appreciate the *wayang* "through an idiom he understands". This approach is both disturbing and distracting.

The first chapter, "Pandhu Crowned King", contains a description of a performance, by the puppeteer (*dalang*) Ki Anom Soeroto. Unfortunately no attempt is made to indicate the context, i.e. the Hindu epic *Mahabharata*, from which this episode derives, until the third chapter wherein the author also discusses the *Murwakala* play performed for ritual purposes; the second Hindu epic, *Ramayana*; *lakon pokok* or principal stories, and, *lakon carangan* or branch stories derived from the two epics already referred to. One wishes this information had come before the graphic presentation of "Pandhu Crowned King".

In "Pandhu Crowned King" dialogue and story, in actual performance-sequences given almost verbatim as well as in synopsis, are interspersed with comments, romanticised "scene setting", the writer's own impressions as well as other digressions. These are not only disturbing, but also detract from the actual description of the performance. At the same time the author tries to provide technical information regarding the shadow play -- a description of the theatre (*panggung*), descriptions of selected puppets, details regarding the *gamelan* orchestra, the use of music including modes (*pathet*), conventions, a discussion of the role and responsibilities of a *dalang*. This information, necessarily brief and incomplete given the length of the book itself, is juxtaposed with the progress of the story, with descriptions of audience behaviour, and other details, such as those pertaining to the crowd, the food-sellers (and even the food) at performances and so on. One cannot help but wish that all these extraneous details were omitted, or at the least presented in a separate chapter, to allow for a better appreciation of aspects of performance. Similarly some of the information dealing with social norms -- the arrival of guests by motor bike, the attire, the manner of "kneeling-walking" to show respect in the second chapter, though interesting nevertheless is distracting.

The third chapter describes *wayang* in performance. Also contained here is a variety of other themes, including repertoire. There are interesting details regarding village purification performances, as well as differences between Surakarta (Solo) and Jogjakarta styles of *wayang*.

The first half of chapter four contains discussions of a whole range of topics, including Hindu myths and their understanding in Java, a performance as a symbol of the life course of a person, the role of spirits, (although the author does not think that the view that spirits act as audience members is tenable), the offerings presented to spirits in ritual performances, the religious overtones of *wayang*, ethical and moral teachings within *wayang*, and *wayang*

as a reflection of the hierarchical structure of Javanese society. Some of these are fascinating.

When, however, the author gets into the theories, (some of which according to him are not verifiable) related to the origins of the Javanese shadow play and some of its interpretations, citing the opinions of venerable scholars such as Hazeau, Serrurier, and Rassers, and when he discusses, in the same place, the commonly held view that the famous nine Muslim saints (*wali songo*), were in fact responsible for developing (more correctly, modifying and reutilising) *wayang* in the earliest days of Islam in Java, he takes an overly critical stance. His stand that no theory can be accepted or rejected outright comes without a full and proper discussion of the theories and interpretations of *wayang*. Although he admits that the *wayang* contains attempts at social criticism, the author believes that aesthetic pleasure is more central to the Javanese shadow play.

The final chapter discusses the future of *wayang*, an archaic form, and the challenges coming from changes in value system, perceptions, as well as new forms of entertainment. The audience, he feels, will not be able to appreciate the old language, although traditional forms of theatre such as *ketoprak* and even *wayang kulit* appear on television and still have an audience. He feels that sponsorship from the wealthy will continue, so that *wayang* will, for instance, continue to feature at weddings, with a distinct preference for cheaper *dalang*. The author surmises that in spite of a tendency for performances to get shorter, and other ongoing changes within *wayang*, *wayang kulit purwa* is not endangered at this point in time.

Overall this work, reflecting the author's background and training, has a sociological emphasis. It deals less with specific aspects of *wayang*. It is obvious that the author has an amazing range of information to offer, but is hampered by constraints of space. The result is that many topics merely get passing mention. A more specific focus would certainly have brought greater strength to the work, particularly given the fact that so much published information is already available on *wayang kulit purwa*.

Among the most valuable features of the book are the handsome drawings by Suharso and the photographs which, in some instances, present unusual views of *wayang* in performance.

Ghulam-Sarwar Yousof
School of Performing Arts
Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang

Zapin: Folk Dance of the Malay World by Mohd Anis Md Nor. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1993. Southeast Asian Social Science Monographs. 224pp, maps, musical transcriptions, dance notations.

This is one of the very few published works on Malay dance, and the first on *zapin*. As such it is a welcome volume, one of several Oxford University Press offerings on Malaysian traditional performing arts in recent years.

Preliminary research for the above volume was carried out in several states of peninsular Malaysia, in Singapore as well as in Indonesia at varying periods of length during the years 1983-89.

The preface to the work and its first, introductory, chapter, indicate the author's methodology and the work's objectives. Chapter two discusses *Zapin* in Johore, while the third chapter, "*Zapin* and the Malay World" examines the genre in a larger geographical context. The fourth chapter "Public Entertainment in the Pre Second World War Period" highlights the use of *zapin* in the *bangsawan* theatre form, as well as *zapin* in the urban public entertainment parks and in the Malay film industry. The last of these topics gets further detailed treatment in the following chapter. Village and Contemporary *Zapin* are discussed in chapter six with special focus on music and dance. Finally, chapter seven, "*Zapin* in Malaysia: the Contemporary Context", discusses the institutionalisation of the genre, besides providing details regarding the contemporary repertoire and interpretation of *zapin*. Also discussed here are attempts by *zapin* to "rediscover its roots". Two Appendices are included in the work: Appendix A: The Music Transcriptions, and Appendix B: Dance Notations. The work is rounded up with a Bibliography as well as an index and is illustrated with fifteen black and white photographs.

The aims of the above work, as outlined in the Preface and in the Introductory chapter are: (a) To provide insight into the development of the *zapin* dance in Malaysia; and in doing so, (b) to shed light on how the movement of the Malays to widely dispersed areas within the region of the Straits of Malacca has influenced the development of a particular form of dance; (c) to examine the historical evolution and transformation of *zapin* into a national form; (d) to show how limited elements in regional culture and performing arts are transformed in the process of integration into the national popular culture; (e) to cast light on the way in which the Malay identity is being reformulated and redefined through the introduction of "alien" elements; (f) to touch on the creation of a broad national identity through the incorporation of regional

elements into a nationally conceived popular culture. For the author the performing arts, and *zapin* in particular, offer an excellent venue through which these processes can be studied, since the arts function on an emotional rather than on an explicitly rational plane. Thus, finally this study is expected to "provide access to aspects of the creation of a national identity that are not approachable in other ways."

Even a cursory glance at these objectives reveals that they are both nebulous and over ambitious. It is not surprising, therefore, that the work, containing a mere ninety-two pages of text, fails to achieve even a fraction of these objectives.

The emphasis in the study seems to be upon the social context rather than upon the genre itself, and as far as this aspect of *zapin* goes, the author has succeeded in giving a good overall picture of the genre's distribution in various territories within the "Malay world". On the other hand, *zapin* itself does not get adequately defined or described. Consequently, comparisons of various forms of *zapin*, such as *Zapin Arab*, *Zapin Melayu*, *Village Zapin*, *Contemporary zapin* and another style named merely *zapin* are at best tentative, and often confusing. When it comes to *zapin* origins and history, and to the question as to whether or not the genre received royal patronage, for instance in places like Deli in Sumatra, the present work makes many unsubstantiated assumptions.

The task of a proper appreciation of *zapin* has, unfortunately, been rendered difficult and confusing as a result of the inclusion of a substantial amount of irrelevant purely historical, information on various territories within the "Malay world"; peripheral information regarding *bangsawan*, entertainment parks, the development of the Malay film industry and especially P. Ramlee's involvement in it. While it is acknowledged that *bangsawan*, amusement parks, and Malay films did in many ways supply the context for *zapin* as well as, in the case of the Malay film industry, inspiration for development and change in the genre, one feels that extended digressions on these topics per se are unnecessary, even if the information they provide is interesting. Similarly details regarding other dance forms such as *joget*, *inang* and *asli*, as used in films, serve little purpose. Such information would certainly have helped if it were to serve as a means of providing an overall framework for traditional Malay dances, and for *zapin* within this framework, or even to highlight facets of *zapin*.

Sweeping statements, broad assumptions, and the fact that vital concepts such as "*Malayness*", "*Alam Melayu*", "*Rumpun Melayu*", "*Keseragaman*"

(Uniformity), and something the author calls "Malay ethics" remain undefined makes it even more difficult for the reader. For instance, according to the author, *Zapin Melayu* is performed mostly by the Malays, while *Zapin Arab*, a more robust and energetic dance form compared to the former, is performed by "pure blooded Arab communities" in Johore, whose exact numbers and locations remain unstated. The latter style of *zapin* appears to the Malays coarse and less refined than *Zapin Melayu* "as it does not encapsulate the complexities of Malay ethics and the Malay perception of aesthetics." Unfortunately a proper understanding of Malay ethics and "Malay perception[s] of aesthetics", though extremely important to the author and, intrinsically, to all scholars of Malay culture, are not even cursorily spelt out in this work. As far as is known there has never to date been any attempt at even a preliminary theory of Malay aesthetics.

The problem gets serious when the reader has to deal with concepts such as Alam Melayu, Rumpun Melayu, Kesaragam, all highly stressed by the author but all unexplained. One senses a desire in the author to see Malay "nationalism" as being achieved symbolically through the *zapin* dance. *Zapin*, says the author "seems to bring about an awareness of Alam Melayu", whatever that phrase means. Hence the rather awkward attempts in this work to make *zapin* fit into a far from clearly defined "Malay world". In the section on "*Zapin* as a Malay performing art" the author does not define the "Malayness" of *zapin*, despite the fact that this concept of "Malayness" is given considerable importance in the author's mind.

One notices in the work a sort of missionary zeal for *zapin* due to its connection, in the author's mind, with Islam and Islamic [Arab] traditions. This connection apparently gives *zapin* a status beyond other traditional Malay performing arts. This of course raises the question as to whether the major traditional theatre, dance and music forms, such as *mak yong*, *wayang kulit* and *bangsawan*, cannot in fact be considered "Malay" due to a distinct lack of Islamic flavour in them. The author has not attempted to explain this problem.

Errors, inaccuracies, and contradictions further mar the work. The author claims for instance, that no formal teaching of traditional Malay performing arts is offered in any Malaysian university. A degree programme in Performing arts, with adequate emphasis on Malay traditions of the performing arts, has in fact been in existence at Universiti Sains Malaysia since 1970.

As far as *zapin* is concerned, this work takes a historical and distributional approach. Certain specific technical details are, however provided, for instance in chapter six. This chapter is by the far the most valuable chapter in the volume apart from the appendices containing music transcriptions and dance notations. In view of the almost total absence of well-researched material on Malay dance, something recognised by the author, this work would have been much more useful had it been designed as a study of *zapin* as a dance form *per se*.

Overall, while providing a detailed picture of the distribution of *zapin* and some of its varieties, as well as indicating to some extent the context in which *zapin* was in the past performed and continues in the present, one feels that the work has not really achieved its own set out objectives. The most useful sections appear to be the sixth chapter which grapples with technical details of *zapin*, the appendices, and the fairly good bibliography. The addition of a glossary would have been of immense assistance to the reader, especially since equivalent terms for Malay terminology are not always available.

Ghulam-Sarwar Yousof
School of Performing Arts
Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang

The Emergence, Development and Dissolution of the Pro-China Organisations in Singapore by Chui Kwei-chiang and Hara Fujio, Institute of Developing Economies, Tokyo, 1991, pp. ii, 133. Preface, Tables, Abbreviations.

This study is the outcome of a joint project conducted by the Institute of Developing Economies in Japan on two major China-oriented political parties, the Kuomintang (KMT) and the China Democratic League (CDL) in post-war Singapore. Its overriding objective appears to be one of formulating general interpretations of Chinese political identity of the period. Both authors have published widely on the topics and they should be congratulated for pooling together their indefatigable labour to work on this less developed area in Malaysian historiography.

After giving a captivating overview of Malayan Chinese responses to political development in China from the late 19th century to the early 1940's in the introductory chapter of Part 1, Chui sets out to describe meticulously in

Chapter 2 the multiplicity and complexity of the KMT's organisation and its expansion within a multi-ethnic polity. With the rise of indigenous political consciousness and the colonial government's attempt to create a common Malayan citizenship, the KMT was proscribed in May 1949 for its part in propagating an alien political ideology and loyalty. Despite this setback, some party loyalists capitalised on the government's tolerance and attempted with some success to foster closer ties with the Nationalist Government in Taiwan in the 1950's, an episode which the author neatly summarises in Chapter 5. Meanwhile, KMT members were encouraged to join the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) 'so as to secure the support and win the confidence of the Chinese to restore KMT's prestige' (p. 70). This was, however, to take an abrupt turn towards the end of the decade when more and more KMT hard-cores began to involve themselves voluntarily in Singapore's electoral process.

A similar narrative approach is adopted to trace the rise and fall of the CDL in Singapore and Malaya between 1946 and 1949 in Chapter 3. The factual portions of this account are informative. The author makes a few interesting points as regards the instrumental role of Hu Yu-chih in implementing the Chinese Communist Party's United Front Policy at the height of the Civil War. It is especially insightful on the close rapport between the CDL and Tan Kah Kee shedding some light on the latter's charismatic character as the indisputable leader of the Chinese community. Nevertheless, the CDL's influence amongst intellectuals and petty merchants receded gradually principally because of the elitist and disunited leadership at both the state and national levels. Besides being unable to widen its scope of activities, it also failed to solve the long haunting financial problems of the party. After the declaration of the Emergency, the CDL was brought under the close surveillance of the colonial government. It was finally forced to wind up in May 1949. Its organ, the *Nan Ch'iao Jit Pao*, however, remained operational until September 1950 when it reiterated in its editorial that it would not involve itself in 'local political struggle' but would continue voicing its stand on issues and problems related to China and the Overseas Chinese. Many of its key personnel were repatriated to China and the pro-Tan Kah Kee group eventually began to acclimatise themselves with current changes in the country.

The conflict between the KMT and the CDL had always been a heated issue in local Chinese politics with each aggressively pursuing its own cause. It assumed a new dimension when the Civil War in China escalated. It impinged on the Singapore Chinese society, reinforced its segmental delineations and occasionally led to violence. This struggle was also well

reflected in the contest for power in the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce, and in the columns of rival partisan newspapers, notably the pro-KMT *Nanyang Siang Pao*, *Sin Chew Jit Pao* and *Chung Shing Jit Pao* on one side, and the pro-CDL *Nan Ch'iao Jit Pao* on the other. The rift cut clear across parochial frontiers making all reconciliations impossible. Such is the thrust of Chui's Chapter 4, by far the most exciting and illuminating.

Insofar as the sources permit, the various accounts portrayed by Chui are reasonably balanced. Lacking a coherent conceptual framework, he nevertheless seeks to reconstruct historical phenomena both chronologically and thematically with the use of English and Chinese sources. While such an approach may enable one to avoid unnecessary controversy, inadvertent errors may occur if sources are not selected and interpreted critically. One such slip pertains to the use of War Office Records to depict Hu Yu-chih as an ambitious character aspiring to make a name for himself in Colonial Malaya while promoting the CDL's cause (p. 33). Another error is in relation to the amalgamation of the KMT and the more articulate San-Min-Chu-I Youth Corps approved by the Sixth Plenary Session of the Central Committee of KMT (sic) in September 1947 (p. 10). In point of fact, it was a move necessitated not by local rivalry. It was a new party strategy to solve the feud between the youth corps and the parent body long existing in China itself. In addition, there are also factual errors such as mistaking Queen Victoria for Queen Elizabeth II as the English monarch to whom a petition was addressed in January 1955 against the English proficiency requirement in the Singapore Legislative Assembly (p. 71).

In contrast to Chui's narrative essays in part I, Hara Fujio has chosen in 'Liberation of Malaya and Liberation of China' in Part II, to raise some contentious issues regarding the Chinese left-wing movement in post-war Malaya to reaffirm the symbiotic relationship of co-operation and contradiction between the China-oriented CDL (the C Group) and the Malayan-centric MCP (the M Group). Quoting contemporary Chinese sources as his evidence, he surmises that the renunciation of dual citizenship, the debates over the uniqueness of Malayan Chinese literature and the strategic change in United Front Policy were all part of the MCP's deliberations which culminated in armed revolution in June, 1948, 'a national liberation movement independent of China's civil war' (p. 87). However, this concurrent programme of Malayanisation and radicalisation failed to strike a sympathetic chord in the hearts of the local Chinese as they were largely skewed towards China in their political orientation. Equally disastrous was the alienation of the Malay left from the MCP when all manifest support for the People's Constitution was withdrawn. Consequently, the MCP had to

revert to being a satellite party of the Chinese Communist Party when more and more Chinese identified themselves with Malaya's constitutional developments in the 1950's.

Inherent in Hara's article is the weight of historiographical discussions on the origins of the Emergency which, in turn bears upon the analysis of the MCP's lost struggle. While the author has undoubtedly advanced another plausible explanation of the party's futile attempt to capture power, his use of Eu Chooi Yip's interview article as evidence of the beginnings of the MCP's Malayanisation programme is controversial. Eu's account was but a rebuttal to the results of a *Nan Ch'iao Jit Pao's* opinion polls on dual nationality in June 1947. Writing in his capacity as the Secretary-General of MDU, Eu preoccupied himself with his party's stand on the issue which was then, in consonance with the People's Constitutional Proposals. In this respect, one wonders why in his search for a decisive turning point, Hara has disregarded May 1946, when the MCP officially announced their 9-Point 'Democratic' Program and preferred to opt instead for November 1947 when Eu's account appeared.

As for the lengthy literary debates in Chinese vernacular press from early 1947 to early 1948, available sources show that it might not have been orchestrated by the MCP to brainstorm the fractious literary and political elites of the day on necessary changes in their political programme. It could have been the outgrowth of the Nanyang New Emerging Literary Movement which originated in the late 1920's. The immediate cause that sparked off such a discourse was an informal forum in Singapore in January 1947 as acknowledged by Fang Xiū, an authority cited by Hara. At this juncture of the MCP's history, the party was being plagued by Lai Teck's treacherous act and one doubts that it was in a position to give much priority to direct the course of the literary debates.

While readers may not be in full agreement with Hara's "Revolution by Timetable" thesis chiefly because of the scanty and doubtful sources he has mustered, his explanation of the radicalisation of MCP is certainly accurate. After all, one of the major resolutions adopted by the Fourth Plenum of the MCP's Central Executive Committee in Singapore in March 1948 was to rectify the moderate line advocated by Lai Teck, a fact long recognised by scholars like Hanrahan, Brimmell, McLane, Short, Khong Kim Hoong and Mahmud Embong. Nevertheless, Hara is very unspecific when he remarks that the MCP had eventually to satisfy itself with its subservient role as a satellite of the CCP. He needs to elaborate on this vital point in his argument.

Hara's second article entitled 'Repatriates to China' is a short but provocative analysis filled with interesting observations. With an appended table which takes up one quarter of the book, he postulates that C Group members, on their return to China, were given important portfolios in Communist China's political bureaucracy such as the National People's Congress and the Overseas Chinese Affairs Committees (OCACs). This has most probably given them the opportunity to influence the making of China's Overseas Chinese policy.

As far as this is concerned, one realizes that the author is trying to build his theoretical categories into what Stephen Fitzgerald has put forward in *China and the Overseas Chinese: A Study of Peking's Changing Policy 1949-1970*. Before any conclusions can be drawn, it is best to keep in mind the fact that the OCACs and the central Overseas Chinese Affairs Council do not possess any authority to act independently. The final arbiter of China's external policy on the Overseas Chinese is, as Fitzgerald has suggested, the State Council Staff Office of Foreign Affairs with advice from the Foreign Office. The author has rightly said that C Group members might have played an invaluable role by virtue of their intimate knowledge of Malaya and Singapore. But how far-reaching their actual influence on policy-making has been certainly requires further empirical study.

Taken as a whole, the two parts that constitute the book are glaringly incoherent and uneven. More rigorous editing, especially of the *pinyin* transliterations, is also needed. Despite all these structural deficiencies common to works co-authored by scholars, the book is without doubt a welcome contribution to the existing knowledge of Chinese politics in post-war Singapore and Malaya.

Tan Kim Hong
International College, Penang

To Siam and Malaya in the Duke of Sutherland's Yacht 'Sans Peur' by Florence Caddy. Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1992. 363 pp. with original preface by the author and a Biographical Note on the Author by J.M. Gullick.

This book was first published in 1889 and is one amongst several in the same genre of writings by an earlier generation of European travellers to the region which OUP selected for republication in its 'Oxford in Asia Paperbacks' and

'Oxford in Asia Hardback Reprints' Series (see *Oxford in Southeast Asia*, 1992 catalogue). The voyage described in this particular book began in December 1888 and the journey covered the Red Sea (Ch.2), India (Ch.3), Singapore (parts of Ch. 3 & 9), Siam (Chs. 4-9), Johore (Chs 10 & 11), Ceylon (Ch. 12) and Egypt (Chs. 13 & 14). Florence Caddy was, by her own account (see her Preface), invited by the Duke of Sutherland as a "geographer and naturalist" to join the small and select group of travellers accompanying the Duke on what was apparently a trip undertaken for health reasons. Gullick's concise but highly informative and well-researched note tells us more, not just about the author herself, but also about the actual purpose of the journey and the probable reasons for Mrs. Caddy's inclusion.

The publisher's blurb on the back cover describes this as a "delightful account of a voyage" which contains descriptions that can be "considered as set-pieces of real historical value" and suggests that "today's reader will find it as fresh and entertaining as when it was first published". In the late nineteenth century when the book was first published, readers of the book would have been almost certainly Europeans who would conceivably have been entertained and no doubt also charmed by Mrs. Caddy's observations on 'natives' and their 'exotic' ways. It is, however, difficult to imagine that many readers of today can possibly read her book with the same 'innocence'. Southeast Asian readers especially will not find it easy to be delighted or charmed by the *orientalist* prism that colours Mrs. Caddy's social observations which are cast in all the familiar and predictable turns of phrase that mark such a perspective. This is not intended to suggest that Mrs. Caddy is to be faulted for being representative of her times and her social background. Quite the opposite. The historical value of her book lies precisely in its representativeness. Together with others of the same genre, this book (re)presents "set-pieces" from a (by)gone era, containing language and descriptions that cry out for decoding. Except for those suffering from a severe need to be soothed by the illusions of colonialist nostalgia, Mrs. Caddy's book cannot be read as simply delightful or as straight historical presentation.

Tan Liok Ee
School of Humanities
Universiti Sains Malaysia Penang.

Bangsa Melayu: Malay Concepts of Democracy and Community 1945-1950 by Ariffin Omar. Kuala Lumpur & New York: Oxford University Press, 1993. xvi, 251pp., 15b/w illus., 4 tables, end paper maps.

The acute and feverish stage of anti-colonial nationalism in Indonesia and Malaya - following incubation periods of half a century or so - came on the heels of the Japanese occupation as it ended in late 1945. This stage was marked in Indonesia by the bloody flux of revolution and contrastingly in Malaya by a more muted political activism hobbled by complex intra-communal tensions. Perhaps because of these contrasts, comparisons between the two territories in this period, seldom enough undertaken, have tended to the superficial and as often as not been confined to examination of the markedly different colonial matrices from which the newly independent states in due course emerged, or generalizations about assumed Pan-Malayan sentiment. One of the common places of this literature is that Muhammad Yamin and others were the unsuccessful advocates in 1945 of an *Indonesia Raya* (Greater Indonesia) that would embrace a unitary post-colonial Dutch East Indies and British Malaya and that the left-wing Malay Nationalist Party (PKMM) equally fruitlessly sought a *Melayu Raya* conceived along apparently similar lines. But did these two prescriptions in fact mean anything like the same thing and how did the Malays of Indonesia and the Malays of Malaya construe them in seeking to shape their political future?

One of the numerous merits of Dr. Ariffin Omar's fine and subtly argued book is that it makes it impossible to hold any longer many of the more simplistic notions comparing or contrasting post-war political development and Malay political ideology on either side of the Malacca Strait. At the center of his study are the ethnically Malay communities of Peninsular Malaya and East Sumatra, communities with in many respects, a shared past and shared institutions - notably that of *kerajaan* monarchy but in 1945 inextricably embedded in locally complex, nascent nation states and faced with circumstances that, despite some similarities, required very different kinds of political pragmatism. His central concern throughout a series of careful, linked, and extremely well constructed narrative accounts of political developments in, alternately, Malaya and Sumatra from 1945 to 1950 (focused on the "Malayan Union Crisis" in Malaya and the republican extinction of monarchy in East Sumatra) is to explore the ways in which established or newly coined Malay-language terminologies for concepts such as "community", "nationalism", "sovereignty" and "democracy" were adopted, utilized, transformed or appropriated by one or another social group to give expression to the exigencies of the situations in which they found themselves and to produce or justify political change.

The result is a brilliantly persuasive examination of the development over half a decade of two dominant but ultimately divergent political ideologies, constructed from in many ways identical materials. The book is, in consequence, a major contribution not simply to modern Malaysian and Indonesian political history and historiography but to broader comparative studies of ethnicity and identity as well as to understandings of decolonization and post-colonial state-building elsewhere. One of its most satisfying strengths is the close attention given not simply to analyzing but to presenting textually to the reader generous measures of the political rhetoric of the protagonists. Among a remarkably wide range of materials employed in this respect including Dutch and British colonial records, interviews with participants and private papers, a central role is allocated to the vernacular press of the time, itself a participant of great importance and a formative influence in ideological change.

Though Dr. Ariffin's study was originally prepared as a doctoral dissertation at the Australian National University (it in no way detracts from his achievement, incidentally, to note that he has benefited greatly from the earlier seminal work of A.J.S. Reid and A.C. Milner) it has few of the vices often attributed to the genre. Elegantly and clearly written, its accompanying scholarly apparatus is judicious and helpful and the maps and illustrations assist in bringing the text to life. Altogether a book very much to be welcomed.

William R. Roff
Columbia University