

ULASAN BUKU/BOOK REVIEWS

Bilingual Women: Anthropological Approaches to Second Language Use by Pauline Burton, Ketaki Kushari Dyson and Shirley Ardener (eds.) Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1994, pp. 198

Although much has been written on bilingualism and on gender issues, what is apparently missing are studies which engender bilingualism. This book, which is a collection of papers presenting anthropological approaches to women and second-language use in a wide range of cultures, is an attempt to fill in part of this gap. Much sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic research has centered on questions of identity and inequality, but it has been gender-blind. One may well ask why is it important or essential to engender language difference? According to one of the contributors to this book, using a particular language variety may identify a person's social or regional origins, age and sex. "Questions of gender are questions of social relations. They are questions of making difference, of power, authority and 'alternative voices'" (p. 187). The writing in this book view language as social activity and focus on acts and choices especially on shifts between different language usage in different social situations.

Studies on gender and language can be conducted at both the micro- and macro-level. At the micro-level, the focus is on the minutiae of sentence variations. Is women's use of language different from that of men in terms of syntactical structures and semantic differences? However, the studies presented in this book are of the latter type i.e. of the macro-level, which focus on gender difference in the choice and application of second languages. Do difference between men and women in second-language use simply reflect male oppression of women? The case studies in this book shows that the issue is definitely more complex and intricate than the single factor of male oppression.

These studies deal with the experience of women in different situations of language contact which mainly fall into three categories: those in which language contact has occurred through European colonial conquest, those in which individual pockets of speakers of minority languages are cut off by the surrounding national languages, and the unique experience of a bilingual individual within a powerful monolingual society. Studies that fall in the first two categories deal with language use at the level of the group and not at the individual level. The women's language choice is important because often they are seen as the "guardians of the local languages and ethnic identity"

(p. 15). In several of the case studies, women are found to be responsible either for maintaining the vernacular language or causing language death by choosing to speak or not to speak it themselves and by transmitting it or not to their children.

The case studies in this volume cover a wide variety of geographical and linguistic situations, ranging from the death of Gaelic in Scotland and Konkani among Catholic Goan women to the use of Spanish by Quechua and Aymara women in the Andes. The role of women in the death (or survival) of minority languages is highlighted in the chapters on patterns of women's language use; of Gaelic in Scotland, Breton in Brittany and Konkani in Goa. The role of colonialism in introducing a second language into a speech community which led to the emergence of dominant and subservient languages and women's use of them are examined in Bolivia, Chile, Zaire, Mongolia and Goa. This book also includes two personal narrative chapters which were written by an interpreter of English in China and a bilingual writer who writes in Bengali and English.

While this book is rich with descriptions of women's different language use in different parts of the world, it is generally weak in theoretical analysis. With the exception of Burton's and Harvey's chapters, there is little explanation as to why there are gender difference in second language usage, explanations that can cut across national boundaries. Since most of them are case studies, it is quite impossible to draw any general conclusion. As one of the writers herself acknowledges, "[I]t is not the aim of this exercise to reach general and generalizing conclusions about the relationship between gender and the fate of Gaelic (or any minority language). Resisting generalizations of this order is imperative on both theoretical and empirical grounds" (p. 111). What is needed are comparative studies of bilingual women from an even wider linguistic, cultural and structural contexts which can provide some theoretical explanations as to why bilingual women make certain language choices in different social contexts among migrant women, refugee women, monolingual women in bilingual communities, and women from the Third World who are guest workers in industrialized societies.

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Pendudukan Jepun di Tanah Melayu 1942-1945 (Tumpuan di Negeri Kedah) by Mohamad Isa Othman, KL: DBP, 1992, pp. 176

Mohamad Isa Othman's study of the Japanese Occupation of Malaya with emphasis on the state of Kedah is a valuable contribution to historical knowledge and our understanding of the impact of the occupation especially on the history of Kedah. This book which consists of six chapters begins with the Japanese preparation for, as well as, occupation of Malaya. While the discussion of the pre-invasion preparations are a welcome contribution, the military details concerning the various battles give the chapter the feel of a field diary kept by a captain on the battlefield and are not necessary.

The subsequent chapters deal specifically with the state of Kedah and focus on Japanese and Thai administration of the state from 1942 till 1945. Certain facts such as the incorporation of Malaya (including Kedah) as an integral part of the Japanese Empire instead of the promised independence are mentioned as is the diminished status of the sultan in comparison to the British period are well brought. The structural aspects of the Japanese administration and its power base is explained clearly. So too is the diminution of the powers of the Malay administrative elite.

Of considerable importance is the ceding of Kedah (renamed Saiburi) to Siam in 1943 and the various implications connected with the cessation. To his credit, Mohamad Isa points out that the cessation was viewed with misgivings by all parties concerned namely the Siamese, the Kedah Malays and the Japanese. Thus the old view that the Siamese viewed the cessation with delight is put to rest for the Siamese viewed the impending allied return with increasing concern and gave considerable freedom to the Kedah elite to run the state. One weak point is the lack of a detailed analysis of the grievances of the ordinary Kedah Malays towards Siamese officials, their rapacious behaviour and policies which emphasised on Siamese nationalism.

In dealing with economic control in Kedah from 1942 till 1945, it would have made more sense for Mohd. Isa to get straight to the point instead of giving a too brief background of Japanese economic policies since the time of the Ashigaka period (1339-1573). Furthermore his somewhat lengthy description of Japanese economic enterprises in Malaya takes away valuable space that could have been devoted to an analysis of the economic situation in Kedah. When he finally gets to the point it is all too descriptive and does not give much in the way of peasant

resentments towards unfair practices other than to state that there was widespread dissatisfaction. The tripartite struggle for economic control/exploitation between the Kedah state authorities, the Japanese and the Siamese could have been given some prominence instead of being mentioned in passing. The deviousness of the Kedah peasants in the face of crude exactions could have been detailed in this chapter.

The following chapter which deals with the restlessness and social disorders within Kedah society gives a fair though somewhat brief description of the dismal state of affairs in Kedah between 1942 till 1945. Rather than using all the Malay states in the peninsula as a backdrop for discussing the situation in Kedah, qualitatively it would be better if Mohd. Isa had, instead compared Kedah more specifically to the other Malay states which fell under Siamese administration in 1943. For example banditry was a serious problem in Kedah as a result of the disintegration of law and order. Was it also a problem in Kelantan and Trengganu? Attempts by the Japanese to stamp their language and culture through brute force hardly achieved the results that they planned for in Kedah which was very Malay in its characteristics. What about similar attempts in Kelantan and Trengganu? While Saberkas, Kesatuan Melayu Pemuda Kedah and Anjuran Pemuda Kedah were mentioned, not much was revealed as to the extent to which they were able to operate as effective counter currents to Japanese policy.

The last section of Mohd. Isa's books deals with the opposition to the Japanese Occupation, the transition from the Japanese to the return of the British as well as political developments from 1942 onwards to 1946. Undoubtedly, this is too much to handle in just one chapter. Mohd. Isa mentioned an important element of Malay reaction. Instead of the aggressive posture adopted say by the Chinese in the MPAJA in opposing the Japanese, the Malays resorted to a passive mode of resistance until there was no other option left except violence. Mohd. Isa's mentioning of the millenarian movements in Kedah is indeed important but unfortunately, he does not delve into the details of such movements other than to mention the futile attempt by Tok Janggut to storm the Japanese garrison at Kubang Buaya (Butterworth), Province Wellesley.

Active Malay resistance against the Japanese in Force 136 was mentioned but its impact was marginal. Fortunately greater attention was paid to detail the growing rapprochement between the Malay elite and the rakyat and the political consequences of such a link when the war ended. Of interest was the rift between Saberkas and the

aristocrats which led to the ascendancy of the traditional elite. The Malayan Union issue and the reaction of the various political groups in Kedah is well brought out and Mohd. Isa deserves credit for his even handed treatment of Malay-Chinese tensions in Kedah immediately after the war.

Given the dearth of good books in Malay on the Japanese Occupation in the various Malay states, Mohd. Isa Othman's book on Kedah under Japanese rule is indeed a good contribution and starting point for other studies on Japanese rule in Malaya.

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International Commercial Rivalry in Southeast Asia in the Interwar Period by Shinya Sugiyama & Milagros C. Guerrero (eds.) New Haven: Yale University, Southeast Asia Studies, 1994, tables, pp. 222

Until quite recently, most, if not all Japanese academic writings on Southeast Asia had remained inaccessible to foreigners except a handful who understand the Japanese language. This situation had changed somewhat lately as a few of these writings were translated into English (one such example is Yale University's publication of the translation of an interesting monograph published by Kyoto's Tonan Ajia Kenkyu Senta - Center for Southeast Asian Studies) and the increasing number of Japanese scholars who are publishing in English and other foreign languages including Thai, Bahasa Melayu/Indonesia and Burmese, Yale University's highly commendable effort in publishing the present volume is a positive contribution to our knowledge of a much neglected aspect (of an equally neglected period) of Southeast Asian history. It is indeed refreshing to note that younger Japanese scholars are attempting a more sober analysis of Japanese economic penetration in Southeast Asia during the 1920s and 1930s which served, as rightly argued by Hajime Shimizu and Kokaze Hidemasa, as a prelude to its invasion and subsequent occupation of Southeast Asia. This frankness is a most welcome development as Japan's current (as well as past) political leaders, or at least an increasing number of them, many of whom played various roles in Japan's imperialistic ventures in the recent past, held various positions, none of which are acceptable to most Southeast Asians.

International Commercial Rivalry in Southeast Asia in the Interwar Period originated from a conference involving Japanese and non-Japanese scholars that was held in the summer of 1988 in Shimoda, one of the two ports prised open by Commodore Perry in the twilight years of the Tokugawa Shogunate. Some of the contributors are already well-known among the international academic fraternity, others not quite so. To mention a few names, Ian Brown and Benjamin Batson had undertaken research on various aspects of 19-20 century Thai history while Ann Booth had been actively researching on various aspects of Indonesia's economic history. Among the Japanese, perhaps Shimizu Hajime is the most well known outside Japan as he has written in English (more than the others), had taught for some time in NUS besides being a regular in the IAHA circuit over the last 10 years. The current breed of Japanese Southeast Asianist, as reflected by the Japanese contributors, have come a long way since the time of Okano Kanki (then using the abacus to tabulate reparation figures), Ogiwara Hiraoki (Myanmar), Ohta Tsunezo (Myanmar) of the late 1950s and early 1960s followed by Nagazumi Akira (Indonesia), Akashi Yoji (Malaysia), Ishii Yoneo (Thailand) and Ohno Tohru (Myanmar), just to name a few.

The book is divided into two parts with Part One, consisting of 4 essays written by Japanese scholars, dealing with the various aspects of Japanese penetration into Southeast Asia beginning with the emotive *nanshin-ron* (debates to move south), textile exports, shipping rivalry with the Dutch, and the role of the navy in *nanshin-ron*. These essays also touch on the role of the Japanese government in facilitating the commercial needs of its citizens even when this meant making sacrifices and compromises and the divergent views on *nanshin-ron* between the military and civilian and among the various sections of the military; between navy and army and with the navy itself.

Part Two, consisting of four essays written by non-Japanese academics including a noted Filipino scholar, deals with the responses of the western colonial powers and European/American merchants regarding Japanese economic penetration, such as the action of a section of the British merchant community in Singapore mainly; Dutch efforts in the field of industrialisation ostensibly to serve varying purposes including as a possible bulwark against Japanese economic penetration in the Dutch East Indies; the varying fortunes of American textile trade in the Philippines in the face of the onslaught of Japanese textiles as well Japanese efforts to cultivate segments of the Thai elite (within and outside the establishment) and the division of the Thai populace into the

anti-west and anti-Chinese camp. In geographical terms, Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore (and to a limited extent peninsular Malaysia) and the Philippines are the main focus of these essays with India given some reference.

Hajime Shimizu offers an interesting insight into the changing paradigm of Japanese economic expansion and how the emotive *nanshin-ron* evolved from a purely economic and moralistic doctrine into one of aggression and imperialistic expansion without much regard for the Southeast Asians. *Nanshin-ron* had its origin towards the end of the last century, during the period of high imperialism. It may have been moralistic but as a slogan, provided a useful rallying cry besides the intellectual justification for any Japanese move into the region. After all Japanese history since the last century is replete with similar populist slogans including those associated with the expansion into Korea. Japanese economic penetration soon followed suit although it was only during and after World War I that the presence of Japanese goods such as textiles and Chinaware made itself felt. After replacing the Germans, the Japanese became a threat to British, American and Dutch interests, not to mention Chinese traders, who were already entrenched in the local economy. Japanese goods might be of lower quality but these were cheap and to the majority of Southeast Asian, affordable and much sought after. How this happened to be so is convincingly answered by both Sugiyama and Hidemasa. Since World War I, the Japanese textile industry had undergone varying phases of rationalisation with significant improvement in technology, perhaps through adapting British and American technology, resulting in lower production cost. With the depreciation of the yen, cheaper Japanese textiles soon became a threat to British interests in India, Malaya and Singapore, Dutch interest in the Dutch East Indies and American interest in the Philippines. The Japanese also, as in the case of Java, add an impressive retailing network which rivalled the one created by Chinese traders, enjoyed cheaper freight cost (for instance it was cheaper to transport Japanese textiles from Japanese ports to Batavia than from Batavia to Sumatra!) and the concerted assistance given by Japanese banks and the Japanese government.

The role of the Japanese government is crucial but not surprising as it always had a very close link with business since the early Meiji period. But what is surprising is its willingness to compromise with and accommodate Dutch demands, in this case involving Japanese and Dutch shipping interests, to the extent of killing free trade by its nationals. Herein lies the contradiction: Tokyo always argued for freer

global trade but in reality never allowed her nationals such freedom. To the Tokyo politicians and bureaucrats especially the national interest is always paramount. As Hidemasa rightly notes the diplomatic resolution to the shipping problem led to the birth of new difficulties. It was the search for non-diplomatic solutions to problems of the late 1930s that led Japan to move inexorably toward the Pacific War.

To cope with Japanese economic penetration, various measures were suggested. In the process deep differences between official and unofficial vies within the various administrations and among the European commercial interests, as in the case of the Philippines and a section of the British merchant community in Singapore, revealed itself. Measures implemented included the imposition of quotas, import duties and voluntary restriction. Much more interesting, however, is the measure undertaken in the late 1930s by the Dutch colonial administration when it embarked on a policy to diversify the economy and strengthen the industrial base of its colony in the Far East. Besides dealing with the short-term Japanese commercial competition, these measures, as argued cogently by Anne Booth, were also meant to help the Dutch East Indies rise to a higher level of economic and social progress. Anne Booth may be right but I believe all these measures were for the benefit of Dutch capitalists mainly and to a certain extent other European and even Chinese capitalists. There is nothing to indicate that this industrial package was meant for the *pribumi* entrepreneurial interests even for the "real welfare" of the *pribumi* masses. Not so consistent though is the reaction of the British merchant community in Singapore in its defence of the Malay peasants when it resisted restriction on Japanese textiles; for its own vested interest perhaps, the same group did not resist the restriction of the Japanese shipment of rubber.

The task of the reviewer is made easier when Ian Brown suggests in the last chapter, which serves as a set of concluding remarks to the preceding discussion, three areas for further research (modestly he puts it as a personal agenda). One of the areas suggested is Japanese retailing activities which had been dealt with by Sugiyama. I agree with Brown that we need more information on this aspect of Japanese economic penetration which was able to compete with Chinese retailing in such a short time. In Burma Indian traders were known to be an important part of this retailing network but we are equally interested in the Japanese themselves. Perhaps I should mention one Japanese national by the name of K. Shiba, a colourful character more noted for his association with Japanese espionage and the Fujiwara-Kikan. On

the commercial side, Shiba was known to operate a merchandise store in Alor Setar in the 1930s (he owned the Kedah Boeki Shokai by renting 5 empty shophouses along Japan Penjara Lama from the Kedah Government) and possibly another store in Gelugor, Penang. Older residents of Penang and Kedah had often mentioned this name and the man's retailing network. With his good command of Bahasa Melayu, Shiba managed to build his business reputation especially among the rural Malays. He also made regular visits to his clients and he brought along presents (*buah tangan* in Malay and *omiyage* in Japanese). One such client who lives in Alor Setar still proudly displays Shiba's *buah tangan* in the form of a Chinaware to visitors. With that kind of aggression, it was not surprising that rural Malays especially, fervently desired a Japanese invasion in late 1941 and in fact, based on the false assumption of the availability of cheap Japanese goods, naively were looking forward to it.

The other issue, although Guerrero mentions it in passing, is the response of the indigenous political elite. As in the case of Burma, the political elite of the late 1930s such a Premier U Saw had definite views on the importance of the Japanese trade, conducted through barter, and its relevance to domestic politics. They therefore tried to impress the colonial government to continue such trade when it was jeopardised by London's policy of ending such trade links with Tokyo in response to Japan's aggression in China and Later Indochina. The Burma-Japan trade did come to a halt in July 1941 after Japan occupied parts of Indochina. The Burma case is particularly interesting as such stoppage affected the export of Burmese cotton and consequently the welfare of native cotton growers and also perhaps, the fortunes of politicians in at least 5 cotton growing districts.

In the final analysis, *International Commercial Rivalry in Southeast Asia in the Interwar Period*, is a welcome addition to the existing scanty literature on the region's economic history. It also provides us with much insight into the intense economic competition which served as a prelude to Japan's conquest and subsequent occupation of much of Southeast Asia and her failed efforts to re-arrange the regional economic order under the guise of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.

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James Francis Warren, **Ah Ku and Karayuki-san: Prostitution in Singapore, 1870-1940**, Oxford University Press, Singapore, 1993, pp.433. Appendices, glossary, bibliography, index.

This is a social history of brothel prostitution in turn-of-the-century Singapore, focussed on the economic and social life of Chinese and Japanese prostitutes. The play of ideas and theories, moral, psychological and sociological, is profuse and often quite challenging. The first part of the narrative moves between China, Japan and Singapore, examining the causes and impact of poverty in the lives of the prostitutes, the overseas trade in women for prostitution, the brothel industry in Singapore and the colonial attempts at control and regulation of brothels, while the second part presents evidence on the everyday life and problems of the *ah ku* and the *karayuki-san*, as revealed in the Coroner's Court records.

Given the preponderance and increasing influx of male migrant Chinese labour in Singapore and the imbalance in the sex ratio of its population, the colonial authorities were half-hearted in their efforts to suppress traffic in women and children and the abuses connected with it, and reluctant to declare brothels illegal until 1927. Most of the traffickers in women were members of powerful Chinese triads, who also controlled the brothels. Besides the importation of women for brothel prostitution, the triads had a grip on the Chinese coolie trade, extortion and narcotics. However, so long as the colonial authorities did not contemplate the abolition of brothels, but tacitly sanctioned them for pragmatic social and economic reasons, the supply of young girls from China and Japan continued to flow into Singapore for the public houses which needed them.

However, in 1870, fear of the spread of venereal disease led to Singapore's introduction of the Contagious Diseases Ordinance, which imposed registration of brothels and the medical examination of prostitutes. But this law was soon withdrawn at Whitehall's orders following the repeal earlier of similar legislation in Britain, urged on by suffragette reformers, who regarded compulsory medical examination of women prostitutes as "rape". Consequently, in the decade 1888-1898, the VD epidemics took a high toll of men and women, including British troops based in Singapore. Between the years 1899 and 1927 the colony was allowed to introduce a system of quasi-regulation to help contain the spread of infection in brothels catering for Westerners, but this system also proved inadequate. The chapters discussing the VD problem are probably the best in the book.

Brothel prostitution, or the 'sexual economy', as the author calls it, played not an insignificant role in providing the capital for the growth of Chinese and Japanese enterprise in Singapore at the time. It had led to the development of retail shops and businesses, such as restaurants, drugstores, confectionery shops, florists, and kimono shops in the brothel areas, while the foreign exchange sent back to China and Japan by prostitutes, brothel-keepers and others involved in the industry were said to be substantial. The author, however, is unable to determine the level of official sanction given by the Japanese government to deliberately foster the establishment of brothel prostitution and the sending of rural women abroad as prostitutes to earn much needed foreign currency. But, in 1920, emerging rapidly as an economic and military power Japan found the *karayuki-san* in Southeast Asia an embarrassment. Japanese consulates in Singapore, Manila and other overseas centres were instructed to take steps to close down all Japanese brothels, and to repatriate the women back to Japan.

The author offers a different approach from previous studies on prostitution. He sees prostitutes as "migrant workers", not as "fallen women" or deviants (pp.10-11). His account of prostitution in Singapore's past is also different in that it is not another disquisition on male domination or the miserable oppression of women. He attempts to show the Chinese and Japanese prostitutes in Singapore essentially as women who made choices, on their own terms, to become prostitutes for survival, mobility, and for communal and individual integrity. They were not 'victims' of the male-dominated Singapore world. Individually they were said to have shaped their own lives and destinies.

However, only a minority of individual cases of prostitution presented by the author may be said to have chosen their profession freely or decided on their lives and destinies, so that the author's approach has been greatly overstated to establish a "new" methodological and conceptual framework of historical analysis. Such a view, when repeatedly stated, becomes tiresome. At times, one wishes if the author would simply allow the facts to speak for themselves. Often, he wishes to read the evidence his own way. Take suicide, for instance. A prostitute has taken her own life - the evidence shows it is because she was oppressed by her brothel keeper, spurned by her lover, or for some other reason, but she is described as *choosing* to take her own life; she is said to have power to decide her own destiny. On the other hand, one could read the evidence otherwise, not as a case of empowerment, but simply as - powerlessness, defeat, or despair. The tendency to eschew conventional explanations can sometimes be taken to extremes, as

when the Japanese prostitutes protested individually and collectively against the closure of their brothels and their deportation to Japan, the author interprets it as the women making their own choices (p.165):

They were still in a position to make some decisions about the future of their lives and found ways to protest their treatment and public humiliation. Some women simply disappeared. They operated as private prostitutes rather than leave their profession. Others refused to leave and managed to find work as waitresses in restaurants or cafes, or became mistresses of former clients.

One begins to have doubts about such power-related statements when the author also reveals other reasons why the Japanese prostitutes had made their protest (p.165): "Yet some were unable to return to Japan. They had borrowed or purchased goods on credit, and a large percentage of them had VD."

The second part of this study of prostitution in Singapore is an overworked picture stressing the unique experiences of individual women prostitutes, revealing their origin and identity, their relationships with family, friends and other people who helped fashion their careers and destinies - the procurers, brothel-keepers, colonial officials, and clients. This is a commendable effort to retrieve the prostitutes' lives from oblivion. There is, however, a tendency to be repetitious, as many of the same cases are cited several times in a number of places.

In fact, the author tries too hard to treat parts of the prostitutes' testimonies, found in the Coroners' Courts, like a novel or pieces of investigative criminology. He goes over the records with a fine-toothed comb for every bit of information on the life of a prostitute. But since most of the testimonies deal with the deaths of other prostitutes, the stories they tell are often rather tragic, if not depressing; the discussion of each death or suicide at times seems to be prolonged and the materials rather excessive. Still, he deserves praise for his unbounded enthusiasm in wading through the voluminous "death files" in the archives, for attempting a "new" analytical approach and for throwing

much light on what he calls "unmentionable subjects in Singapore's past - prostitution, the status and subordination of women, sex and love, and death".

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Bangka Tin and Mentok Pepper: Chinese Settlement on an Indonesian Island, by Mary F. Somers Heidhues, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 1992. xvii, pp. 270. Illustrations, Bibliography, Index.

We have long associated Bangka island, off the southeast coast of Sumatra, with tin mining. In Bangka, as elsewhere in Southeast Asia, Chinese immigration, settlement and enterprise played a crucial role in the development of the industry. At its peak in 1930, ethnic Chinese accounted for 47% of the island's total population. Following the 1930s Depression and repatriation to China, their proportion of the population dropped to about 41% by 1939, and progressively fell until some one fourth of the island's population in 1980. This book by Mary Somers Heidhues discusses how Chinese immigration and industry beginning from the eighteenth century, spearheaded the transformation of Bangka into the centre of tin mining in Indonesia.

For the reviewer who is more familiar with the case of tin mining in Malaya, the author establishes four important points. Firstly, she clarifies an important difference between Dutch and British colonial policy vis-a-vis the industry. On the one hand, the British received income from tin mining by means of a fixed duty on tin exported and from charges for mining leases. They left the control of mining to individual lease holders. Towkay advancers (and later European joint-stock companies as well) provided capital to holders of leases. This left profits from changing tin prices in the world market in the hands of the mine owners, the advancers, and sometimes the workers as well. Opium, alcohol, gambling and the truck system offered the towkays additional profits.

On the other hand, the Dutch were the "operators" of the Bangka mines and paid the *kongsi* which worked the mines a fixed price. When world prices rose, the Dutch kept the profits for themselves. In addition to administrative expenses, the Dutch subsidised rice purchases and

advanced capital for machines, the construction of buildings and part of the costs for recruiting new labourers. To increase their profits, the Peranakan Chinese mine bosses (who dominated the *kongsi*) urged the coolies to work harder. More often, the bosses squeezed them: selling provisions to the coolies in the mine shop above market rates; promoting opium, gambling and alcohol, and lending money to the mine workers for these purchases; cutting back of coolies' food or reducing its quality; and docking the coolies' pay for indiscipline. These were euphemistically known as "internal profits" (*binnenwinsten*).

Secondly, Somers Heidhues investigates the system of labour organisation and finance called the *kongsi* which has given rise to different notions of its operation. She notes that the original *kongsi* introduced to Bangka in the early 1800s, was a "co-operative undertaking of mine workers" wherein small amounts of capital were pooled together and the profits shared. As more capital was needed to import additional workers, to mechanise and to increase production, "investors" who did not labour in the mines but possessed capital joined in, and came to dominate the *kongsi*. By the late 1800s, "shares were in the hands of the local 'elite' frequently local-born [Peranakan] Chinese who had responsible positions in mine administration..., or of Chinese businessmen and Chinese officers in the towns" (p. 75). On certain occasions, a single individual would take over the *kongsi*. One such mine contractor was Lim A Pat who was also a coolie broker and a member of the Volksraad (p. 119). Other times European employees of the mining company also became shareholders (p. 79). With the emergence of the new *kongsi*, all previous social aspects like catering for the aged, and the health of the shareholders were lost; the *kongsi* was now a purely economic arrangement. More than that it became "a means to control labour and to bring the greatest profits for the mine owners and the tin company - in this case the colonial government" (p. 76). The worker was no longer a shareholder, merely a wage labourer. (One notes, in passing, that it was this latter purely economic form of the *kongsi* which would be introduced and utilised as the mechanism for organising tin production in Larut and Kinta in Perak in the late nineteenth century).

Somers Heidhues indicates that this shift was "partly a result of changes caused by the Dutch attitude of laissez-faire toward the *kongsi* [and] partly a cause of Dutch policy in other fields" from 1850-1910 (p. 54). For the cooperative mode had resulted in rising debts which the Dutch were anxious to recover. Presumably, the Dutch thought that

recovering debts resulting from advances would be facilitated if certain individuals, rather than a cooperative, could be identified.

A third point is the exploitation of the mineworkers given the arrangements mentioned above. The Dutch themselves were clearly aware of the situation. In Chapters 3 and 5, the author highlights the findings contained in several official reports including two prepared by Hoerink and Kat Angelino who were both Chinese affairs officers. Invariably, the finger was pointed at *binnenwinsten* - the "internal profits" gained by the mine bosses from off-mining operations. Consequently, mine workers could only earn half of what could be gained in the Malay states. Still others remained perpetually in debt. Poor nutrition and inadequate attention to health precautions caused a beri-beri epidemic which lasted through the 1890s until 1905 (p. 61). But most of all there were the "penal sanctions" imposed upon workers who could not produce a pass certifying employment, or a certificate of discharge from his former mine. In effect, the mine bosses had "police powers" (p. 119).

Bangka's ill reputation was, apparently, well-known among coolies. Chinese workers preferred to work in the tobacco plantations in East Sumatera, the rich mire fields being opened in British Malaya, and later the mines in Belitung and Singkep as well. The author notes that in Belitung the mineworkers were effectively free, gained higher wages, and were more likely to accumulate enough money to return to China. She attributes these better conditions in Belitung to two factors: firstly, unlike in Bangka, the mine operators were a private company, the Biliton Tin Mij. By operating the mines themselves, the BTM bypassed the necessity of contracting out to a Chinese mine owner. Secondly, the mineworkers in Belitung organised themselves as a *numpang* (from *tumpang*), which was a system of profit sharing among all members of the work team who also chose their own headmen. Although the author does not mention this, it appears that the *numpang* was simply a variant of the original *kongsi* arrangement. And clearly the cooperative arrangement catered better for the mineworkers. Moreover, wages were paid once a year and so savings secured. These circumstances influenced coolies to opt for Belitung rather than for Bangka.

Hence Bangka continued to face a labour shortage problem. In 1886 Dutch officials assumed the burden of recruitment costs and dealt directly with recruiter-contractors. Ships were chartered to carry coolies directly to the Dutch Indies. However, these efforts still failed

to ensure a regular supply of able-bodied workers. Apparently the "dregs of Chinese port cities" were the only ones attracted (p. 58). (The problem of labour shortage was partly resolved by recruiting Javanese workers and by mechanisation subsequently, which is discussed in Chapter 5). Ultimately, the responsibility for redressing the situation was the Dutch's. But, as Somers Heidhues states: "Bangka's system enabled the government to wash its hands of questions relating to coolies' welfare by pointing to them as matters for the *kongsis* to deal with" (p. 77).

Belatedly, the Dutch authorities began to act to undercut the system of "internal profits". The Dutch themselves took over the opium monopoly in the 1910s. In 1913, a company Bangka Tinwinning (BTW) was formed which enabled large amounts of funds to be raised for mechanisation but which also resulted in the separation of government from mining personnel for the first time. Although the colonial government owned mining rights, henceforth BTW assumed overall control of the mine. In 1919 the mine bosses were made employees of BTW allowing for closer regulation of everyday affairs. Gambling and the use of opium and alcohol were discouraged: cash payments were made only on a monthly basis. Despite these reforms, the abuses continued until at least 1925 (p. 123).

Fourthly, like two other recent investigations of Chinese mining communities elsewhere in Southeast Asia (Francis Loh Kok Wah, *Beyond the Tin Mines: Coolies, Squatters and New Villagers in the Kinta Valley, Malaysia c. 1880-1990*, Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1988 and Daniel Chew, *Chinese Pioneers on the Sarawak Frontier 1841-1941*, Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1990), Somers Heidhues shows that cash-cropping - in this case pepper cultivation - also accompanied, and subsequently outstripped mining activities in Bangka (Chapter 8). It indicates a pattern that has not been adequately recognised in earlier accounts of mining settlements and merits comparative investigation.

In the last part of the book (Chapters 7 and 8) the author focuses on political and social developments in Bangka in the Revolution and post-Independence periods. Within this context, the reorganisation of mining, and the further decline of the industry are discussed. The major weakness of the book is its poor structuring which results in considerable repetition. Chapter 4 which focuses on the native Bangkanese is not adequately related to the other chapters as well. The five-page discussion on changes to the Chinese population stuck

in between Chapters 6 and 7 in the form of "A Note" sticks out like a sore thumb. Nonetheless, Somers Heidhues book is an important account of tin mining in Bangka. And her account is based on solid data.

There is an additional significance of this study which goes beyond tin mining. The author notes that "nowhere in Indonesia were ethnic Chinese of such importance in the rural areas as in Bangka" (p. xiv). This account of the Chinese in Bangka, many of whom were located at the lower end of the economic scale, serves as a corrective to the assumption regarding the ethnic Chinese "as an undifferentiated (and apparently equally wealthy) group" (p.xiv), in turn, related to their origins "as some kind of ancillary colonialists". Mary Somers Heidhues has ably challenged the orthodox view.

Finally, the author should be congratulated for compiling an impressive bibliography which contains comments on the contents of some of the works.

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The Singapore Worker: A Profile by Chew Soon Beng & Rosalind Chew
Singapore: Oxford University Press 1992, 216x 138mm 224pp 71 tables 24 figs.

This book has three stated objectives: to present a theoretical framework for assessing the employment status of labour market participants based on the profit-maximising behaviour of the employer (or government) and the earnings maximising behaviour of the worker. Second, to provide a profile of the labour force of Singapore and of Singaporean emigrants to the US. Third, to show that labour market imbalances can be reduced by enhancing built-in labour market adjustment mechanisms such as the public sector, foreign labour, social security, training, incomes policy, and employment service.

With regard to the first objective, the authors do not present a single, integrated framework for analysing the employment status of all categories of workers they focus upon: the employed, part-time workers, the unemployed, retired workers and emigrants. Thus the

concept of VMP (VMP) and profit-maximising employer (both in the public and private sector) is used in the case of the employed, part-time workers, the unemployed and retired workers, while a simplistic cost-benefit framework is presented in the discussion on emigrants. For most categories of workers, the analytical framework focuses only on one aspect of their behaviour.

While the conclusions from the analytical framework are of some interest, only in the case of employed workers (Chapter 2) was there an attempt to verify empirically the predictions of their framework. Thus, there appears to be no link between the theoretical and empirical sections in Chapters 4 and 5. In the case of Chapter 3, on the other hand, the theoretical discussion appears incomplete because no predictions are offered. The case is made that part-time workers fall largely under the flexible wage system and wages are equal to the VMP all the time. Thus it is concluded that when the employer faces hard times, workers either can take a pay cut or face dismissal. However, the authors stop short of drawing an obvious prediction: in hard times (e.g. recession), when output prices fall and the VMP is adversely affected, part-timers will be out of work first because, unlike full-timers, their remuneration is identical to their VMP without the bonus element to cushion workers against job-loss.

The richest theoretical discussion is to be found in Chapter 5, which provides the rationale for the position of various interest-groups (e.g. employers, workers, public sector etc.) in relation to the proposal to raise the retirement age of employees.

The second section of each of Chapters 2-6 attempts to meet the second objective of providing a profile of the republic's labour force and its emigrants to the U.S. The profiles of all groups except the emigrants are drawn from the National University of Singapore Census Survey (a contradiction in terms?) of 1987 that had 1,171 respondents.

There are some troubling aspects about the data and analyses used. With respect to the former, the authors, presumably, were not involved in this data collection exercise. But a footnote informs the reader that the 1,500 households were extracted from the Registrar of Electoral Polls 1984, using a "...random stratified sampling method" (p. 28). If this is meant to suggest that the data are representative of the labour force, it is inadequate, especially since the bulk of the book depends on this data. It would greatly enhance the usefulness of the conclusions about the profiles of the actors in the labour force if the

key characteristics emerging from the sample data are compared with labour force data to establish the representativeness (or otherwise) of the sample.

In the case of emigrants, only those who went to the US are discussed. Singaporeans presumably migrate to other places, as well. So why was the U.S. singled out? Was it the most important destination, or was it the only one for which data were available? We are never told.

Turning to analyses, the authors use the regression technique freely throughout the book. In any regression analysis a fundamental question is whether the group of regressors (independent variables) chosen have any relevance in explaining the variation in the dependent variable. If they do not, the estimated model *cannot be used for inference or prediction*. The computed F-statistic is routinely compared to the critical F value at the 1 per cent or 5 per cent level; if the former is larger than the latter, the null hypothesis that all regressors are irrelevant is rejected. The authors do not always report their computed F-statistics (for e.g. Chapter 8), and when they do, they do not indicate if the F-values are significant or not (e.g. Chapters 2, 3 and 4). More important, the routine F-test outlined above has not been applied by the authors.

Chapter 2 on "The Profile of the Unemployed," provides an illustration. The number of previous jobs held has been regressed on variables like age, education and income levels for 15 occupational categories. Although the F-statistics are reported, it is not indicated whether these are statistically significant. A quick check showed that in only three cases (clerical workers, sales workers and workers not elsewhere classified), were the computed F significant at the 5 per cent level. Consequently, the null hypothesis that all the regressors are irrelevant *cannot be rejected* at the conventional levels of significance for 12 of the equations. It therefore makes little sense to discuss them further. Yet, inferences about the relationship between the dependent and independent variables are made in the case of all occupational groups, teachers and related workers, directors, service workers and production operators when they are not warranted by the poor performance of the estimated equations. Of the three cases where the F-statistic proved to be significant, the "workers not elsewhere classified" is not discussed at all.

Similarly, in Chapter 4, all 6 regression equations do not meet the F-test, making all related discussion and conclusions drawn therefrom irrelevant. The same applies to the earnings function of part-time workers estimated in Chapter 3. In Chapter 8, the F-statistics for all 10 regression equations are not reported at all.

The poor performance of the overall regression models suggests either or all of the following: poor quality of the data, poor specification of the model or poor specification of the dependent and independent variables. Since the authors appear not to have recognized the poor performance of their models, they have not addressed these concerns.

The interpretation of the results also needs to be sharpened. In the case of production workers, for instance, the number of jobs previously held (the dependent variable) was found to be negatively correlated with income (one of the explanatory variables). The authors explain this thus: "As with workers in services, production operators also suffer a reduction in income with more frequent job changes" (p. 26). If this line of argument is pursued, then the negative correlation between the number of jobs held and age (as noted for sales workers) must imply that sales workers suffer an age reduction with frequent job-changes! More accurately, the negative relationship between number of jobs held previously and income suggests that those with higher earnings tend to have held a fewer number of jobs previously.

In Chapter 2, in discussing the results of the job-mobility equation, the authors suggest that the equation "performs rather well" (p. 23) for several occupations such as teachers and related workers; directors; clerical; sales; services; and production operators. As noted before, except for clerical and sales, the equations for all other groups do not meet the F-test and cannot be deemed to have performed well.

In addition, the authors imply that the coefficient of the income of teachers is significant when the p-value is 24 per cent and the coefficient of the income of directors too, is worthy of note with a p-value of 18.5 per cent. Admittedly, the p-value to establish whether or not a coefficient is significantly different from zero has been relaxed in recent econometric writing from the traditional 1-5 per cent levels to up to 10-15 per cent. But moving beyond this is open to debate. And in this particular case, even the traditional 1 or 5 per cent may make no difference since the equations do not meet the F test.

In sum, the reader must tread with care when reading the discussions that accompany the regression exercises in the book.

The last objective is met by discussions in Chapters 7-8. The former appears redundant and could be eliminated without loss of continuity or contribution. The first part of Chapter 7 on manpower planning is a general discussion on methods that breaks no new ground. This chapter should have been made more interesting by incorporating a discussion on the manpower planning methods practised (or, perhaps, not practised) in Singapore.

The section on manpower planning is further complicated by a discussion of the Fei and Ranis model of surplus labour that does not fit into the general flow of the section. The reader will doubtless wonder about the relevance of the Fei-Ranis model to a labour-short economy like Singapore, with no agricultural sector to speak of.

The second section of the chapter discusses mechanisms for adjusting the demand for labour to supply. It is general in nature and sets the stage for Chapter 8 where these mechanisms are evaluated in the context of Singapore. This discussion could have been subsumed easily by Chapter 8.

Chapter 8 is interesting in terms of the ideas presented. An important suggestion made by the authors in Chapter 7 is taken up again in this: the public sector should down-size its demand for quality labour in order to avoid "unnecessary" competition between the private and public sectors that can affect the competitiveness of Singapore's exports in world markets.

In labour-short Singapore, competition for good workers between the public and private sector is inevitable, not "unnecessary", especially since (fortunately for Singapore) the former stresses on productivity, efficiency and non-corruptibility. Whether or not such competition prices Singapore out of export markets will depend on whether worker-productivity keeps ahead of wage increases.

The authors further suggest that while the public sector must attract the best brains in the economy for its top civil servants, it need not seek the best for every level of its hierarchy (p. 137). If the public sector has top decision makers but employs only "average" personnel for its other manpower needs, the private sector will expand by attracting the best fresh graduates and some of the best

existing workers from the civil service. In this way "...the growth of the private sector and the economy will be maximised."

However, the argument appears flawed. It assumes that the best decisions of the public sector (determined by top-brains) can be executed and implemented by "average" officers. In fact, a crucial ingredient of Singapore's success is its non-corruptible and efficient civil service at *virtually all levels*, assured in some measure by the attractive salaries they receive. Additionally, in a labour-short-economy like Singapore, if the best local brains are drawn to the private sector, the civil service may have to depend disproportionately on immigrants to man its middle and lower-levels. On both these counts, the idea is unlikely to appeal to policy-makers in Singapore.

Finally, a careful reader will no doubt be bothered by numerous minor irritations. Some examples:

Figure 2.2 (p.13) illustrates the relationship between VMP and wage under a flexible wage system (FWS) where wages are linked to productivity. Under the FWS, according to the authors (p. 12), a worker receives a basic wage and bonuses. Bonuses are presumably linked to productivity; if it is, the bonus component cannot fall if the VMP is assumed constant. Yet, Fig. 2.2 shows a constant VMP and a bonus that is decreasing over time.

On p.15, it is argued, "Under the FWS..wages are equal to the VMP even in the short run." This contradicts the figure and explanations offered by the authors themselves earlier (pp. 12-13) that the total reward (made up of wages plus bonuses) equals the VMP in the short run.

On p.46, it is stated that E (earnings) is negatively related to age, yet their estimated equation shows a *positive* relationship.

In the discussion on the pension system, the civil servant's wage is assumed to be below his VMP until the age of 50. Yet, when he takes on another job (after the age of 50) in the private sector, he is assumed to be paid equal to his VMP. The basis for this assumption is never explained (p.14).

The first line on p.58 of this chapter appears incomplete. It should read: "retrench the worker at age t_1 ...

The authors state, more than once (p. 103 & 111), that permanent residents in Singapore enjoy better benefits than her citizens. This is an intriguing observation but , unfortunately, they offer no elaboration.

It is interesting that after assuming that wage = VMP in the public sector in all previous chapters, the authors reverse their position and suggest that the equality between the two may not necessarily hold since the services of the public service are not monetized (p.136). The authors then present Fig. 7, where the wage is fixed in the public sector and the private sector equates its VMP to this given wage. No rationale is offered for this. Two further points are noteworthy. First, it is not evident that the figure illustrates the point the authors assert that it does. Second, the figure assumes (implicitly) that the supply of workers is fixed in any given point in time. Hence, an increase in the employment of the private sector (during a boom) reduces public sector employment and vice versa. It is difficult to accept the authors' assumption that the wage in the private sector can remain fixed during a boom and in times of recession. This can only be true if labour supply is infinitely elastic at all times, an assumption that would be ruled out by their fixed labour supply diagram.

In conclusion, one puts aside this book with the feeling that it cannot represent one of the better works of the authors or the publisher.

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