

## **ULASAN BUKU/BOOK REVIEWS**

**Meanings of Multiethnicity: A Case Study of Ethnicity and Ethnic Relations in Singapore** by Lai Ah Eng. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1995.

The author of this carefully documented research on the phenomenon of multiethnicity has succeeded in her aim to provide a number of insights into the vagaries of ethnic relations in Singapore. Using an eclectic approach, she delves into the daily experiences of various ethnic groups living in a public housing complex. Relevant themes discussed are the particular evaluations of multiethnicity by the people themselves in addition to an analysis of cultural and economic competition at a general level. The resulting picture reflects a worthwhile attempt to fit micro ethnographic data into macro state policies.

The division into various chapters shows a neat structuring according to basic research questions. In the first three chapters, a literature review leads to a survey of the historical background of the inhabitants of the respondents with a focus on shopping, chatting, playing, visiting and stereotyping. The local organizations are dealt with in chapters 4 and 5, while the latter part of the book focusses on the people's evaluations of living in a multiethnic environment. Information is provided on the phenomenon of ethnic assertion and cultural-economic competition in terms of a resinization process among the Chinese together with Christian proselytization trends as well as language issues. The last chapter tries to round off the study by placing people's experiences in a broader framework of nation building.

Valuable observations on the symbolic expression of ethnic identity are presented, for example when it concerns the decorations at the entrance of the flats. The gift exchanges between different ethnic groups on festive occasions is another eye-opener alluding to the subtle crossing of ethnic boundaries. Altogether the study conveys an image of a multiethnic community which has managed to practice tolerance while exercising pragmatism as an overriding rationale. The findings have added a refreshing look at the intermingling of culture, identity, group belonging within the very specific context of a purposely planned multiethnic environment.

While critically reviewing the different chapters, it is necessary to bear in mind the basic methodologies used by the author which are aimed at an anthropology of locality. In order to realize this goal, a constructionist conceptual framework is used in which the life world of meanings, the management of identity and indigenous perceptions constitute the core areas of

investigation. The one hundred interviews among Chinese, Malay, Indian and Eurasian respondents, together with participant observations, formed the materials from which the constructions of meaning were drawn. In this respect, the author could have given the reader an idea of how the depth-conversational interviews were designed and what guiding questions were used in order to approach people's ideas on ethnicity. In the interview excerpts, little transpires as to how respondents refer to other ethnic groups (except for the conventional stereotypes) and what types of negotiation styles emerge in different kinds of settings. Depth interviews of this kind are no doubt difficult to administer since people's constructions of the Other are mostly randomly uttered, interspersed within informal talk and seldom consistently built up into ready-made answers.

Yet one would have liked some indications regarding the process of constructing ethnicity from scratch, however sloppy and incongruous such meaning-complexes may seem at times. As the title of the book pertains to the meanings of multiethnicity, a more systematic probing of the strategies through which ethnic identity is maintained, or decomposed, at different levels of interaction, could have been undertaken. Moreover, more data could have been provided on the interpretations the respondents themselves suggest on the non-crossing of boundaries, as in the case of visiting other groups, while on the other hand football games are jointly entertained. How do residents explain these contradictions?

Within a constructionist theoretical framework, it is not sufficient to primarily observe behaviour, however carefully this may have been executed, but rather to examine the strategies involved in the building of images and the rationalizations given. Ideally speaking, the first order constructions of ordinary people ought to include different kinds of attitudes in which they manage the frail reality of interethnic relations. At another level of explanations, there is the scrutiny as to how a sense of a multiethnic community can be maintained despite the anger and frustration of certain ethnic groups at being sidelined or under-privileged. Is there a greater feasibility in warding off tensions and retreating into the private arena of urban niches in apartment buildings of a big city? Is the "better not to talk" syndrome the only strategy by which to deal with possible conflict? In the final analysis of interpretative schemes, a discussion of variables like class, gender and age should have been included.

The greatest strength of this publication lies in the detailed description of the macro environment which covers the idea of nation building and multiethnic policies. Especially well argued is the section on the historical forces beyond

the community and the projection of the idea of multiethnicity. The most significant finding which transpires via the research concerns itself with the concepts of ethnicity which in its continuous construction and deconstruction processes demonstrates a volatility and non-fixity of meanings together with its manifold contradictions. In a highly illustrative manner, this jumble of self-representations is summed up by one respondent who considers himself "a Malay, a Singaporean, a teacher, motocyclist, man". Thus, disjoined meanings of self can coexist without being necessarily encompassed within an ethnic sense of identity. This study has skilfully brought to the fore again the shaky scaffolding on which reality construction is maintained in micro and macro settings of ethnic relations.

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**The Politics of Chinese Education in Malaya 1945 - 1961**, by Tan Liok Ee.  
Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1997. pp.xvi, 352. Tables, Plates, Appendices, Glossary, Bibliography, Index.

Chinese migrants established their own schools wherever they had migrated in significant numbers. This was especially so in Malaysia where today there are more than 600,000 children studying in 1,287 National-type Chinese primary schools which are part of the national school system. Chinese is taught as a subject in the 54 Chinese secondary schools which had joined the government system that required the use of either English or Malay as the medium of instruction, and today Malay (the National Language) is the only medium of instruction, except for language classes. However, there are still 60 independent Chinese secondary schools which continue to use Chinese as the main medium of instruction although Malay and English are taught too. Thus Malaysia is the country outside mainland China (including Macau and of course Hong Kong) and Taiwan which has the most Chinese schools and a still fairly strong tradition of Chinese education.

However, the survival of Chinese education and the character it assumes today are the result of the Chinese in Malaysia engaging in strenuous efforts at defending it and negotiating with the British authorities and the post-independent government. It is also very much a legacy of nation-building shaped by ethnic politics in this multi-ethnic country. Tan Liok Ee's book describes comprehensively the politics of Chinese education in the post World War Two period up to 1961, a period of intense politicking in anticipation of

Independence in 1957 and debating on the nature of nation-building. Obviously this involved debating the future and the place of Chinese education in the development of the new multi-ethnic state.

Chapter 1 describes the origin of Chinese schools in Malaya, covering the period 1849 to 1950. Chinese schools then followed the models of education in China, and inevitably the politics from China was brought into the schools in Malaya. In fact the Republican Government of China regarded them as part of China's educational system. The British government was concerned about China-oriented activities and wanted to control the Chinese schools. By the 1930s it had even thought of converting them to English schools. The authorities realized the need to have textbooks written for Chinese schools instead of using those from China. In fact up to 1948, 50% of Chinese school teachers still came from China (p.31).

Chapter 2 describes the decade of critical change from 1945 to 1955 when the Chinese finally realized they could not take the existence of Chinese schools for granted anymore. The British proposal for a single system of schools using English was seen as a threat by the Chinese while Malay nationalists wanted Malay to be the basis of a national educational system. In 1951 the Barnes Committee was appointed to study the existing system of Malay education, and later the Fenn-Wu Committee was established to study problems relating to Chinese education. Due to the leftist influence of Chinese schools, the colonial government could not neglect Chinese schools anymore. The Barnes Report recommended that all public funds be devoted to the newly proposed "National schools" which the government hoped would attract students away from vernacular schools. Chinese leaders were unhappy about the recommendation, and Tan Siew Sin, who was to succeed his father Tan Cheng Lock as President of MCA (see below) in 1961, criticised the Report as smacked of "racial bigotry" and "racial intolerance" (p.62).

Chapter 3 describes the genesis of the Chinese Education Movement (CEM). Barnes Report which recommended the abolition of vernacular schools and incorporating them into a single national system, led to the formation of what may be described as a Chinese education movement. Chinese school teachers were most active, and in 1951 the United Chinese School Teachers' Association (UCSTA), which represented Chinese school teachers throughout Malaysia, was established. Leaders of Chinese school committees were active too and they were able to use their positions in different Chinese associations to voice their concern. Nevertheless in 1954, the national body of the school committees was formed, named United Chinese School Committees' Association (UCSCA). UCSTA and UCSCA became the dominant Chinese

organizations which defended Chinese education and they have continued to play important roles to this day. In the fifties, these associations and the Chinese political party called Malayan Chinese Association (MCA, founded in 1949) were the main bodies which articulated Chinese education, and they had to deal with the Malays represented mainly by the political party United Malays National Organization (UMNO). Among the prominent leaders were Lim Lian Geok from the UCSTA, Tan Cheng Lock, President of MCA, and Tunku Abdul Rahman, President of UMNO. Lim Lian Geok, was not only a respected fighter of Chinese education, he was instrumental in promoting a Chinese vision of Malaya in which Chinese education would have a legitimate status, in contradistinction to the Malay nationalist view of an educational system using Malay as the only medium of instruction.

Of interest in Chapter 4 is the detailed description of the historical bargain between UMNO and MCA (representing the Alliance) on the one hand, and UCSTA and UCSCA on the other hand, at a meeting in Tan Cheng Lock's house in Malacca on 12 January 1955. The Alliance agreed that the Chinese could preserve their schools (p.158) and in return the UCSTA should not, before the first Federal Election which later took place on 27 July 1955, brought up the demand for Chinese to be considered as an official language. This Malacca meeting, as Tan Liok Ee points out, "laid the groundwork for the Alliance's education policy after it came into power" (p. 158).

Chapter 5 describes the compromises which had to be made during the two tense years before Independence from August 1955 to August 1957. During this period, the Razak Report was introduced in 1956, and in 1957 the new Education Ordinance was passed. The new emphasis on common syllabuses rather than a single language of instruction was an important compromise, but the mention of an ultimate objective of bringing the children of "all races" under a single system using Malay worried those in the Chinese education movement. The CEM activists also protested against the policy of conducting LCE (Lower Certificate of Education) examinations in the official languages only.

In Chapter 6, Tan Liok Ee has a good description on the breakaway of the famous Chung Ling School (established in 1917) in Penang in 1955 to join the government system. The government wanted to use Chung Ling as a prototype, to woo Chinese schools to receive government aid which would require them to join the government system, and this would involve changing the medium of instruction to either English or Malay, then the official languages. There were protests from Chinese groups against the decision of Chung Ling, and there were student demonstrations.

After Independence, the politics of Chinese education continued. In response to the language requirement for the LCE examination, CEM activists renewed their demand for Chinese to be made an official language. As part of Alliance, MCA was caught between the need to represent Chinese interests and the need to work with UMNO in the Alliance. This led to tension between MCA and the CEM activists, tension between MCA and UMNO, and even conflict within MCA. The release of the Talib Report in August 1960 marked the beginning of the implementation of a new education policy. Chinese-medium primary schools were incorporated into the system as National Type schools (using Chinese as medium of instruction) in contrast to National schools which used Malay as medium of instruction. However vernacular secondary schools which wanted to receive government aid had to change the medium of instruction to one of the two official languages. Demonstrations and protests continued, but Chinese schools were under pressure to choose to join the national system by the end of 1961. Prominent CEM activists were harassed by the government. On 12 August 1961, Lim Lian Geok was asked to show cause why his citizenship should not be revoked, and on 19 August 1961, his registration as a teacher was revoked. By December 1961, 54 out of a total of 71 schools had converted to the National Type (p.274). Even the Confucian High School where Lim Lian Geok had taught also converted. This concluded a turbulent period, and the place of Chinese education was defined and patterned. CEM activists appeared to have lost their fight, but in fact they had contributed to ensuring that Chinese education had a place in the national educational system albeit not in the way they had wanted.

Tan Liok Ee's book provides an important description for understanding how the present system and nature of Chinese education in Malaysia came about. It is not only a significant study of the history of Chinese education in Malaysia, it is also an important work on Chinese politics as well as ethnic politics in nation-development and nation-building during the crucial period of 1945 - 1961. In fact understanding the politics of Chinese education during this period is crucial to understanding the politics of Chinese education since then especially in the seventies and eighties when UCSTA and UCSCA (collectively called *Dongjiao Zong*) played important roles in reviving Chinese education and in articulating Chinese interests in general.

This reviewer recommends readers not so familiar with the politics of Chinese education to read first the short Introduction and the Conclusion so as to be able to follow the detailed description in the book. The conclusion summarises the main points described in the book and so it is useful to those who may not be able to pay too much attention to the rich details in the book. Overall this is

a good descriptive study which has also added new information (such as the detailed description on Chung Ling's breakaway from the Chinese education movement) not previously available in English. It is a convenient reference on the politics of Chinese education during the period.

A minor disagreement from this reviewer is the use of Wang Gungwu's famous classification of Chinese in Malaya into Group A, Group B, and Group C according to their political orientation towards China (Wang 1970). In Dr. Tan Liok Ee's period of study, unqualified use of Wang's model can be misleading. Thus after acquiring Malayan citizenship, the China-born Lim Lian Geok was described as having changed from Group A to Group C (p.97), in the same category with Tan Cheng Lock the prominent Baba. This is odd as in terms of local political and cultural orientation, Lim represented the views of those Chinese-educated Chinese who held a very Chinese view of Malaya, so to speak. As I had commented elsewhere, Wang's model is useful for analyzing the Chinese in Malaya before the Second World War, but with most Chinese becoming citizens, this model needs revision (Tan 1988).

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**Economic Restructing, Technology Transfer and Human Resource Development** by B.R. Virmani and Kala Rao, Response Books (a Division of Sage Publications), New Delhi, 1997

Despite the very current and interesting nature of the topic (as reflected in the title), this book was a disappointment. It appeared poorly conceived, poorly

organised and relied heavily on dated material -- both in terms of statistical data and references. In addition, the book was largely descriptive rather than analytical.

Part I of the book was made up of two chapters: The Conceptual Framework and the Significance of Appropriate National Policies. Chapter 1 provided a definition of technology transfer, and in this respect, was a refreshing change from numerous volumes and articles on the subject that proceed without a definition of transfer. However, the definition provided lacked clarity and I wondered if something was amiss. Sample the following (p. 8):

*Similarly, technology transfer has been given many meanings. Essentially, however, the major motive of transfer is the technology gap that exists between the supplier of technology and its recipients.*

The reader is not told what some of the many meanings might be. Illumination was only provided several paragraphs later, after a digression on the transfer process [it] involves four main stages-negotiating, setting up, starting-up, and sustaining growth....) and on the issue of appropriate technology. The definition offered is as follows:

*The extent of absorption and assimilation of technology by the recipient organization/country is a true measure of the actual transfer of technology for manufacturing/production purposes without developing the appropriate capabilities of the recipients.*

While the term 'absorption' was defined, 'assimilation' was not. More importantly, the reader is left to decide what the authors had in mind when they offered this definition somewhat belatedly.

The remaining two paragraphs of this section defined the sophistication of technology and technological capability. Both definitions left much to be desired. The greatest disappointment was the lack of discussion on how to operationalize these definitions, since the subsequent empirical case-studies were presumably going to draw on these concepts. As it turned out, however, the analyses in the book never really utilised the conceptual framework developed in Part I.

The discussion in Chapter 2 was also weak and some assertions do not stand up to scrutiny. For example: *In any technology transfer process, experience suggest that it is necessary that every recipient has all the resources required for technology absorption* (p. 29). Surely, this is inaccurate. In as much as

technology transfer is a process, some stages of the process can proceed without the recipient having all the resources necessary for the complete absorption of the process in its entirety. Another example: citing an Asian Productivity Organisations study, the authors report: *Thus, the developing countries' MNCs create more spill-over and linkage effects. However, MNCs of developing countries tend to undertake less R&D activities in recipient countries than their counterparts in developed countries* (p.31). This statement suggests that the lack of R&D undertaken by MNCs from developing countries in the recipient countries is their only disadvantage, compared to MNCs from developed countries. Again, this is inaccurate on several counts. First, MNCs from developing countries tend to do very little R&D in the recipient economies simply because they do very little R&D, even in their home-economies, relative to MNCs from developed countries. This is probably related to the kind of products and product markets the former concentrate on. Second, there is evidence suggesting that even MNCs from developing countries investing in other developing countries is still small for developing countries to rely on them entirely. Neither are they always the conduits of the latest technology. Hence, the long-term benefits of the so-called greater linkages and spill-overs they promise appear debatable.

The discussion of R&D in Chapter 2 lacked depth because there was no evidence that the authors consulted the recent and interesting findings on factors that determine the relocation of R&D activities from the home-base of MNCs to the recipient economies. Apart from bemoaning the low level of R&D expenditures in most Asian countries, relative to Japan or South Korea (by now, an old tale), no new insights were offered on the matter. In fact, without an understanding of the underlying causes for poor R&D in the recipient countries and the reluctance of MNCs to transfer such skills, the authors suggested: *The ideal course would be if the technology is first transferred to R&D which, in turn, should take the responsibility for training of personnel. This can, then possibly pave the way for proper assimilation and upgradation (sic) of technology in the future* (p. 38).

Part II (chapters 3,4,5,6) consisted of country studies: Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and India. No justification was offered for this particular choice. Apart from the discussion on India - the country which the authors were obviously familiar with - the others were highly descriptive, relied on dated data (1992 was the most recent in most cases) and sorely lacked critical analysis. The chapter on Malaysia, minor irritations like misspelt Malay word aside, read like material from government documents repeated uncritically. To illustrate, while there was a long list of government incentives for investments, R&D, human resource upgrading, industrial adjustment allowances and so

forth, there was no discussion of how effectively these have reached the intended audience. Given the claim that they had detailed discussions with 400 officials at various levels in the countries studied (p. 10), it was surprising that no critical viewpoint was reported vis-a vis the implementation of these schemes. A reputed scholar who reviewed the schemes meant to assist small and medium-sized industries noted in 1996 that *While these seem well-gearred to meeting the technological needs of the [SMIs]...[t] heir limited impact on technological upgrading must ... reflect weaknesses in their design and delivery and the lack of capability on the part of the enterprises.*

Since technology transfer was an important focus of the book, the absence of sections on technology transfer in the chapters on Singapore or Thailand was curious. In the case of Malaysia, the sections on technology transfer consisted of data on technology agreements (until 1990) and a description of the procedures followed by the Ministry of International Trade and Industries in approving technology agreements. Once again, there is a lack of critical review. For example, no mention was made of a published study in 1992 that found institutions in charge of overseeing and co-ordinating research and technology transfer agreements lacked the relevant expertise to accomplish these tasks effectively. In fact, these weaknesses prevailed until 1995.

More generally, the virtual absence of references to the technology transfer literature of the countries being studied was striking. No study pertaining to technology transfer in Singapore or Thailand was consulted, and in the Malaysian case, only a study completed in 1988 appeared in the bibliography. This is a serious lapse.

Another inconsistency was that while the chapter on Malaysia had a micro-level study of two organisations - Texas Instruments and Petronas - the discussions on Singapore and Thailand did not have firm-studies. It was also unclear why firm-studies were included for Malaysia. The authors explain only that they have been taken up for an illustrative micro-level study. However, no clear link was established between the macro discussion and these firm-level cases.

Part III, was made up of 4 chapters, each of which presented a case study of an Indian firm. Two of the firms were from the public sector and the other two from the private sector. This chapter was more interesting because an effort was made to related it with the earlier macro discussion on India's approach to technology and development. Taken together, they formed the highlight of the book.

The final part listed the lessons learnt (Chapter 11) and discussed the policy initiatives necessary for the future (Chapter 12). It was not really clear for whom these lessons were intended until the end of Chapter 11, where it was suggested that they may benefit *some of the newly emerging countries such as India and help them in evolving their policies* (p. 231). While the chapters made for interesting reading, not all conclusions emerged directly from the earlier sections of the book.

Overall, the picture that emerged from the book regarding economic restructuring, technology transfer and human resource development was a disjointed one.

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**Malaya and Singapore during the Japanese Occupation**, edited by Paul H. Kratoska, Department of History, National University of Singapore, 1995, 188pp.

The five papers published in this book constitute an attempt to look into various facets of the Japanese Occupation in the Malaya Peninsula and Singapore. The first paper by Abu Talib Ahmad discusses the impact of the Japanese Occupation on the Malay Muslim population and the reactions of the various groups. His account gives a fresh analysis of Malay Muslim attitudes and reveals the serious schisms within the society. Even more important is the impact of the Japanese on Islam, which was seriously undermined as a result of Japanese interference and manipulation. The inability of the religious authorities to enforce Islamic syariah, in turn, led to the breakdown of Muslim society.

Hara Fujio's discussion on the relationship between the Chinese communities and the Japanese draws a distinction between the anti-Japanese Malayan Communist Party and the pro-Japanese associations that were established willingly or otherwise to regulate the relationship between the Japanese and the Chinese. This chapter is indeed fascinating as it casts new light on the subject by making extensive use of Japanese sources as well as Chinese sources not utilised previously. While many of the incidents discussed by Hara such as the treachery of Lai Tek and the extortion by the Japanese of 50 million dollars from the Chinese are well known, his contributions come from the discussion

of more inside information behind these two incidents. In addition, other events are also discussed.

Yoki Akashi concentrates on the anti-Japanese movements in the state of Perak. Once again the extensive use of Japanese and Chinese records gives his account an edge over other written works on Perak during the Japanese occupation. Japanese documents reveal all too clearly the treacherous role of Lai Tek as he betrays allied agents to the Japanese. However it also reveals just how much the Kempetai knew about communists operations in Perak. Not all the information came from Lai Tek as the Japanese did possess an effective intelligence network that was able to disrupt allied agents and harass the MPAJA considerably. Japanese and Chinese reports also reveal the serious difficulties faced by the Japanese in their struggle against the anti-Japanese forces. The anti Japanese struggle was clearly a mere dress rehearsal for a full scale struggle against the British which would take place after the Japanese surrender.

Patricia Lim Pui Huen's chapter on how the Japanese Occupation is remembered is an interesting study of how various men and women who lived through the occupation narrated the experiences. Ironically, as stated by Patricia, the body of autobiographical writing is not large and amounts to some 50 odd volumes published in Malay and English. Most deal with their personal observations of the invasion, the subsequent occupation and the ending of the war. Undoubtedly descriptions of suffering and personal privations are discussed. Some as in the case of Sybil Kathigasu's account, are indeed painful to read. However, all provide interesting and fascinating accounts of a period of uncertainty and grave danger. The list of books that appear at the end of this chapter will provide any reader with a varied view of the various facts of the Japanese Occupation seen from the eyes of those who lived through this tragic experience.

The last chapter written by Henry P. Frei is a kaleidoscope of view of the Japanese invasion of Malaya through the eyes of those who remember. Henry Frei concentrates more on the written accounts of Japanese soldiers and officials who participated in the invasion and remained in Malaya as administrators and soldiers from 1941 till 1945. Everyday accounts of ordinary soldiers who recorded the events of the day to day fighting, the memoirs of the brutal Tsuji Masanobu who planned the massacres of the Chinese in Singapore, and, the account of Mamoru Shinozaki a humane Japanese, reveal the conflicting views of individuals involved in the war. Of even greater interest is the increasing attention given by Japanese writers into researching and presenting a balanced and objective account of the war conducted by the Japanese in Malaya and Singapore, including the appalling

atrocities and sufferings inflicted on the local population. Finally a serious attempt is being made by the Japanese to honestly appraise their role in the war.

While this book has only five chapters, the value and academic merits of each chapter gives this work an edge over many books on the Japanese Occupation.

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**An Urbanizing World: Global Report on Human Settlements, 1996** by United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (HABITAT), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996, pp. 599

*An Urbanizing World* was published as a prelude to a major United Nations Conference on Human Settlement (HABITAT II), alternatively referred to as the 'City Summit', held in Istanbul in June 1996. Evidently, this report was intended to "serve as a road map in helping us to decide the direction to take" with respect to the changes in global human settlements. Through this report, "the international community will seek to shape a common global agenda to address the challenge of an urban world and to improve shelter and the living and working environment of people everywhere.

The core message of *An Urbanizing World* is that more people are congregating in major cities of the world and this is the major factor contributing to "the dilemma now confronting all human settlements - large and small, rich and poor - as they stand on the threshold of a new 'urban world'. Arguably, cities in the coming millennium - especially the larger ones - must become "sustainable, productive, safe, healthy, humane, and affordable". To bring this about, the report recommended that the critical role of urban governance and the financing aspect of human settlements must be re-evaluated with a view to strengthening structures and optimizing expenditure pattern.

The three primary objectives of *An Urbanizing World* are as follows:-

- (a) To provide a statement on the global and regional conditions of human settlements useful to individual countries and international

agencies concerned with improving their respective human settlements policies and programs;

- (b) To promote general interest in, and make contributions towards an informed understanding of the evolving nature of settlements, the interrelationships of their parts, and of the significance of settlements systems in providing setting for human, social, economic, and environmental development.
- (c) To provide an update on global policy matters addressed by the United Nations as well as a synthesis of information available to the United Nations from other sources.

To meet the above-mentioned objectives, the report is divided into four parts as follows:-

- (a) Part I reviews the various trends that have shaped the conditions of human settlements development to which policies need to be directed;
- (b) Part II assesses the state of the various sectoral components of human settlements and the factors that condition them; housing, housing finance, land etc.
- (c) Part III outlines the responses of governments, NGOs, community groups, the private sector and the international community to human settlements, conditions and trends. The emphasis is on governance of municipal and rural settlements through approaches which encourage governments to enable neighbourhoods to manage, in the widest sense, local settlements improvements, facilities and services.
- (d) Part IV presents statistical annexes on various human settlements topics for references and future studies. The annexes are designed to assist practitioners and scholars to build upon existing strategies for human settlements improvements, enabling innovative programming and applied social research.

Even though *An Urbanizing World* is intended for the expert and the layman alike, reading it would not be easy for the layman as urban issues are multifaceted and very complex. In fact, it is a challenge in itself to be able to present these in a way that would enable the layman to comprehend some of the underlying processes. Nonetheless, true to the remarks made by Boutros-Boutros Ghali - the then Secretary General of the United Nations - *An*

*Urbanizing World* is indeed thought-provoking and promotes a sense of awareness of the magnitude of things to come for governments, NGOs and urban planners. Policy prescriptions are practicable where administrative structures and infrastructures are already in place.

The report highlighted the critical role of urban governance and financing of human settlements in dealing with the extra large urban agglomerations of the future. Urban governance, i.e. the management of cities and regions through private-public partnership, was mentioned in passing by many writers and researchers on the spatial management of cities, but this report dealt with this issue at great length and how this should enable us to achieve social, economic and political objectives.

One interesting feature of this report is that it contains "boxes" which highlighted case studies and these add significantly to empirical knowledge. Arguably, these "boxes" are invaluable aids to university teachers and students alike.

Researchers and university teachers will find *An Urbanizing World* interesting and stimulating. They will appreciate especially its statistical annexes and references to other empirical findings which are usually not available to researchers and university teachers in the Developing World. In fact, the whole report, typical of many reports coming out of the United Nations agencies, is rich in data.

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**Constitutional Conflicts in Contemporary Malaysia** by H.P. Lee, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1995, pp. 184

The Malaysian judiciary may be said to have truly arrived at its *institutional* independence on 1 January 1985, when it severed its remaining ties to the Privy Council of the United Kingdom, and when the Federal Court, renamed the 'Supreme Court', became Malaysia's final court of appeal.

But the judiciary, many would say, lost its *constitutional* independence two and a half years later with the sacking of the Lord President, Tun Salleh Abas and

two other judges of the Supreme Court, Tan Sri Wan Suleiman and Datuk George Seah, under notorious circumstances.

Along with most legal experts and other observers of Malaysian politics, H.P. Lee argues the latter point in *Constitutional Conflicts in Contemporary Malaysia*, his study of the clashes between the executive, under Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad and the Malay Rulers in 1983-84 and 1992-93, as well as with the judiciary in 1988.

Lee's assessment of the position and indeed the future of the Malay Rulers, as have emerged from those conflicts, sees ambivalent. On the one hand, he notes that the monarchy may have been regarded by some sections of Malaysian society as a 'feudalistic feature of the Malaysian polity' (129). In particular, there had been 'a number of incidents involving the Rulers of some states' which might have 'provided some basis for the [Federal Government's] fear that it might have to deal with a "defiant" King' (26). On the other hand, Lee considers the monarchy's potential as an 'effective fetter on executive power' to have been lost to Malaysia's tradition of constitutionalism after the monarchy was embroiled in the 1983-84 crisis over the royal prerogative of granting assent to acts of parliament, and forced, in 1992-93, to accept the partial removal of royal immunity from legal suits or prosecution.

Lee is much less reserved when he comments on the dismissal of the Supreme Court judges in 1988 which resulted in 'the transformation of a once highly respected bastion into a timorous institution' (p. 100). He traces this 'convulsion in the judiciary' to the tensions which developed between the executive and the judiciary during the mid-1980s.

These tensions, Lee recapitulates, arose out of the executive's defeat in certain constitutionally important cases, namely, *Berthelsen v. Director General of Immigration, Malaysia and Ors.* (1987 1 MLJ 134), *Persatuan Aliran Kesedaran Negara v. Minister of Home Affairs* (1988 1 MLJ 440), *Lim Kit Siang v. United Engineers (M) Sdn. Bhd. (No. 2)* (1988 1 MLJ 182), *Inspector-General of Police, Malaysia v. Tan Sri Raja Khalid bin Raja Harun* (1988 1 MLJ 182), and *Public Prosecutor v. Dato' Yap Peng* (1987 2 MLJ 311).

Then came the critical case of *Mohamed Noor bin Othman v. Mohamed Yusof Jaafar* (1988 2 MLJ 129), in which UMNO was ruled to be illegal and ordered to be deregistered. The subsequent appeal of the decision, which was scheduled by Lord President Tun Salleh Abas to be heard by a full bench of the Supreme Court, struck not at the constitutional balance of power in Malaysia but the future of UMNO's leading contenders for power, including Prime

Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad. It was under those politically charged circumstances that Salleh Abas, Wan Suleiman and George Seah were dismissed following the recommendations of two separate impeachment tribunals.

A specialist in Malaysian constitutional law, Lee approached all these cases with care and a sharp grasp of the law. And, evidently, a strict constitutionalist by conviction, Lee writes at his best when reviewing the many contentious aspects of the Tribunal proceedings. There is scarcely any doubt from Lee's critique of many contentious aspects of the impeachment of Salleh Abas, Wan Suleiman and George Seah that his sympathies lie with the judges whose attempts to uphold judicial independence came to grief in 1988. To that extent Lee does not mince his words. On the publication of the report of the First Tribunal, for instance, he says that the government's decision to 'publish not only the findings of the Tribunal but also the transcripts of the proceedings ... was a blessing in disguise for it revealed the travesty of justice occasioned against Tun Salleh' (60).

Non-specialist readers needing some guidance in negotiating the legal intricacies of the cases which featured in these executive-monarchy and executive-judiciary battles, which tipped the balance of power very greatly in the executive's favour, will find in Lee's slim volume a lucid critique of the legal dimensions of those constitutional conflicts.

But the legal sharpness of this book is not matched by its political insight. Fundamentally, Lee assumes, in line with an established view, that the Malaysian judiciary enjoyed an untampered independence before the crisis of 1988, largely because the executive until then displayed a great respect for this 'co-equal' branch of government. Such a deferential view of the Malaysian judiciary – even if it serves to highlight the extent of executive aggrandizement under Dr. Mahathir – needs to be tempered with a more critical attitude towards the conservatism of the judiciary.

As the Malaysian Bar Council, and individual lawyers, for example, Tommy Thomas and G.S. Nijar, have suggested (*Reflections on the Malaysian Constitution*, Aliran 1987), the Malaysian judiciary had very rarely supported legal challenges to executive and legislative curbs on constitutional rights in Malaysia. Constitutional guarantees were only too frequently undermined by draconian statutes. Yet, except in cases that concerned narrow, procedural, irregularities on the part of the executive, the judiciary tended strictly to observe, in Harry Grove's words, a 'judicial deference to legislative intent'.

Hence – and this is borne out by Malaysian political history – an executive which dominated the legislature could always pass oppressive laws with the expectation that these would be upheld in court on a strictly legal basis. In that sense, one can only make an unbalanced comment on the executive's determined erosion of constitutional safeguards, as Lee does in his survey of the amendments to the Malaysian Constitution, as well as in his conclusion, without critical references to its reliance on the direct or indirect support of the judiciary in the latter's first thirty years of independence.

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