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Chinese Politics in Malaysia: A History of the Malaysian Chinese Association, by Heng Pek Koon

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environmental concerns associated today in Europe and the United States with the green movement. Dorothy Stein finds that an underlying reason why the dowry system persists in defiance of India's laws is that only by marriage can a woman be a full member of society. Women who are unmarried, disowned by their husband or husband's family, or widowed are threats according to a prominent ideology in male-centered societies. The same rationale also justified widow burning decades ago. She notes that it cuts across religious groups in India and is not altogether different from views toward women often pronounced in the West.

Burton Stein concludes that the origins of the Nagar uprising in Mysore must be traced far back in history and that the unrest does not fit well into analytical grids offered by others. Both findings call into question recent theoretical studies of Indian peasant movements. R. D. Hill argues that the numerous cases of Malay peasants packing up and moving beyond the reach of oppressive rulers were expressions of protest. This suggests the usefulness of not limiting the concept of protest movement to organized, confrontational conflicts that a more conventional notion of what is political requires.

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Chinese Politics in Malaysia: A History of the Malaysian Chinese Association. By HENG PEK KOON. East Asian Historical Monographs. Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1988. xiv, 307 pp. \$36.00.

The focus of this book, covering only eight years (1949–57) in the history of the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), at first seems rather narrow; yet the author skillfully uses this framework to provide an insightful, balanced, and politically astute evaluation of the possibilities and limitations of Chinese politics in Malaysia. Heng Pek Koon credits the MCA both with the successful indigenization of Chinese politics in Malaysia and with the ultimate marginalization of these politics because of compromises reached with the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), the major Malay political party, in preindependence negotiations. Hence, as she argues in her epilogue (which covers 1957–87), the MCA no longer claims the sustained political support and confidence of most Chinese Malaysians.

While Heng Pek Koon's account follows a basic chronological format, it simultaneously weaves within it a more thematic understanding of Chinese Malaysian politics. She begins by carefully reviewing the earlier adaptation of Chinese institutions to the Malayan setting (secret societies; the Kapitan China system; clan, district, and dialect associations) and then describes the formation of new groups linked to specific economic and political interests.

The heart of the book deals with the MCA between 1949 and 1957. Established at the suggestion of British officials, the association in its first years served primarily as a conduit for social-welfare programs in the resettlement of Chinese rural squatters during the Emergency. Yet with the quickening movement toward independence, key MCA leaders recognized the need for a more centrally organized approach to the political future of the Chinese in postindependence Malaya. Starting in 1952, the UMNO agreed with MCA leaders that by working together they could eventually win the right to inherit power from the British. Heng Pek Koon describes in considerable detail the agreements reached by MCA (and UMNO) leaders in the next few years on racially sensitive issues, arguing that the English-educated MCA leaders were willing to barter

acceptance of Malay views on national language, education, and special rights in exchange for more liberal citizenship provisions for the Chinese. When opposition to the constitutional agreements on citizenship, language, and education was raised by leaders of traditional Chinese associations in 1956, their position was undercut both by lack of unity among them and by fears of harming their own financial positions by belonging to a politically powerless outgroup.

This tension between the backgrounds and aspirations of Western-oriented, English-educated Chinese leaders and more Sinocentric, Chinese-educated leaders provides one important theme of this study. The most interesting chapter details the different backgrounds of MCA leaders at various levels. Heng Pek Koon argues that the cosmopolitan backgrounds of national-level, English-educated Chinese leaders enabled them to work successfully with Malay leaders of similar background, while Chinese-educated leaders with different backgrounds at the state and local levels provided crucial links to the Chinese masses. Her further suggestion that economic connections among leaders at these different levels reinforced and sometimes underwrote their political ties, although provocative and plausible, is unfortunately not supported by any evidence.

Heng Pek Koon also draws interesting parallels between traditional Chinese middlemen leadership roles during the colonial period and the current patronage system whereby the power of Chinese leaders is measured by their ability to obtain favors for their followers from the politically dominant Malays. She frequently alludes to class-based divisions within the Chinese community (she consistently identifies MCA leaders with capitalist interests), but the actual effect of class background on political behavior is never systematically explored.

This book offers unusually sound and insightful perspectives on Chinese Malaysian politics. Particularly impressive is the way national political themes identified by Heng Pek Koon across time resonate with personal observations of recent political activities and attitudes in local Chinese Malaysian communities.

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Intellectuals and Nationalism in Indonesia: A Study of the Following Recruited by Sutan Sjahrir in Occupation Jakarta. By J. D. LEGGE. Cornell Modern Indonesia Project Monograph Series. Ithaca: Cornell University, Modern Indonesia Project, 1988. x, 159 pp.

After a long pause J. D. Legge has published another monograph on Indonesian history—certainly a feat to be acclaimed. He turns his attention to the group of young intellectuals recruited by Sjahrir during the Japanese occupation of Indonesia (1942–45).

Sjahrir, who was exiled by the Dutch colonial government because of radical political activities in the early 1930s, was released by the Japanese. Unlike the prominent nationalists Sukarno and Hatta, however, Sjahrir declined to cooperate with the Japanese and set about organizing a loose network of young people who sympathized with his political ideals and admired his personality. Their discussions focused on Indonesia's postwar political future. Sjahrir stressed rationalism and democracy at the expense of doctrine. In his acceptance of Western concepts and ideals, he surpassed other prominent Indonesian leaders; likewise, his negative view of traditional society was more extreme.