

But in such cases the characters involved and their relationship with Tokyo are fascinating. Two of them, Iwaichi Fujiwara of the Fujiwara Kikan (Fujiwara Agency) and Colonel Keiji Suzuki of the Minami Kikan (Southern Agency) (and later Munenari Yanagawa who was to train the Javanese Peta) saw themselves in the mould of Lawrence of Arabia. Fujiwara was supposed to work with overseas Indians in Thailand and Malaya while Suzuki was to work with the Burmese. They had this romantic and visionary attitude that they were destined to lead the natives in their independence struggle against their colonial masters. They were to develop lasting friendships with some of the overseas Indians and Burmese they worked with and were to champion their course in Tokyo even at times when it was against the best interests of Tokyo, particularly in the case with Suzuki.

Joyce Lebra in this book has of course made a contribution to our understanding of this now apparently profound period in modern Southeast Asian history. She has utilized a fair amount of Japanese sources, both documentary and oral, together with English language sources to bring about a fairly readable book. Her discussion of the significance of the Japanese military model for Southeast Asia is generally valid in my opinion. However, if criticisms were to be given of this book, I would say that it is too Japanese-oriented. By that is meant there is a lot on Tokyo's view of things and Japanese personalities, and not nearly enough on the Southeast Asian side. This kind of perspective gives the impression that the response from the Southeast Asians to Japanese initiatives was clear-cut, either collaboration or rejection when the whole attitude towards the Japanese and also the Western colonial powers were much more ambivalent. There is by no means an adequate discussion of Southeast Asian nationalism especially when such was crucial to Japanese policy. The section on Malaya is rather weak, a result no doubt of the difficulty of getting documents and the relevant interviews. I wonder if her spelling out of the acronym MPAJA in page 114 as the Malay People's Anti-Japanese Army instead of the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army is a typographical error. Similarly, in the same page, she writes of a Malay Communist Party instead of a Malayan Communist Party. If these are not typographical errors, then the existence of these groups, hitherto unsuspected, should be worth further study. Such apart, I recommend this book to those who would seek to know more of the Japanese occupation and its legacy. (Lee Poh Ping)

*Peasants and Their Agricultural Economy in Colonial Malaya, 1874-1941* by Lim Teck Ghee, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1977, xiv+291 pp.

## I

Economic history studies of colonial Malaya have generally focused on plantation agriculture and the mining industry, the two leading interests controlled by large-scale colonial enterprise. There are of course some accounts on the peasant economy by colonial administrators and scholars, whose scope, however, was limited mainly

to describing the existing state of peasant society. These authors gave very little attention to the dynamic, historical aspect of a changing society. The reasons for this orientation may be explained in two ways. First, available materials, either written or oral, from the level of the farmer are very scarce. For instance, it is quite rare for landlords to have written records which would reveal past landlord-tenant relationships. Second, as a subject of academic inquiry, plantation agriculture and mining are much more accessible to European and Chinese scholars than peasant agriculture would be, since positive participants in these industries have come from these two racial groups.

Lim Teck Ghee challenges this plantation or mining-oriented approach to the economic history of colonial Malaya. Using huge volumes of unpublished and published records of the Federated Malay States and the colonial government, he successfully reconstructs, in detail, colonial economic policy towards peasant agriculture and its impact on Malay society. This book is the first major work which contributes to a new approach to the study of the indigenous peasant economy in its entirety under colonial rule in Malaya. It is a revised version of Lim's doctoral thesis submitted to the Australian National University in 1971. Lim is currently a senior research fellow at the Centre for Policy Research, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang.

## II

The traditional Malay peasant society, a society that was more or less self-sufficient, began to change as British colonial interest emerged, starting in 1874. Throughout the study, Lim endeavors to trace the causes and effects of colonial policies largely responsible for the change and growth of the Malayan peasant society. Of all colonial economic policies, the introduction of a modern land system as a replacement for traditional Malay customary law had a crucial impact on the peasant economy. Especially after the British introduced the Federal Land Code in 1897, peasant society was exposed to a highly individualized land tenure system and gradually became subordinate to an export-oriented colonial economy. The extent of influence of this new land system greatly increased when the rubber industry was established in the Malay Peninsula. In other words, the combination of economic interests and legal institutions formed the basis of colonial capitalism in an export-oriented economy which continued to exist even after independence in 1957.

However, it is also true that the colonial bureaucrats had to resort to a number of other administrative manipulations of peasant society in order to stably develop colonial plantation agriculture and make it prosper. One of the typical and effective strategies was to build a dual structure in colonial agriculture; rubber plantations on one side and rice farming on the other. Ever since the emergence of the colonial economy, rice, the staple diet of immigrant laborers from South India and China, was imported from Burma and Siam. This was necessary mainly because traditionally Malay peasants produced only enough rice to meet their own needs. But the crop failures in Burma and Siam in 1917-21, and subsequent ban on rice export from these countries, the world depression starting in 1929 with the consequent price increase

of imported rice as well as the poor performance of Malay's export economy caused great financial loss to the colonial government.

The colonial government occasionally offered inducements to encourage peasants to farm rice. For instance, irrigation facilities and credit services were provided to develop the rice industry. But the farmers' response was not always favorable. The government intention was, of course, to attain a stable supply of local rice for the immigrant laborers, which would help to reduce imports of the grain and maximize profits from the rubber economy. Many Malay peasants, however, were reluctant to produce any more rice than what they needed for themselves and preferred to do mixed-farming with rubber as a cash crop. In fact, despite government reluctance to let native peasants plant rubber, the acreage of small-scale rubber farming gradually expanded. The major method of discouraging peasant rubber agriculture was to regulate the alienation of rubber land to Malay as well as Chinese peasants, and sometimes to prohibit rubber planting so that the monopolistic position of colonial capitalists could be maintained.

The tendency of the agricultural economy to divide into two parts, the rubber sector controlled by colonial capitalists and the rice sector dominated by indigenous Malay peasants became more distinct whenever there was a rice shortage or a rubber crisis. The policy against peasant rubber production culminated when the Stevenson Restriction Scheme took effect in 1922. The colonial governments of Malaya and Ceylon introduced a scheme to adjust their rubber production, following the decline in price caused by overproduction on one hand and simultaneous decrease in demand from industrial nations on the other. Quotas to limit rubber production were devised on the basis of planted acreage in plantation and assessed average productivity per mature acre in the peasant sector. The Malayan peasants were dissatisfied with the unreasonably lowering of official assessments of planted acreage and productivity in the peasant sector compared to what was done in the plantation sector. Consequently, "violence broke out in various parts of Perak and Johore" (p. 146), which forced the colonial government to appoint a committee to inquire into the production allowance allotted to small-holders.

The committee's assessment on the economic conditions of rubber small-holders provided evidence that the standard production allowance for the small-holder sector was unfair and inequitable, but that yields from small-holdings in many localities were higher than generally expected. In this respect, Lim, in common with Bauer in *The Rubber Industry*, successfully dispels the past misconception that productivity in the peasant rubber sector was much lower than in the plantation sector. However, whether under-assessed productivity of the peasant rubber sector was equally applicable to both Malay and Chinese small-holders still remains to be investigated. It is regrettable that Lim did not detail the events of peasant violence against the government assessment, nor did he suggest which race or class of peasant participated in these events. Further, in appraising the colonial rubber policy, Lim uses a strict sectoral analysis between colonial large-scale and indigenous small-scale sectors. However, one may wonder whether it would not have been more realistic, in analyzing the economic conditions of small-holders, to divide the peasant sector into Malay and Chinese subsectors. Another important point is that, although small-

holders generally were discriminated against in their allowances under the restriction scheme, they had at least one noticeable benefit—the increase in rubber price due to production restriction.

Next, let us turn our attention to the significance of the Malay Reservation Enactment which was designed to protect land ownership by Malay peasants. In the early days following Maxwell's introduction of the new land system, colonial rubber enterprises acquired spacious virgin land, but with soaring worldwide demand for rubber the plantations soon began to encroach on traditional Malay land. During the expanded land buying, a traditionally self-sufficient peasant economy was forced into becoming a commercial, monetary economy, and peasants rapidly lost their land. The colonial government, at first, did not object to this tendency since administrative interference would have directly contradicted the doctrine of economic laissez-faire widely adhered to by colonial bureaucrats. However, deterioration of the peasant economy was accelerated by increasing transfers of land to non-Malay hands. The colonial government had to take remedial measures to halt the disastrous consequences of these land transactions. The Malay Reservation Enactment was passed in the Federal Council on November 25, 1913. The main feature of the enactment was that land once declared Malay Reservation Land by the Resident could not be sold, leased, or otherwise disposed of to a non-Malay. Thus, at the end of 1923 approximately 2,783,000 acres, or 15.6 per cent of the total four state area, was estimated to be under Malay Reservation. In 1921 the reservation policy was further used and a strong Malay-oriented land policy continued by the colonial government. This eventually put Chinese and Indians outside its land policy interests.

Lim stresses that land policy under British rule always emphasized how dangerous Chinese merchants and Indian *chettians* were to the Malay economy. Such a policy is a contributing factor to form the present "racial polarization" (p. 216) in colonial Malaya. Lim is critical of the British colonial government's making Chinese the "scapegoat" (p. 216) for the economic impoverishment of Malay small-holders.

### III

In summary, assessment of *Peasants and Their Agricultural Economy in Colonial Malaya, 1874-1941* consists of three points. First, Lim made a strenuous effort to read an enormous quantity of official and other material pertaining to the subject, some of which has never been used before. Second, using these materials, he re-interpreted an intricate sixty years of colonial policy over Malayan peasant society to provide a coherent history. This work is most helpful in deepening our insights of past and present Malaysian society. I believe most readers will agree with my assessment of these two points.

Third, Lim's general disapproval of British administrators and their policies is, on the whole, reasonable and perhaps even essential for understanding the present economic and social setting of Malaysia where remnants of colonialism still exist. However, he should have devoted more attention to the role and function of colonial capitalists, especially in his analysis of British and Malay-biased colonial land policy. It seems to me that Lim sometimes overemphasizes the power of British officialdom

in decision-making and implementation of colonial land policy and thus tends to underestimate the actual role of colonial capitalists. Colonial officials, of course, occupied a very important position in determining colonial policy, but, in fact, the functions and interests of both parties in deciding important colonial economic policies such as the introduction of modern land tenure and the Malay Reservation Enactment must have inevitably converged and interacted with each other. It seems to me, however, that the complicated interaction between these two parties has not been elucidated enough in the book. An overall evaluation of British colonial agricultural policies and their effect on the peasant economy can only be made after this point has been fully clarified.

(Kenzō Horii)