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Two Malay Worlds:

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TWO MALAY WORLDS: Interaction in Urban and Rural Settings. By Ronald Provencher. Berkeley, Calif.: Center for South and Southeast Asia Studies, University of California, 1971. xii, 211 pages.

The hallmark of the second generation of intensive social science scholarship in Southeast Asia, according to anthropologist James N. Anderson in the foreword of this monograph, is refinement. Refinement here involves taking a detailed look at social organization in two communities of Western Malaysia, one urban and one rural, and filling in the outlines allegedly established by the earlier first generation of scholars.

Author Provencher offers a wealth of detail — indeed staggers us with it — in discussing “how urban and rural communities with the same traditions differ as social environments, and how these environmental differences correspond to differences in social behavior” (p. 1). Using Fred Eggan’s controlled comparison framework and Jules Henry’s personal community concept, with generous doses of Erving Goffman’s social interaction analysis, he describes behavior in Kampong Bahru, a Malay settlement in the capital city of Kuala Lumpur, and in Kuang, a rural Malay land reservation 19 miles away.

The data he presents to achieve his aims fall into two categories, namely: (1) demographic imperatives like population density, social and geographic mobility, population heterogeneity, age and sex structure, and economic differentials; and (2) cultural patterns, or ideal, normative, and actual modes of interaction. The major chapter headings focus on landholders and tenants; work as social context; social aggregates like households, owners and tenants, and sub-ethnic and regional groupings; organization and leadership; the learning of basic social roles; modern Malay manners; performances; and, finally, environments and interaction. Eighteen simple tables describe the employment, household, and terminological features of the two populations. To help the reader locate the research sites in a national and regional context, two maps are provided. Specific community layouts do not receive comparable treatment, unfortunately, and the reader is left to struggle with imagined layouts derived from the textual description. On the other hand, the author has enhanced the text by reproducing five attractive drawings of typical household and street scenes done by artists Ismail bin Omar and Jalimus bin Hakam.

While the details so methodically furnished by the author verge on the tedious, at least for the reader not well acquainted with Malay culture in that area of Southeast Asia, they nonetheless yield important insights to students of the urbanization process. I refer to the various continua emerging out of the data, which almost uniformly show urban owners clustering at the traditional end of the scale, urban renters at the other extreme, with rural dwellers somewhere in between. Surely now the simplistic and long criticized single-line, rural-urban continuum, often bolstered by the traditional-modern continuum, can be laid permanently to rest in the wake of this latest empirical attack.

The discrediting of the rural-urban continuum as invalid in these Western

Malaysian circumstances leads to further insights. These include the author's contention that Southeast Asian cities, having predated Western colonization by over a thousand years and holding a special, even sacred, place in the cultural cosmologies of these societies, fall within the definition of traditional social forms. Thus, centuries-old terms of reference or address, and traditional forms of social behavior apparent in urban areas need not be interpreted as survivals of rural traditions perpetuated by migrants to the city. Rather, they constitute outgrowths of long-term *urban* interaction for the most part. They are city practices that have evolved from the pre-colonial urban tradition of Southeast Asia and have developed into an urban Malay way of life. Indeed, Kapong Bahru displays much greater variation in traditional social forms than does rural Kuang because the long-standing heterogeneity and complexity of the former's urban setting have precisely generated this diversity. The model of acculturation applied to Southeast Asian cities as moving away from traditional to modern forms under the impact of the West thus gives only a partial, perhaps misleading picture of urban dynamics in this part of the world. Cities like Kuala Lumpur reveal a strong and flourishing traditional Malay base, even as they also take on Western forms, a product in part of a long-term indigenous adaptation to pre-colonial urban environments.

Having generalized these patterns to all of Southeast Asia, the Manila-based reviewer must then hastily point out that the exception to the rule appears in the Philippine case. Its fringe location in the region placed it outside pre-colonial urban activity. Hence, unlike the Malaysian, Indonesian, or mainland Southeast Asia cases, urban forms of social organization evident in Philippine cities have developed out of a dominant *rural-derived* indigenous culture which has adapted over four and a half centuries to urban structures significantly shaped by the Spanish and American hand. For Filipinos, the process of evolving an urban culture from an indigenous base coincided with that of adapting to colonial ways. The Philippines, therefore, deviates significantly from the Southeast Asian trend described by Provencher.

Although, as one would expect, rural-urban contrasts emerge prominently in this monograph, the more interesting data describe the differences *within* the urban settlement. These revolve around the statuses of owner and renter. Renters more than owners show a greater desire for status recognition through the possession of electrical appliances and other material indicators of wealth. Renters have higher employment rates than owners, many of whom tend to rely on their rent incomes for their livelihood. Renters' male children show a higher percentage of non-school attendance, partly a result of their comparatively lower financial capacity.

The very composition of owner and renter households influences their participation in community life. Although they resemble each other in having about two-thirds of all households made up of two-generation groups, they diverge in that the other third of the renters tends to occupy single-generation households in contrast to the owners' three-generation pattern for their other third. Moreover, renters house a higher proportion of males than females, a ratio that is reversed among owners. The effects

emerge in the more limited involvement of renters in neighborhood activities. Their departure for work outside the community places them in the category of strangers or outsiders; owners, on the other hand, tend to remain at their residential sites all day. Renters are therefore constrained from participating actively in local decision-making and from seeking local leadership positions. Moreover, since women foster neighborhood contacts more than men do, and since older persons are involved more than younger ones, it is not surprising that women-scarce and younger renter households find themselves more estranged from the community than owner households. Similarly, the one-generation renter households have less potential for developing broad interactional networks than do the three-generation owner households.

The more quantitatively oriented behavioral scientist will wish Provencher had included more tables showing the key data instead of expecting the reader to rely on his interpretations of them in the largely descriptive and increasingly outmoded non-statistical tradition of anthropology. In making his inter- and intra-community comparisons, he nonetheless provides much-needed data on social organization in the modern Asian context.

It is, therefore jarring to come across sections so basic to Malay social organization that they reflect first-generation outlines quite out of place in this second-generation monograph. Is it really necessary to describe, for example, common respect terminologies, pronoun usage, the naming system, or the meaning of *haji*? Every Malay has conscious knowledge of this through sheer experience, and every non-indigenous Malay scholar learns it as part of his first lessons in Malay culture. One can only conclude that Provencher sees his audience as primarily non-Malaysian generalists unacquainted with Malay culture. He would have been wise to shift the long description of general Malay manners (e.g. pp. 144-158) to an appendix, and discuss in text only the relevant comparisons of manners in Kuang and Bahru.

One should not really fault Provencher for writing a monograph directed mainly at a foreign audience; for that is his public. His work, however, encourages us to look forward to the day when resident Malay scholars writing largely for local educated audiences will dispense with those portions describing the obvious (to local residents and foreign scholars of Malay culture), and focus on subjects crucial to Malaysian interests and reflective of indigenous cognitive frameworks and concerns.

Such efforts will probably constitute the third generation of social science research in Southeast Asia. Presumably, they will include much more of the existing literature in the Malay languages than is apparent in Provencher's presentation. His bibliography is conspicuously weak in items by Malaysian authors, and completely lacking in Malay-language citations. This ignoring of the local and indigenous source will, hopefully, be remedied, when third-generation indigenous or resident Malaysian scholars begin in large numbers to analyze their own societies. In doing so they will add the insider's perspective to help balance the noteworthy but often limited

efforts, vis-a-vis development usage, of other-society-directed second generation scholars like Provencher.

Mary R. Hollnsteiner

VEDANTA: AN ANTHOLOGY OF HINDU SCRIPTURE, COMMENTARY AND POETRY. Edited by Clive Johnson under the supervision of Swami Prabhavananda. New York: Harper and Row, 1971. xii, 243 pages.

Like most collections of documents from the Indian heritage, this book contains excerpts covering three thousand — maybe more — years of religious experience. From the Vedas to contemporaries like Ramakrishna, Gandhi, Aurobindo. The anthologist, however, does not present another historical survey to provide academics with another source of erudition. While the niceties of academe are meticulously fulfilled — as is only right, since religious experience does not usually flourish in intellectual sloppiness — the anthologist's aim transcends mere scholarship. He has gathered these excerpts hoping to be of help to searchers for God. He has the same basic stance as the authors of the works he has anthologized.

Roque J. Ferriols, S.J.

A QUÉ LLAMAMOS ESPAÑA (Colección Austral, No. 1452). By Pedro Laín Entralgo. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, S.A., 1971. 157 pages.

The book under review is the preliminary essay of an extensive work on Spain soon to be published by the editors of Espasa-Calpe, the publishing house in Madrid. It is divided into four parts: I. "Mosaico multiforme"; II. "Modos de ser y vivir"; III. "Vida conflictiva"; IV. "A qué llamamos España."

In the first two parts, the author describes the various geographic regions of Spain, heaping warm eulogy on the good in all of them, at the same time that he points out their various deficiencies and flaws. Catalonia, Asturias and Cantabria evidently are the author's favorites, not least because of their geography and climate. Castilla he treats with sober praise for its lofty dignity and idealism, especially in the epic forms of expression that "castillanized" the peninsula and spread its influence to the outside world, together with the mysticism of ideals that explain both the root and the story of its more sublime aspirations. Both the plans of a divine providence and the unforseen eventualities of history have stamped their impress on this region's characteristics: proud, exacting, cautious but bold to accomplish hazardous deeds, mystical, of unlimited idealism, with an undying hope to lift itself to the heights in order to live fully. The following Teresian tryptich is perhaps its best expression: