

of cross-cultural commensurability rooted in conceptualizations of culture as symbolic forms.

Chapter Four examines the transmission of medical knowledge through different linguistic registers: primarily *Nôm*, the ideographic script of Vietnamese, but also classical Chinese, and *quốc ngữ*, the Romanized Vietnamese script. As different topics are addressed in each set of texts, materials in these languages do not merely translate the same content. Rather, they reflect distinct viewpoints. Thompson is one of the few scholars who can work with materials in *Nôm*, *quốc ngữ* and Chinese. Her insights into the function of written scripts in Vietnamese medical history are thus especially enlightening and valuable.

In analysing the history of smallpox in Vietnam, Thompson concludes that the impact of Chinese medicine on Vietnamese medicine should be considered on a case-by-case basis. Her book is a call for more comparative research on the illnesses and afflictions that shaped not just the lives of Vietnamese and Chinese individuals, but also those of the two societies themselves. Scholars of Sino–Vietnamese medical and cultural contact and contestation now have a clear model to follow.

#### **Allen Tran**

Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Bucknell University, 1 Dent Drive, Lewisburg, Pennsylvania 17837, USA; email: [allen.tran@bucknell.edu](mailto:allen.tran@bucknell.edu).

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*Privilege and Prejudice: The Life of a Black Pioneer*. By Clifton R. Wharton Jr. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2015. xvi+597 pp.

It ought take nothing away from Clifton R. Wharton Jr.'s accomplishments to write that, by any measure, he has led a charmed life. That life included a fruitful early chapter in Southeast Asia. Among its many virtues, Wharton's detailed and engaging

autobiography has great value in prodding us to put his activities in the region more than half a century ago into perspective.

Born in 1926 to the first African-American career member of the United States Foreign Service, Wharton spent much of his childhood in Liberia and in the Canary Islands. In adolescence, he studied at the vaunted Boston Latin School and participated in the rich associational life of that city's historic African-American middle class. At age sixteen, he entered Harvard College as one of only three African-American members of the Class of 1947. He then broke the colour bar at the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) in Washington. Having landed, with the help of a SAIS mentor, a junior post in an organization launched by Nelson Rockefeller to promote economic development in Latin America, he gained his first exposure to agricultural economics, in which no less a figure than T.W. Schultz recruited him to pursue a doctorate at the Rockefeller-founded University of Chicago.

Wharton continued to focus on economic development in rural Latin America at Chicago, in work that first brought him into contact with Arthur T. Mosher. In 1957, Mosher hired Wharton to join John D. Rockefeller III's Council on Economic and Cultural Affairs (CECA) and to prepare a study of American universities' training of Asian students to meet the needs of the farm sector in their home countries. Wharton would continue to work with Mosher at the CECA and the Agricultural Development Council (ADC, the CECA's name from 1964 onward), above all on the problems of Asian agriculture, till the end of 1969. In 1965 the two men organized a conference on "subsistence agriculture and economic development" that resulted in a long-influential edited volume and testified to Wharton's stature as a leading American specialist on the agricultural problems of developing Asia (Wharton 1969).

The start of 1970 saw Wharton leave the ADC to assume the presidency of Michigan State University. After eight eventful years in that post, he moved to the chancellorship of the State University of New York (SUNY). A creature of Nelson Rockefeller's governorship of New York State, SUNY had no fewer than sixty-four campuses. It

enrolled more students than any other university system in the United States. And it depended for its funding largely on a state government that was, by the late 1970s and 1980s, financially overextended.

Elected chairman of the board of the Rockefeller Foundation in 1981 and having led SUNY for nearly a decade, Wharton was well prepared for his next challenge: taking over in 1987 as chairman and chief executive officer of the financial giant TIAA-CREF to bring new dynamism to the most important retirement-savings institution for American university faculty. In clear recognition of Wharton's success in that role and as the culmination of his glittering career, Bill Clinton announced with no little fanfare in late December 1992 his appointment to serve as deputy secretary of state in the incoming administration.

Wharton's tenure at State was brief. By early November 1993, confronted with a whispering campaign mounted from within the Clinton administration, he had resigned his post. On the instructions of a distant and mediocre secretary, Wharton devoted much of his time as deputy secretary to the reorganization of the department, to rationalization of its budget and to the preparation of a major report on the future of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). While this book does not mention it, Americans outside of the government who were concerned with issues of international development anticipated with varying combinations of interest, worry and hope the outcome of Wharton's work on USAID, but the dysfunctionality of the Clinton administration's foreign policy team meant that, while completed, the Wharton report was never released. Wharton had no direct role in the formulation or execution of that administration's foreign policy, but, with that policy in the doldrums and the president unwilling to lose face by cashiering either his weak secretary of state or his erratic national security advisor so soon after taking office, Wharton became the fall guy. Americans confronted the spectacle of their president replacing one of his highest-profile African-American appointees with a journalist whom the president had known at Oxford when they were both Rhodes Scholars and in their early twenties.

More than a touch of bitterness colours the recounting of these latter events in *Privilege and Prejudice*. And among the specific sources of Wharton's disappointment with the treatment that he suffered while serving as deputy secretary of state are a number relating to Southeast Asia. He notes, for example, his exclusion from the briefing to prepare Clinton for his meeting with ASEAN leaders in Singapore in July 1993. He also expresses dismay that the secretary of state did not enlist his help in trying to convince Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad to attend the November 1993 APEC meeting in Seattle.

Wharton's expectation that his expertise on Southeast Asia, a region rather far from the central foci of American foreign policy in the early 1990s, would be recognized and valued had its roots in experiences dating to three and a half decades earlier. For in 1958 Arthur Mosher had dispatched Wharton to Southeast Asia as a CECA regional field associate. Moving his family to Singapore, Wharton served initially as a senior lecturer in the economics department of the University of Malaya (UM), then led by Professor T.H. Silcock. Both in his teaching and through an extensive programme of travels across the region on the CECA's behalf, Wharton quickly began what would end up being six years of energetic efforts to foster the development of "the rural social sciences" (p. 149) — agricultural economics, rural sociology, agricultural extension and even applied anthropology — in Southeast Asian universities. Not least, these efforts included scouting for Southeast Asian students to whom to award fellowships for graduate study in the United States.

With the establishment of a faculty of agriculture at the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur, Wharton would move there and work from that city. His activities in the classroom on that second campus, and — increasingly — his research, reflected his boundless determination, developed soon after his arrival in Singapore, to advance the study of economics in ways that made it as relevant as possible to his students and to local concerns. He became an active contributor to the *Malayan Economic Review* (for example, Wharton 1962). In 1960, he and Mosher convened, under CECA and UM

auspices, the inaugural conference of Southeast Asian agricultural economists, with nearly forty participants from across the region. He offered advice on rice price policy to the U.S. mission to the Republic of Vietnam and organized a programme of student research on the Malayan rubber sector at UM. He cultivated particularly close ties with agricultural economists and other faculty at Thailand's national agricultural university, Kasetsart, on the outskirts of Bangkok. Proving hardly less energetic during the family's years in Kuala Lumpur, Wharton's wife undertook research that would result in a pioneering book on Malaysian art, published by John D. Rockefeller III's Asia Society (Wharton 1971).

The range of individuals — Southeast Asians and expatriates, prominent figures and undergraduate and postgraduate students — with whom Wharton worked and from whom he learned during his years in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur underlines the breadth of his exposure to the region at a particular moment in time. He writes of taking John D. Rockefeller III to see Singapore Chief Minister Lee Kuan Yew by entering the Istana through “the side door” (p. 144) during a period when Lee was reportedly not meeting Western officials or visitors to Singapore. (Wharton refers to Lee as an Oxonian; this is not the only error that creeps into the treatment of Southeast Asia in *Privilege and Prejudice*.) He traces his relations with Ungku Abdul Aziz, his colleague on both campuses of the University of Malaya. In addition to Abdul Aziz and Silcock, Charles Gamba and Siew Nim Chee numbered among his academic colleagues in Singapore. (Curiously, Wharton's account of his time at the University of Malaya in that latter city makes no mention of research on rural Malaya begun before his arrival there, spearheaded by the geographer E.H.G. Dobby.) Augustine Tan Hui Heng, clearly one of Wharton's favourite students, completed a master's thesis on the stabilization of Malayan rubber prices under his supervision. Norman Parmer, Peter Gosling, Thomas McHale and the visiting Robert Shaplen numbered among the friends that he made in Kuala Lumpur, while Agoes Salim, Mokhtar Tamin and Tan Bock Thiam received CECA or ADC fellowships for doctoral study in the United

States. Nearly thirty years after he left the region to return to ADC headquarters in New York, the two-week Southeast Asian tour that represented one of the highlights of Wharton's time at the Department of State underlined the strong and lasting relationships that Wharton, the CECA and the ADC had forged during the period in which he worked in and then, from headquarters, on Southeast Asia and on the development of expertise to address the needs of its farm sector.

Inevitably, Wharton's boss at State took no serious interest in what he had learned on that trip. In substantive terms, the most important episode of the tour appears to have been Wharton's having to try to explain to Prince Norodom Sihanouk the typically muddled American position on Cambodia. There is little in *Privilege and Prejudice* to suggest that Wharton thought, either during or after that 1993 trip, with any particular insight about the social, economic and political change that had come to the region since his departure decades before. Nor does he seem to have sought to relate that change to his earlier work to meet the region's needs for appropriate human capital. In fact, relative to the sections of the book treating Michigan and New York State, that covering Wharton's six-year posting to Southeast Asia is notable for failing to convey any vivid sense of local dynamics, of immersion in or reflection on what made Singapore or Malaya or the region tick. In light of the company that Wharton kept during his years in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, this lack and Wharton's apparent inability to develop or articulate or even to provide the raw material for a perspective on a place in which he lived for such an extended period are puzzling. Equally or even more puzzling is the neglect in *Privilege and Prejudice* of the degree to which the leadership of the Southeast Asian universities with which Wharton, the CECA and the ADC worked shared the vision that he and these organizations brought to their cooperation with those universities.

Nevertheless, the relationship between the Southeast Asian agricultural sector and Southeast Asian agriculturalists, on the one hand, and the economic sectors that have propelled economic growth in the region in recent decades and the social formations in which that growth has resulted, on the other, remains a matter

of continuing importance. While the autobiography of an American who spent the majority of his career in university administration, in finance and also on a series of corporate boards back home is hardly the most obvious place to look in seeking perspective on that matter, the material on Southeast Asia in this book offers a number of valuable prods to those intent on studying it. Not least, thanks to the energies of Arthur Mosher and of men like Clifton Wharton, the ADC had, by the time that it was wound down in the mid-1980s, funded the study of hundreds of Southeast Asian fellows, placed many expatriate associates on the faculty of universities in the region and organized innumerable conferences whose proceedings today represent an invaluable intellectual resource. Its activities are a chapter in the modern history of the region, of its agriculture and of its universities. Further, as the date of the Wharton family's move to Singapore in itself makes evident, the organization's work in Southeast Asia predated — if just barely — the establishment of the International Rice Research Institute and the arrival of the Green Revolution. In reminding us of all this, in sparking our interest in developing a long-term perspective on post-colonial-era Southeast Asian agriculture and on efforts to bring expertise both foreign and local to the needs of the sector, the sections on Clifton R. Wharton Jr.'s time in the region in this book well merit reading and study, their lack of a terribly Southeast Asian perspective notwithstanding.

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#### **Michael Montesano**

ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, 30 Heng Mui Keng Terrace, Pasir Panjang, Singapore 119614; email: michaelmontesano@iseas.edu.sg.