

BOOK REVIEWS

Readings in Malaysian Politics. Edited by Bruce Gale. Petaling Jaya: Pelanduk Publications, 1986. 304 pp. Soft-cover.

Bruce Gale must be commended for his initiative in editing *Readings in Malaysian Politics*, which is a collection of articles dealing with the contemporary Malaysian scene. The book is basically intended for a wider audience beyond the usual academic clientele with a view to helping them refine their understanding of recent political developments.

It carries a very brief Preface by the editor and is divided into four unequal sections, namely, Electioneering, Islam, Ethnicity and Development, and Foreign Policy. Twelve of the thirteen papers included in this volume have actually been published before in reputable journals such as *Asian Survey*, *Man*, *Pacific Affairs*, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* and *Modern Asian Studies*. The thirteenth paper, by Chandra Muzaffar on "Islamic Resurgence: A Global View (with Illustrations from Southeast Asia)", is a reprint from *Islam and Society in Southeast Asia*, edited by Taufik Abdullah and Sharon Siddique, and published by the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, in 1985. By virtue of this fact alone, the quality of each of the articles presented in this volume can be expected to be high and it certainly is. In their own right too, all the contributors to this volume, without exception, are established scholars who have more than an intimate knowledge of their respective fields of interest. Nonetheless, in a volume of this nature which attempts to cover such a wide range of topics, it is inevitable that some of the papers tend to stand out above others, not only because of their perceptivity and lucidity but also because of their direct relevance to the main focus of the book.

Diane K. Mauzy's paper on "The 1982 General Elections in Malaysia" and the other one on "The Mahathir Administration: Discipline Through Islam", which she co-authored with R.S. Milne, fall into this category of highly authoritative, well-balanced and pleasantly readable papers. With the advantage of hindsight, with the 1986 general elections having been held since she wrote the first paper, it could now be seen how perceptive and accurate she had been in her analysis, particularly in suggesting that unless the National Front non-Malay parties were able to impress their supporters with tangible concessions, "there could be substantial non-Malay voter backlash at the next general elections". The evaluation of Mahathir's administration in the second paper, although by no means exhaustive, is simply brilliant. The titling of the paper, however, seems a little inappropriate considering that the Islamic content of the analysis constitute only a third of the article. The last-minute attempt made almost at the tail-end to rationalize that Mahathir's call for discipline and hard work as exemplified in the "Look East Policy" and support for the institutionalization of the teachings of Islam are part of the integrated approach in the direction of "Discipline Through Islam", somehow does not seem convincing.

Bruce Gale's examination of the 1981 and 1982 election campaigns in Sabah introduces us to the hitherto relatively little-known dimensions of politics from the periphery. In view of the more recent political developments in that state, some of the conclusions

drawn here may now have to be modified, although the paper could still serve as a useful introduction to current Sabah politics.

Marvin L. Roger's first contribution on the "Electoral Organization and Political Mobilization in Rural Malaysia", gives a concise account of the campaign organization, strategies and tactics of the Barisan Nasional, Parti Islam and the Democratic Action Party in rural Malacca and Johor, in the 1978 general elections, with conclusions, however, which may seem obvious even to the non-specialist. His second paper, which assesses the patterns of change in Sungai Raya, a rural Malay community in northwestern Johor, is a much more solid contribution with penetrating conclusions. Likewise, the second paper by Shamsul A.B. on "The Politics of Poverty Eradication: The Implementation of Development Projects in a Malaysian District" is a fine work of sound scholarship providing us with invaluable insights on the dynamics of local politics in Malaysia, much more than his first, "A Revival in the Study of Islam in Malaysia", which is basically discussive. Notwithstanding this, some of his criticisms on the superficiality of Judith Nagata's treatment of the phenomenon of Islamic revival in Malaysia, which is also included in this volume, are not without good grounds. Judith Nagata's urban-rural dichotomy in talking about the *dakwah* movement is particularly suspect. Her rejoinder on "Islam in Malaysia", which tacitly acknowledges some of the limitations of her first paper, if anything, only serves to suspend the debate. Readers will have to look up her other works in order to fully appreciate her analysis of Islam and politics in Malaysia.

One sometimes wonders if great care has really been taken in the selection of papers to be included in this volume. Some of those selected, like Chandra Muzaffar's, and the debate between Shamsul A.B. and Judith Nagata, although interesting in their own way, do not seem to fit into the Malaysian politics bill easily. Lee Poh Ping's analysis of Malaysian foreign policy too, although concise, seems slightly out of step with the other papers which deal primarily and specifically with Malaysian politics. The same goes for the remaining two papers, but their problem is of a slightly different kind; there seems to be an overdose of concepts and jargon, which surely would not appeal to general readers.

It is also a pity that the Preface has not been cleverly used to tie up all the papers presented in this volume into something which would have a clearer focus and a more direct relevance to the topic of the book. A longer Introduction, rather than a brief Preface, would have considerably enhanced the quality and appeal of the book. With a little more work too, some of the minor inconsistencies in the use of terms such as "paper" and "article" could have been avoided. All said, this is still a handy copy for the specialist and the general reader.

Omar Farouk
University of Malaya

Industrialization and Labour Force Processes: A Case Study of Peninsular Malaysia. By T.G. McGee et al. Research Papers on Development in East Java and West Malaysia No. 1. Canberra: Australian National University, 1986.

This volume on manufacturing, labour and urbanization in Malaysia is billed as a set of "working papers", which should not be taken too seriously as the contributions by Australian