



**No. 149**

**Taiwan's Present/Singapore's  
Past Mediated by Hokkien Language**

Chua Beng Huat

Department of Sociology  
National University of Singapore  
11 Arts Link  
Singapore 117570

Fax: 777 9679  
E-mail: soccbh@nus.edu.sg

ISSN0129-8186  
ISBN 981-3033-43-6  
All rights reserved 2000



The *Working Papers Series* is edited by a committee comprising **Maribeth Erb**, **Vineeta Sinha** and **Angelique Chan**. This series was established by the Department of Sociology in 1973, as a forum for staff members, graduate students and visitors to the department to circulate their work in progress. Please refer to the back for a list of all past working papers.

All orders may be directed to:

**Select Books**

19 Tanglin Road, #03-15  
Tanglin Shopping Centre  
Singapore 247909  
Tel: 65 732 1515  
Fax: 65 736 0855  
E-mail: [selectbk@cyberway.com.sg](mailto:selectbk@cyberway.com.sg)

## **Taiwan's Present/Singapore's Past Mediated by *Hokkien* Language.\***

**Chua Beng Huat, Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore**

**Abstract:** The dominant 'Taiwanese' language is *Minnan*. The same language is known as *Hokkien* dialect in Singapore, the language of the largest number of Chinese in Singapore. Both *Minnan* and *Hokkien* are languages by suppressed by the desire of the respective governments of Taiwan and Singapore to develop Mandarin as the common Chinese language. In Taiwan, Mandarin, derived from the 'mainland', which is outside Taiwan, was to be imposed as the 'national' language. To native Taiwanese, Mandarin is thus the language of the colonizer. In Singapore, Mandarin is promoted as the 'unifying' language of the Chinese in a multiracial society, suppressing sub-ethnic or dialect identities. The Taiwan independence movement has reasserted the determination to use *Minnan* as the Taiwanese ethno-nationalist language. It is thus a political act to speak the language. In Singapore, *Hokkien* has an everyday existence that is denied in government-controlled mass media until very recently. The common language has facilitated the traffic of Taiwan popular cultural material, such movies and popular songs, to Singapore, where it is received enthusiastically. However, the politics of *Minnan* in Taiwan is transformed by the politics of *Hokkien* in Singapore.

### **Introduction**

The rise of capital among the newly industrialized countries of East and Southeast Asia is obviously a phenomenon that calls for comparative analysis. There is indeed a very large body of comparative work, particularly in economics and politics. Much of the existing literature on contemporary cultural development of these countries tends to take up the generalized, often culturally xenophobic, concern with the process of 'Westernization' or more accurately, 'westoxification'.<sup>1</sup> The expressed fear of the government and other conservative elements is that with economic development, the cultural sphere will be penetrated and corrupted by Western consumerism, particularly media products, that will insidiously 'erode' local wholesome cultures. On the other hand, the cultural traffic between these locations - and there is a substantial amount of exchanges - is a rather neglected area of research.

Indeed, there is a very substantial quantum of exchanges between Singapore and the other three Chinese dominant locations of Taiwan, Hong Kong and PRC. For example, Hong Kong producers and directors regularly work in Singapore-financed television series; Hong Kong actors are increasingly used in Singapore television programs as guest artistes. Singaporean television personalities are popularly recognized in Taipei because of the screening of Singapore-produced serials in Taiwan, the most notable personality being Fann Wong, who appears regularly on

---

\* Paper presented at the Intra-Asian Cultural Traffic Workshop, University of West Sydney, Sydney, Australia, 24-26 February 2000.

Taiwanese popular magazine covers. The collaboration of Hong Kong and Singapore actors have also reached the big screen with the teaming up of Hong Kong based Aaron Kwok with Singapore television actor James Lye and actress Phyllis Quek in the film '2000AD', which was released across Chinese-Asia during the 2000 Lunar New Year season. Similarly, Singapore singer Kit Chan has been popular in Taiwan; her quick flight to Singapore from Taiwan during the 1999 earthquake made the news in both locations. In spite of the regular reporting of such exchanges in the popular press, all these exchanges have largely escaped analytic attention. This is perhaps because, as in Singapore, the exchanged products are subsumed ideologically under the sign of the 'same', i.e. similarly 'Chinese' and thus do not warrant analysis. This is, of course, a serious delusion. This essay demonstrates one instance of the cultural exchanges between Singapore and Taiwan,<sup>2</sup> through movies, with the aim of disclosing the differences in cultural formations within the apparent 'sameness' of a common language, namely *Hokkien*.

For reasons of history of migration from China to Taiwan, which began in the early part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Chen, 1980), the 'local' language of Taiwan (excluding the aboriginal population) is that of *Fujian*, a southern province of present People's Republic of China. The language spoken in this region is known as *Minnan* 'dialect' in Mandarin. However, both the province and the language are known as *Hokkien* in its own phonic terms. While the language is still so known in overseas Chinese communities, it has come to be known as Taiwanese (*Tai yu*) in Taiwan, signifying the overwhelming majority of *Hokkien* speakers on the island.<sup>3</sup> Again, because of history of migration, significant numbers of the waves of migrants from southern China to Southeast Asia, known as South Seas (*Nanyang*), in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century were hewn from *Fujian* province. They formed the majority Chinese immigrant population in Singapore, Penang in Malaysia and Manila in the Philippines. A *Hokkien* speaking person, from either the PRC or any of the overseas Chinese communities, will have little problems, other than local accents, in conversation with a local Taiwanese. There is thus a common spoken language between the *Hokkiens* in Singapore and the majority of Taiwanese. It is precisely because of this similarity that the comparison of cultural production and reception in these two locations is well suited to tear the veil off the delusion of similarity alluded to earlier and to recover and account for the differences that are disclosed in the process.

Taking the shared language as the starting point, I am concerned in this essay, with the political positioning of *Hokkien* as a representation of and vehicle for the national politics in Taiwan and Singapore in the films produced in the respective locations.<sup>4</sup> The analysis will be conducted through two films, one from each location. A synopsis of the two films is therefore necessary.

### **The *Hokkien* Films: A Synopsis**

For the purpose at hand, the Singaporean film selected is the financially very successful 'Money No Enough': a 'singlish', and hence intentionally clumsy, English translation of the Mandarin title (*qian bu gou yong*). The Taiwan film that is the focus here is 'Kingdom of Peace', a translation of Mandarin, (*tai pin tian guo*), which was screened to a full house during the 1998 Singapore International Film Festival.<sup>5</sup> Take the Singapore film first.

The narrative of 'Money' is straightforwardly about the trials and eventual financial success of three men who are good friends; one is Mandarin educated (in Singapore, colloquially known as 'Chinese' educated, in contrast to being 'English' educated) and the other two are without formal education; that is illiterate, hence monolingual *Hokkien* speaking, with some facility in Mandarin which is presumably picked up during school days, before failing or dropping out. Like the overwhelming majority of contemporary Singaporeans, they live in public housing estates. When the film begins, the Mandarin speaker has a white-collar job, gambles and makes gains in the stock market, and confidently buys a large number of consumer durables, including a car, on monthly installment payments. As the film unfolds, he loses his job to a younger man who is overseas English-educated, his stock-holdings collapse, vendors re-possess all his hire-purchase goods and his wife leaves with their one child. His attempts to secure a new job fail successively, for want of an English education and other 'certified' skills or in Singaporean parlance, 'no paper qualification'. He is left with an empty flat; fortunately for him the public housing authority, unlike private financial institutions, does not repossess flats on account of financial difficulties of the lessees.

Meanwhile, one of his two friends, who is a building renovation contractor, is cheated of his working capital, forcing him to borrow money from a loan-shark. Predictably, he cannot pay the high interests on the loan and is reduced to being a fugitive from the debt collectors, whose only means of recovering unpaid loans is violence. The third and least able man works as a lowly 'waiter' at the local coffee

shop and in spite of his advanced years still lives with his mother. His sole ambition is to have a girlfriend. At their most destitute, they pull their meagre financial means to set up a car-wash business, after hearing about a friend's success in this trade. One thing leads to another, they became successful in that business, which extends to owning exclusively dealership for car-care products. With the success, the educated one is reunited with his family and the other two simply continue to spend lavishly on women in karaoke lounges.

The Taiwanese film, 'Peace Kingdom', centres on the transformation and events that rupture the moral basis of life in a farming village, when it is commandeered for military exercise by the US Army stationed in Taiwan. Throughout the entire episode, the villagers' disposition is one of incomprehension. The adults do not understand the point of the exercise, as they watch their tilled land being destroyed by tanks and bombs. Their attempt at protest is thrown into disarray by the warning shots from the US soldiers. The only person who stands up against the destruction is a village widow who owns a cabbage patch. Determined to protect the vegetable, she camps out at her patch and each time literally stands in the way of the traffic of tanks and other military vehicles. The American military, out of frustrated incomprehension, diverts the tanks away from her patch. The other villagers, herded into the village school building and kept away from their daily routine of work, spend their days idling, gambling and drinking. The children, let off from attending school, do not realize the danger of the mock battlefield and run around freely amongst the soldiers, the tanks and the guns. This reduction to idleness leads to the corruption of the villagers. The adults are seduced, by an outside Taiwanese agent who promise to buy the loot, to steal everything from the military, from canned goods to army uniform, including items that they do not know what to do with, like an old man who stole a box of condoms. The children hang out at the army camp for goodies from the soldiers, peer into the bar (populated with prostitutes brought in from the city), see for the first time disco dancing, hear for the first time rock and roll music, and fight over bullet and bomb casings, which they sell for cash.

A central narrative thread is built around an unemployed village teacher, who is apparently the only literate person in the village. He is fascinated by everything about the United States; its politics, its wealth and particularly, its science and technology, the 'knowledge' of which he obtains from newspapers. His younger brother has returned from the city after having lost some fingers (number unspecified)

in an industrial accident at his previous factory employment. The severed fingers are soaked in some liquid and kept in glass jar, which the unemployed teacher believes could be sewn back in place someday. The arrival of the US military is just the opportunity they have been waiting for. So, one evening, the young man shows up at the entrance of the bar with his fingers-in-the-jar and tries to get the US soldiers to look at his hand and fingers. The soldier and a prostitute who meet him at the door think that the fingers are props for begging and stuff some US dollars into his hand, to his consternation. The same happens when his 'knowledgeable' brother accompanies him to military camp; however, this time, the brother feels insulted, screams that they are not beggars and throws the money back at the US soldier, to the latter's puzzlement.

The moral corruption of the villagers reaches its highest point when the wife of the unemployed village teacher begins to despise her husband's refrain from stealing from the US military, reading his moral integrity as cowardice. In anger, he takes off with his brother to steal the 'biggest' loot the village will ever see. As night falls, they pull into the village two huge black metal boxes on a cart, to the great admiration of all. The villagers open the boxes after much difficulty, only to discover two dead American soldiers, one black and one white. Admiration turns instantly into admonition of the brothers for bringing bad luck to the village. Bowls of rice and incense are immediately prepared to propitiate the spirits of the two dead soldiers. The possibility of burying the corpses in the village is rejected by the villagers for fear that the spirits will not make it back to the US and will thus visit the villagers in future. Thus, without any assistance from the others, the two brothers tow the coffins to the side of a road to let them be picked up by the military, which, by then, was shutting down its exercise, leaving the village. As the film draws towards its close, the village slowly returns to its previous life.

### **Positioning of Hokkien**

Both are, in the main, *Hokkien* films. However, in both films, Mandarin and English make their appropriate appearances through the characters in the films, respectively. It is the relative positioning of these three languages that is the concern of this analysis.

In 'Money', throughout the film, the dialogues between the three main characters and most of their social encounters are in *Hokkien*. English makes a brief appearance on two occasions. First, when the Mandarin-speaking main character is

fired from his job and second, after becoming successful, he has to use English in his dealings with the manager of the car-care products company and his public relations appearance in front of the mass media. The brevity of its presence emphatically enhances the privileged position of the English language in the working life of Singaporeans. Mandarin appears in conversations at the coffee shop among and with friends of the main characters. Significantly, the hierarchy of social, cultural and economic power of the three languages varies inversely with the predominance of the languages in the film. English is hegemonic by its brief appearances; this is signified by its dominance in the economic life of Singaporeans, where and when the Mandarin speaking character loses his job and is unable to get re-employment for want of competence in English. The significance of Mandarin facility is less explicit and becomes apparent only after it is juxtaposed against *Hokkien* in the film.

The political position and representation of *Hokkien* is immediately manifested in the very genre of the film: a comedy. As such, of course, laughs from the audience are in part drawn from slapstick antics of the characters. However, more significantly for the present analysis, laughter is also drawn from puns in *Hokkien* language.<sup>6</sup> An example is the repeated scene in which one of the regular female customers of the coffee shop orders her usual 'tea with milk', *nai cha* in Mandarin. The waiter character will consistently shout out the order to the counter, which is a common practice in Chinese coffee shops in Singapore but in this instance more for the enjoyment of everyone present (including the film audience, of course): 'This lady wants *teh nee*', which in *Hokkien* could mean, 'This lady wants her breast squeezed', since in *Hokkien*, as in other Chinese languages, milk and breast are the same word, and a slight shift in tone will render the sound for 'tea' to the sound for 'squeeze'. In addition to the puns, the 'pathetic' character of *Hokkien* speakers are further portrayed in the scene featuring the funeral of the coffee-waiter's mother, in which his shameless sisters began to quarrel about the funeral costs through their (hilarious, laughable) false wailings and crocodile tears. Finally, *Hokkien* as the language of low-life is driven home by the swearing and cursing of gangsters who are the henchmen of the loan-shark with a body covered with tattoos. In these and other instances throughout the film, the use of *Hokkien* is intentionally crude, uncouth and bawdy, that is intentionally 'low-class'.

Similar positioning of *Hokkien* as the language of the lowest social class, the marginally employed, the unemployed and the unemployable, can be found in all

recent films produced in Singapore, released in the 1990s. In the film 'Mee Pok Man' (noodle vendor in *Hokkien*), which is very successful in international film festival circuit, the noodle vendor lives in the furthest edge of the underbelly of Singapore, surrounded by *Hokkien* speaking pimps and prostitutes and is himself without voice. Similarly in the film that was released in December 1999 and already selected for showing by some international film festivals, 'Eating Air', which is a clumsy translation of the *Hokkien* colloquial *chia hong* (*chi feng*), which should be translated as 'Eating Wind', meaning 'enjoying leisure', particularly involving road travel, when one can feel the wind on the face. In this film, *Hokkien* speaking youth spend their days getting up late, staying out of their homes all night and in between ride around in flashy motorcycles and hangout in electronic games arcade. These youth are more irrelevant to than alienated from the Singapore society.

It should be noted that in contrast with this positioning of *Hokkien* speakers as low-life, there has also been entertainment attempts to 'romance' them in the generic character of what is locally called the '*Ah Beng*'. *Ah Beng* and his female counterpart, *Ah Lian* are two caricatures of the Singlish-speaking Singaporeans who are 'adoringly' laughable to the middle class English-educated writers and audience, for whom switching code from standard English to Singlish is a marker of 'authentic' Singaporean identity. The most successful construction of such characters is found in the very popular family sitcom, *Phua Chu Kang*, which features the comedy of everyday life in the family of a poorly educated building renovation contractor, as in the character in *Money*. Not surprisingly, the show's popularity is based on the 'silliness' of the Phua and his 'Lian' wife, even as they triumph repeatedly over their commonsense-deficient, university educated architect brother and his West-philic pretentious wife. Significantly, this romancing of the adorable because of his guilelessness has been disrupted by the behavior of 'real' *Ah Bengs* in the movie house.<sup>7</sup> A young lawyer who was watching a movie with his girlfriend was beaten up by four youths after the movie because he had told one of them to stop talking on the mobile phone during the show. This incident immediately led two English-medium columnists to remind their readers of the 'reality' of the *Ah Bengs*' fists (Tan Tarn How, *Straits Times* 8 January, 2000 and Susan Long, *Straits Times* 9 January, 2000).

In a country where forty years of continuous economic growth has engendered a substantial middle class, where individuals' social and economic positions are dependent on academic and professional achievements, *Hokkien* is being thus

positioned, in representation and in social reality, as the language of those left behind by the economic and cultural developments of Singapore in the past four decades, laughably low-class and not a serious language for civil community. The use of *Hokkien* as the voice, and thus representation, of low-class Singaporeans in 'Money' and other films, is therefore an exercise in artistic 'social realism', or *cinema veritae*.

Similar to 'Money', 'Peace Kingdom' is also a *Hokkien* film in which American English and Mandarin also make their appearance in the appropriate characters on screen. However, in contrast to the Singapore film, in which the characters are able to conduct low-level communication in all three languages, in 'Peace Kingdom', the incomprehension of the villagers about all that has befallen them is intensified by the mutually incomprehensible languages of the villagers' *Hokkien*, the heavily northern-accented Mandarin of Taiwanese military men and the US Army personnel. The villagers, young and old, cannot make themselves understood because they do not speak American English; in addition, the adults are exclusively *Hokkien* speaking. The Taiwanese military personnel, as representatives of the KMT army which retreated from mainland China, who act/intervene as translators/go-betweens between the villagers and the US army are inept in both American-English and *Hokkien* and their heavily northern-accented Mandarin is incomprehensible to the villagers. Finally, American English is completely strange to the villagers. The impossibility of crossing language barriers is the root cause of all the misunderstandings between the three different parties and the consequences are often rather humorous.

This mutual incomprehension is an interesting structuring of the politics between the speakers of the three languages; it allows all three to be placed on the same plane, without apparently privileging anyone over the others in spite of obvious difference in force. The mutual incomprehension enables the powerless villages (via the director's ideological positioning) to subvert the intentions of the powerful US military machine; for example, the incomprehensible *Hokkien* protestations of the middle-aged village woman in the face of the tanks and soldiers (a humorous version of the unknown man in front of the tank that rolled into Tianannmen in 1987) forced the military machine to divert its progress and not only spared the life of the woman but also saved her lowly cabbage patch. The bewilderment of the US soldiers in this confrontation is quite humorously portrayed in the film. In another instance when US military personnel, upon discovery of theft by the villagers, chase the villagers to their

school house but found no evidence after ransacking the make-shift rooms in the building. The US military officer's statement of apologies to the villagers is (mis)translated by the Taiwan military officer into a thorough scolding of the villagers for disgracing the Taiwan nation and that future infractions will be punishable by military court. The US military officer has no idea at all of what has happened to his apology, nor more importantly, the feelings his mistranslated 'speech' has generated among the villagers towards US military and US-Taiwan relations because the US soldiers are supposed to be friends of Taiwan, in Cold War rhetoric. It is not clear to the audience, whether the Taiwan officer mistranslation is intentional or for lack of understanding of the US officer's speech. Finally, the US soldiers' exclamation of 'Hey you!' at villagers is misused by the villagers as 'swear' words at each other. In each of these instances, the mutual incomprehension of the three languages act, without any subject intentions, to frustrate the powerful US, and Taiwan military officers and ironically provides the avenue for the villagers' resistance to the former power and oppression.

It is apparent from the above analysis that the political positioning of *Hokkien*, the common language among a majority of Chinese in Singapore and overwhelming majority of Taiwanese, is different in its representation and hence, the representation of its speakers, in the social constructions of the two countries. This difference can be explained by the political histories of languages and the trajectory of *Hokkien* with the respective histories of the two countries.

### ***Hokkien*: The Suppressed Language**

Comparatively, the history of the politics of language is perhaps more straightforward and less complex than that of Singapore. A convenient starting point of mapping this trajectory is the 1949 retreat of the Republican Army of China, under Chiang Kai Shek, after having lost the mainland to the People's Liberation Army of the Chinese Communist Party. From the KMT's point of view, Taiwan was a province of China, tracing the link between the two locations to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when migration from southern China to Taiwan began and the island was within the territory of the Q'ing dynasty before its colonization by Japan. From the Taiwanese point of view, however, the retreating army was an invading army from the outside, specifically from the 'outside provinces' of China. Parenthetically, until today, Taiwan residents who are either members or descendants of members of the retreating

KMT military, or who followed the KMT retreat to Taiwan are still known/labeled as ‘people from outside provinces’.

Upon arrival in Taiwan, the KMT set out to continue the legacy of the Republic of the 1911 Revolution, which overthrew the Q’ing dynasty and ended imperialism in China. In so doing, according to Chun, ‘the Kuomintang felt compelled to define national identity in terms of race, language and history’ and also ‘to invoke, resuscitate and reinvent tradition for the purpose of legitimatising its own vision of modern [Nationalist] society’ (1994:51). The idea of a nation was, of course, a ‘Chinese’ nation. Citing the works of Gellner (1983) and Benedict Andersen (1983), Chun suggests that, as in all nation-state building project, a central prerequisite is universal literacy for the realization of a ‘national’ culture through a ‘common colloquial language’ (1994:50), in this case, Mandarin for the realization of a ‘Chinese’ culture in Taiwan. From hence on, Mandarin became the ‘national’ language (*guo yu*), thus the language of government and public administration, of state supported education and of ‘national’ representation in general. Yet, as Chun argues, the entire KMT government’s exercise in the construction of a Chinese nation in Taiwan is an ‘attempt to *nationalize* Chinese culture (by making the latter a metaphor or allegory of that imagined community called the nation-state) where no such culture (of the nation) previously existed’ (1994:54, emphasis original). And, as the contemporary politics for Taiwan independence shows, this attempt has at best limited success, after fifty years.

From the point of view of the *Hokkien* speaking Taiwanese, the imposition of Mandarin is an act of political violence and repression of *Hokkien* and its speakers, inextricably tied up not only with the colonization of Taiwan by the KMT, as a representation of the mainlanders but also the ongoing claim of the PRC on Taiwan. Against this history of colonization, *Hokkien* language is an emotive rallying icon around which anti-KMT sentiments can be organized and harnessed. It is a political resource that can be invoked as the ‘ethno-national’ language of Taiwan and used to confer upon its speakers the status of Taiwan nationalists, in opposition to Mandarin, Chinese nationalism and the KMT. Arguably, according to the logic of nation-state building discussed above, the invoking of *Hokkien* as Taiwan’s national language would appear to be less artificial than that of Mandarin. Thus in contemporary Taiwan parlance, *Hokkien* is commonly known as *Tai yu* (Taiwanese language) and, the most vehement of Taiwan nationalists will speak no other languages in Taiwan than

*Hokkien*, although those who aspires to state power have little choice but to compromise and speak both Mandarin and *Hokkien* in their public presentations. The possibility of invoking *Hokkien* as representation of Taiwan nationalism draws on the fact that at the street level and at home, given its demographic dominance, *Hokkien* has never been under any threat of total erasure. Instead, it has accommodated itself with Mandarin, leading many Taiwanese to switch and mix codes between the two languages in their everyday life, including in mass media and even, political campaign speeches. What this means is that fifty years of instituting the 'Chinese' nationalist program is not without effects consequently, both Mandarin and *Hokkien*, as Taiwanese, have achieved common usage among the current residents in Taiwan.

Besides Mandarin and *Hokkien*, one needs to also mention the place of English language in Taiwan. The language was introduced and is thus associated with US military personnel who have been stationed in Taiwan, in support of the KMT, immediately after the Second World War and throughout the Cold War period. Perhaps reflecting its global economic interest that befits a newly industrialized economy, English language is also taught in secondary schools. However, it is a language that does not feature significantly in Taiwanese everyday life. With the exception of those who have studied in tertiary institutions in Britain or the US, even university students who can read English competently are very reluctant to speak the language. Indeed, it is a lesser language in Taiwan than even the Japanese language, as a consequence of close to fifty years of Japanese colonization of Taiwan. Many older, or elderly, Taiwanese can still speak Japanese fluently. Furthermore, some Japanese lexical items are mixed into Taiwanese conversational practices but one almost never encounters two Taiwanese conducting their conversation in Japanese. Both English and Japanese are present only in the margin of Taiwanese public sphere and daily life.

Given the political history of Taiwan since 1949, the contemporary linguistic situation is thus one of equal predominance of *Hokkien* and Mandarin, in exclusive or mixed codes, in the daily life of the Taiwanese, with English as a specialized knowledge for those with reasons to know it well but largely incomprehensible to a majority of the population.

The fate of *Hokkien* in Singapore is also politically determined by the single-party dominant state of the People's Action Party (PAP), which has ruled since 1959 till today, without any interruption. As mentioned earlier, the majority of Chinese

migrants from southern China to Singapore were *Hokkien* speaking, with notable smaller groups of Cantonese and *Teochew* speakers. As a result of British colonial neglect, the languages of instruction in the early schools set up by the different language groups within the larger immigrant community tended to follow the respective Chinese languages of their financiers. However, in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in response to the modernist movement in China the language of instruction of Chinese schools in Singapore, and other parts of Southeast Asia, switched to Mandarin. Nevertheless, the different Chinese languages, thirteen of which were officially listed in the 1957 census of the British colonial government (Purushotam, 1997:32)<sup>8</sup>, remained the languages of the streets and within the respective families. The importance of Chinese languages, particularly *Hokkien*, was driven home to the would be Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew, in the early years of political mobilization towards independence from British colonial rule. According to Lee,

When I made my first speech in *Hokkien* in 1961 during the Hong Lim by-elections, the children in China Street hooted with derision and contempt. I was unintelligible. I was talking gibberish. They laughed and jeered at me. I was in no mood for laughter. I could not give up. I just had to make myself understood (quoted in Purushotam, 1997:54).

However, as we have seen from the analysis of the 'Money', *Hokkien* has clearly lost its political position and displaced to the margin. Its displacement from the centrality of the everyday life of Chinese in Singapore involves a complex politics of language in the formation of a multiracial post-colonial state in Southeast Asia.

Immediately after World War II, Britain began to prepare Malaya, of which Singapore was a part, for political independence. After a series of protracted negotiations, Singapore was excluded from the Federation of Malaya, which became independent in 1957. However, it remained inconceivable for the emergent political leaders of all political leanings to imagine Singapore as an independent island nation. The uncertainty was 'resolved' when, in the face of possible 'communist' electoral victory on the island, the Malayan government initiated the formation of Malaysia, which would include Malaya, Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak, the two British territories in the island of Borneo that is in the main part of Indonesia. Malaysia became an independent nation in 1963. However, in a brief two years, Singapore would leave and become the independent island nation that was inconceivable, *realpolitik* had triumphed over political imagination.

During this period of coming into nationhood, the political positioning of the different languages of the resident population was a constant source of concern in the imagining of a new nation. The desire to be part of Malaya and later the reality of becoming part of Malaysia had led to the adoption of Malay the 'national' language, accordingly. Within the Chinese community, the positions of the different languages was resolved in 1956, by the first elected assembly which agreed to adopt Mandarin as the language of Chinese education, as it was already the common practice in Chinese schools, regardless of the languages spoken at home. With Separation, and a demographic dominance of more than 70%, the possibility of adopting Mandarin as the 'national' language for Singapore was mooted by various segments of the Chinese population. This was resisted by the newly independent government, in spite of its dependence on the Chinese electoral support to stay in power, because of the perceived hostile geopolitical environment in Southeast Asia, which would not accept the establishment of a 'Chinese' state with equanimity. Instead, a system of four official languages was instituted; namely, Mandarin, Malay, Tamil (a south Indian language prevalent among the Indian residents) and English.

However, English continued to be dominant in the business of government and public administration and further entrenched by political independence. Singapore, without any natural resources, would have to make its way in the global economy where facility with English would be a necessity. Economic realism was evident in the continuous expansion of enrolment in English-medium schools at the expense of those in the other three languages. For example, in 1965, the year of independence 61% of Chinese children registering for entry to primary education chose English-medium schools (Purushotam, 1997:65). To allay the apprehension of the different racial groups and gain political support for the government, a second language policy was introduced, in which all students were compelled to take their respective 'ethnic' language, which meant Mandarin for the Chinese students. This 'bilingual' education policy evolved further from a multilingual education system into the present 'national' system in which the primary medium of instruction is English, with the other three languages as compulsory school subjects. The dominance of English is thus complete, disadvantaging all who are not fluent in it but with facility in the other languages. In this way Mandarin, along with other second languages, has been displaced and the learning of which has come to be treated as an inconvenience, if not an obstacle, by some students and their parents.

Ironically, difficulties with instituting the learning of Mandarin in school became the direct cause of further displacement, indeed, suppression, of other Chinese languages, including *Hokkien*. In 1978, a study by the Ministry of Education discovered that the bilingual education system was not working among Chinese students because their competence in either language remained seriously deficient after the completion of primary education, creating great wastage of not only money but also human resource. While speaking other Chinese languages might help in learning Mandarin, the latter remained a new language to the Chinese students, who were overwhelmingly speaking other Chinese languages at home. Thus, in practice, Chinese students were coping with three languages. It was argued that the learning of Mandarin in school would be greatly facilitated if it were spoken at home. The government, with the support of the Chinese organizations, initiated the 'Speak Mandarin' campaign in 1979 – one month every year is dedicated as the Speak Mandarin Month, during which the city is bombarded with posters and all forms of public messages to speak Mandarin - which continues till today. Furthermore, the use of other Chinese languages, always officially marginalised as dialects, was banned from all public broadcast media; all imported programs from Hong Kong and Taiwan were been dubbed into Mandarin from Cantonese and *Hokkien*, respectively.<sup>9</sup> The consequence, after twenty years, is that *Hokkien* has become a language spoken by those who have never received formal education and those who did not make the grade in the highly competitive bilingual education system. It is thus reduced to being the language of the lowest educated working class and the illiterate. The linguistic hierarchy, in order of economic and political advantages, is thus English, Mandarin and *Hokkien*, as depicted and reflected in the film, 'Money'.

The two cases of the process of state formation, Singapore and Taiwan, display two different trajectories, with different intensity and success, of the political displacement of *Hokkien* by Mandarin as the language of the 'Chinese'. The displacement of *Hokkien* in Taiwan has not, by cursory evidence, been very successful. So much so that it is being revived in the name of Taiwan nationalism against the PRC. One sees this in the ubiquitous use of *Hokkien* or Taiwanese language in every sphere of social life, including politics, where *Hokkien* idioms and popular songs are adopted as campaign slogans and theme songs. This tying of the language to a Taiwan-nation, instead of a Chinese-nation, guarantees the continuing relevance of the language in Taiwan. In contrast, in Singapore, without any

educational infrastructure support, *Hokkien* is a dying language. Among Singaporeans who are below twenty-five years of age, the Chinese language of use is Mandarin; facility in *Hokkien* is either largely rudimentary or non-existent or reduced to occasional words for emphatic expression. At home, children are increasingly unable to converse with grandparents who are exclusively *Hokkien* speaking, and in the public sphere, the aged are being coerced into speaking Mandarin rather than the young learning *Hokkien*, reversing any Confucian notion of venerating the elder.

### **Consumption of *Hokkien* Films in Singapore**

The very different fateful trajectories of the Hokkien language account for the different political positioning of the language in films that are produced in the two respective locations of Taiwan and Singapore, as shown in the analysis above. Also, one would expect that as Hokkien films cross national boundaries, from Taiwan to Singapore and vice versa, the reception and consumption of these films would be significantly determined by the respective local political history and contemporary cultural configuration, if not reality, of the audience's location. The respective receptions of films exchanged between the two locations are issues that warrant cultural analysis. For this occasion, I will restrict myself to the reception/reading of Taiwanese films in Singapore and will have to leave the Taiwanese reception of Singapore films to future research.

After a period of about a twenty-year lapse when not a single movie was made in Singapore, movie making appears to be emerging again since the early 1990. One common element of films during this period is the depiction of the under-belly of what is commonly viewed as the most successful economies in Asia; most of the films of the decade feature the marginal, the poor, the working class and the alienated Singaporean, either individually or in groups. Among the most commercially successful films are those that use predominantly *Hokkien* in the dialogue; among the most successful of these is the film 'Money'. It was the highest grossing film ever made in Singapore, with about 6 million Singapore dollars box office sales, it edged out the box office taking of the Hollywood blockbuster, *Titanic*. It drew large audience attendance in the public housing estates cineplexes, drawing even individuals who seldom go to movies. One of the reasons is that the film arguably depicts and reflects the daily life of housing estate residents, who are largely of the lower middle income bracket.

This was one of the very first occasions, since 1979 when Hokkien (along with other Chinese dialects) was banned from mass media, that *Hokkien* speakers got to see their 'self-representation' on the big screen. Indeed, many Singaporeans were openly amazed by the fact that movie houses were permitted to screen a made-in-Singapore *Hokkien* film. The politics of this film, other than the obvious theme of class inequalities, lie in its bringing *Hokkien* to the big screen, in staging a 'return of the repressed' that brings pleasure to the *Hokkien* speakers; their viewing pleasure was more intense because it was done in the suppressed language, their language. However, this pleasure is also largely at their own expense because of the depictions of the 'crudeness' of illiterate *Hokkien* speakers who are generally the butt of slapstick antics and jokes. This, then, constitutes a kind of frame within which the Singaporean audience of *Hokkien* films derives their viewing pleasure, a frame that can be shown to be at work in Singaporeans' viewing of *Hokkien* films imported from Taiwan or elsewhere.<sup>10</sup>

Taking the film 'Peace Kingdom', what comes through to the audience is a 'comedy' of errors that arises out of (i) the mutual incomprehension of the three languages, *Hokkien*, northern-accented Mandarin and American-English and (ii) the 'ignorance' of the monolingual *Hokkien*-speaking villagers who are in Singaporean colloquial liken to 'tortoise in the hills' (suanh goo, san ---, in Mandarin). Thus, the widow who stands in the path of and successfully diverts the tanks and soldiers is hilarious by her screaming and stubbornness that wins out; the soaking of the severed fingers is laughable because of the ignorance in scientific knowledge; the dragging home of the refrigerated metal coffins is funny because of ignorance, and the subsequent attempt to propitiate the spirits of the US soldiers is laughable for its superstitious nonsense, and the local boys' adoption of 'Hey you!' as 'swear' words is laughable to anyone who understands English. For such are the ways of the illiterate monolingual *Hokkien* speakers who inhabit the margin of a highly competitive, highly skilled and highly professionalized urban economy that is well integrated into global capitalism.

Undoubtedly, there will be Taiwanese who will see the 'comedy' in these scenes. However, the scenes are more likely to be seen as 'tragic-comic', with greater empathy for the multiple ways in which the moral life of the village is invaded and trampled upon by the US-KMT military machinery, within the complex politics of contemporary Taiwan nationalism and KMT 'Chinese' nation. The trope by which

this politics is carried, namely the juxtaposition of the mutual incomprehensibility of the three languages, is likely to be lost on the Singaporean audience. Furthermore, the highly urban perceptual horizon of Singaporeans has no purchase on life in a rural community. The very stable political condition, laced with rhetorical anti-Westernism, itself a refracted contemporary expression of a colonialism that is externalized, provides Singaporeans with no access to the sentiments of the internal colonization of the *Hokkien* villagers by the KMT mainlanders and their US allies.

Yet ironically, in a country in which the educated and successful speak only English and Mandarin in all social transactions including home, the marginalization and suppression of *Hokkien* and its speakers is a process of internal colonization that is even more violent than in Taiwan. Whereas it is possible to raise *Hokkien* to the status of a language of political protest and subversion, to the status of the language of ethno-nationalism in Taiwan, a possibility that is now embraced to a certain extent by the KMT itself, since Lee Teng Hui an indigenous Taiwanese inherited the presidency in 1989, *Hokkien* speakers in Singapore are condemned to a slow but certain silencing. Their absence of voice and speech ensures an eventual erasure of their histories in the collective memory of the Singapore nation because their past and participation in local history can no longer be communicated fully, as each successive generation of the young becomes less and less competent in *Hokkien* language, to the point of total incompetence. The occasional return of the repressed through an occasional *Hokkien* film<sup>11</sup> marks its demise the more tragically, as fewer and fewer Singaporeans are able to understand the films, beyond the comic scenes, in their totality for want of language competence, no matter where the film is produced.

## Conclusion

This essay attempts to initiate a direction of comparative cultural analysis of Taiwan and Singapore beyond economy and formal political processes, which dominate the field of studies in Asia's newly industrialized economies/countries. The shared presence of *Hokkien* as the language of the majority of the Chinese in both locations provides a privileged opportunity to analyze the potential and actual cultural traffic between these two locations via various media, of which film is one. The difference in the current position of *Hokkien* in the two locations tells us much about the cultural politics in their respective histories and future trajectories in state formation process in the two relatively new nations, although, of course, the idea of Taiwan as an independent nation remains 'unthinkable' among many Chinese, inside

and outside the PRC. To the extent that it is possible to still call the *Hokkien*-speaking Taiwanese Chinese, then the differences in the fate of the language in the two locations is itself a manifestation of the different and respective ways of 'doing' Chineseness, symbolically and materially, giving lie to claims of a single 'Cultural China' as a currently fashionable construction of the overseas Chinese communities worldwide.

---

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The most comprehensive series of work assessing the different aspects of the rise of capital in Asia is the six volume New Rich in Asia Series, published by Routledge.

<sup>2</sup> In the case of Taiwan, due to its Japanese colonial past, the influence of Japanese culture on Taiwan has been a focus of interest among cultural studies writers, see for example Ching (1994), Lii (1998) and Chen (forthcoming).

<sup>3</sup> I have left out for this particular occasion the language of the Hakka, who constitute a substantial proportion of the Taiwan population.

<sup>4</sup> As a result of shrinking market, filmmakers and actors from China, Hong Kong and Taiwan have been moving to Hollywood in search of new opportunities in the 1990s (Cheng, 1998:132-33). The related issues have been the foci of media and academic analytic attention, neglecting issues related to intra-Asia film exchanges.

<sup>5</sup> Many of the films from Taiwan are not released in the commercial movie houses, although they are frequently included as 'art' films during the film festival and are usually among the films that received sold-out attendance. Often, commercial outlets will pick up the film for popular release from the film's sales record during the festival.

<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that the three main actors also appear together, every Monday night, on a very popular local situation comedy, where one of them (the Mandarin speaker) cross dresses as the mother of household. In a country in which gays and lesbianism remain largely hidden from the public eye, this actor is the only who appears in drags on public television, as a 'woman/mother/old lady' without sex or sexuality.

<sup>7</sup> The romancing of *Hokkien* is not restricted to mass media. The current Prime Minister, Mr Goh Chok Tong, has been noted to pepper his annual National Day Rally speeches with a few phrases in *Hokkien* to great effect. Such phrases never fail to draw laughter and applause from his audience.

<sup>8</sup> To date, Purushotam has provided the most comprehensive analysis of the politics of language in Singapore. This section is highly indebted to her analysis even when specific references are not provided.

<sup>9</sup> However, with the introduction of paid cable television in 1995, which is owned by the state, Cantonese and *Hokkien* programmes are screened on cable channels but the ban on public television continues.

<sup>10</sup> Indeed, Taiwan *Hokkien* films are rare in Singapore, in part because of the no-dialect-in-mass-media policy that is still in place. However, when they are screened, as during the annual Singapore International Film Festival, Taiwanese films are often among the earliest to be sold out, indicative of their popularity.

<sup>11</sup> Indeed, *Hokkien* films have to be occasional, since the Singaporean audience seems to tire of them easily. For example, since the release of 'Money' there had been several much better made *Hokkien* films that could not recoup the costs of production, including the above mentioned 'Eating Air', which was immediately picked up by international film festivals.

## References

Andersen, Benedict (1983) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origins and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso.

Ching, Leo (1994) 'Imaginations in the Empires of the Sun: Japanese mass culture in Asia', *boundary 2*, 21:198-219.

Kuan-Hsing Chen (forthcoming) 'The formation and consumption of KTV in Taiwan' in Chua Beng-Huat (ed.) *Consumption in Asia: lifestyle and identity*. London: Routledge.

Chen, Chi-Nan (1980) *Taiwan's Traditional Chinese Society* (in Chinese). Taipei: Asian Culture Company.

Cheng, Scarlet (1988) 'Cross culture cinema' in Lynn Pan (editor) *The Encyclopedia of Chinese Overseas*. Singapore: Chinese Heritage Centre/Landmark Books, pp. 132-33.

Chun, Allen (1995) 'From nationalism to nationalizing: cultural imagination and state formation in postwar Taiwan', *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 31: 49-69.

Gellner, Ernest (1983) *Nations and nationalism*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Ding-Zhang, Lii (1998) 'A colonized empire: reflections on the expansion of Hong Kong films in Asian countries' in Kuan-Hsing Chen (ed.) *Trajectories: inter-Asia cultural studies*. London: Routledge, pp. 122-141.

Purushotam, Nirmala S. (1998) *Negotiating Languages, Constructing Race: Disciplining difference in Singapore*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Tan Tarn How (2000) 'Come, so you want to fight?' *Straits Times* 8 January.

Long, Susan (2000) 'Where Mr. Cosmopolitan clashes with Mr. Heartland'. *Straits Times* 9 January.

## Department of Sociology

### *Working Papers Series*

---

1. Riaz Hassan and Geoffrey Benjamin, "*Ethnic Outmarriage Rates in Singapore: The Influence of Traditional Socio-Cultural Organisation*", 1972, 26pp.
2. Hans-Dieter Evers, "*Urban Involution: The Social Structure of Southeast Asian Towns*", 1972, 19pp.
3. Erik Cohen, "*Social Ecology -- A Multidimensional Approach*", 1972, 97pp.
4. Noeleen Heyzer and Wee Gek Sim, "*Trade Union Leaders in Singapore*", 1972, 92pp.
5. Peter S.J. Chen, "*The Political Course of Singapore*", (in English and Chinese), 1972, 23pp.
6. Chan Heng Chee and Hans-Dieter Evers, "*National Identity and Nation Building in S.E. Asia*", 1972, 29pp.
7. Peter Weldon, "*Indonesian and Chinese Status Differences in Urban Java*", 1972, 41pp.
8. Geoffrey Benjamin, "*Austroasiatic Subgroupings and Prehistory in the Malay Peninsula*", 1972, 63pp.
9. Aline Wong, "*Job Satisfaction among Higher Non-Expatriate Civil Servants in Hong Kong*", 1972, 64pp.
10. Peter S.J. Chen, "*Modernisation in Singapore: Changing Values and the Individual*", 1972, 16pp.
11. Geoffrey Benjamin, "*An Outline of Temiar Grammar*", 1972, 41pp.
12. Peter S.J. Chen, "*Social Stratification in Singapore*", 1973, 99pp.
13. Peter D. Weldon, John S. Western and Tan Tsu Haung, "*Housing and Satisfaction with Environment in Singapore*", 1973, 30pp.
14. Mochtar Naim, "*Penghulu di Minangkabau (Penghulu as Traditional Elite in Minangkabau)*", 1973, 31pp.
15. Michael A.H. Walter, "*A Comparative Examination of Systems of Kinship and Marriage in Fiji*", 1973, 41pp.
16. Hans Dieter-Evers and Daniel Regan, "*Specialisation and Involvement: The Modernising Role of Doctors in Malaysia and Indonesia*", 1973, 33pp.
17. Myrna L. Blake, "*Kampong Eurasians in Singapore*", 1973, 45pp.
18. Mak Lau Fong, "*The Forgotten and the Rejected Community -- A Sociological Study of Chinese Secret Societies in Singapore and West Malaysia*", 1973, 150pp.
19. Erik Cohen, "*Southeast Asian Urban Sociology -- A Review and a Selected Bibliography*", 1973, 53pp.
20. Thelma Kay, "*Group Cohesion and Productivity among Dockworkers -- A Study of Stevedores in Singapore*", 1973, 28pp.
21. Eddie C.Y. Kuo, "*Industrialisation and the Family Type: An Overview*", 1974, 45pp.
22. Hans-Dieter Evers, "*Changing Patterns of Minangkabau Urban Landownership*", 1974, 45pp.
23. Peter S.J. Chen, "*Social and Psychological Aspects of Fertility: Findings from Family Planning Research in Singapore*", 1974, 27pp.
24. Hans-Dieter Evers, "*The Role of Professionals in Social and Political Change*", 1974, 28pp.
25. Geoffrey Benjamin, "*Prehistory and Ethnology in Southeast Asia: Some New Ideas*", 1974, 2pp.
26. Mochtar Naim, "*Voluntary Migration in Indonesia*", 1974, 41pp.
27. Lawrence Babb, "*Walking on Flowers in Singapore -- A Hindu Festival C: in Aram Yengoyan and Alton L. Cycle*", 1974, 46pp.
28. Geoffrey Benjamin, "*Indigenous Religious Systems of the Malay Peninsula*", 1974, 27pp.
29. Aline K. Wong, "*Women as a Minority Group in Singapore*", 1974,
30. Michael A.H.B. Walter, "*Co-operation in East Fiji: A New Traditionalism?*", 1974, 30pp.
31. Aline K. Wong, "*The Continuous Family Revolution in China -- Ideology and Changing Family Patterns*", 1974, 28pp.
32. Eddie C.Y. Kuo and Riaz Hassan, "*Some Social Concomitants of Interethnic Marriage in Singapore*", 1974, 28pp.
33. Riaz Hassan, "*Symptoms and Syndromes of the Developmental Process in Singapore*", 1974, 11pp.
34. Hans-Dieter Evers and Riaz Hassan, "*Studies on Social Stratification in Southeast Asia*", 1974, 141pp.
35. Pang Eng Fong and Thelma Kay, "*Change and Continuity in Singapore's Industrial Relations System*", 1974, 27pp.

36. Eddie C.Y. Kuo, *"Field Theory as a Conceptual Framework for Divorce Study"*, 1974, 25pp.
37. Riaz Hassan, *"International Tourism and Intercultural Communication: The Case of Japanese Tourists in Singapore"*, 1974, 23pp.
38. Riaz Hassan, *"Towards a Dialectic Anthropology -- A Comment on Professor M. Freedman's Paper, Social and Cultural Anthropology"*, 1974, 7pp.
39. Hans-Dieter Evers, *"Urbanisation and Urban Conflict in Southeast Asia"*, 1974, 16pp.
40. Michael A.H.B. Walter, *"The Gardening Game"*, 1975, 15pp.
41. Frederic C. Deyo, *"Organisation and Its Socio-Cultural Setting: A Case Study of Structural Compensation in an Atomistic Society"*, 1975, 31pp.
42. Mak Lau Fong, *"Chinese Secret Societies in Ipoh Town, 1945-1969"*, 1975, 17pp.
43. Vivienne Wee, *"A Preliminary Account of 'Buddhism' in Singapore"*, 1975, 56pp.
44. Geoffrey Benjamin, *"The Cultural Logic of Singapore's 'Multiracialism'"*, 1975, 34pp.
45. Eckehard Kulke, *"Social Class and Primordial Loyalty in Rural India -- An Approach to the Study of Indian Untouchables"*, 1975, 31pp.
46. Peter S.J. Chen, *"Elites and National Development in Singapore"*, 1975, 15pp.
47. Riaz Hassan, *"Social and Psychological Implications of High Population Density"*, 1975, 30pp.
48. Rory Fonseca, *"Planning and Land-use in Singapore"*, 1975, 26pp.
49. Lawrence A. Babb, *"Thaipusam in Singapore: Religious Individualism in a Hierarchical Culture"*, 1976, 19pp.
50. Rory Fonseca, *"Growth, Transition and the Urban Environment; A Reference Frame for Singapore"*, 1976, 19pp.
51. Peter S.J. Chen, *"Asian Values in Modernising Society: A Sociological Perspective"*, 1976, 17pp.
52. Eddie C.Y. Kuo, *"A Sociolinguistic Profile of Singapore"*, 1976, 20pp.
53. Michael A.H.B. Walter, *"On Transitional Society"*, 1976, 20pp.
54. Frederic C. Deyo, *"Marital Status, Job Orientation and Work Commitment among Semi-Skilled Female Workers in Singapore"*, 1976, 20pp.
55. Frederic C. Deyo, *"Decision-Making and Supervisory Authority in Cross-Cultural Perspective: An Exploratory Study of Chinese and Western Management Practices in Singapore"*, 1976, 24pp.
56. John R. Clammer, *"Sociological Approaches to the Study of Language and Literacy in Southeast Asia"*, 1976, 28pp.
57. Peter S.J. Chen, *"Ecological Distribution of Social Pathology in Singapore"*, 1977, 28pp.
58. Aline K. Wong, *"The Value of Children and the Household Economy -- A Review of Current VOC Studies in the Developing World"*, 1977, 24pp.
59. Chiew Seen Kong, *"Educational and Occupational Attainment of Singapore's Chinese Women and Men"*, 1977, 24pp.
60. Peter S.J. Chen, *"Population Policy and Social Science Research on Population in Singapore"*, 1977, 28pp.
61. Michael A.H.B. Walter and Riaz Hassan, *"An Island Community in Singapore: A Characterisation of a Marginal Society"*, 1977, 44pp.
62. Stella R. Quah, *"The Unplanned Dimensions of Health Care in Singapore: Traditional Healers and Self-Medication"*, 1977, 22pp.
63. John R. Clammer, *"Islam and Capitalism in Southeast Asia"*, 1978, 22pp.
64. Robert G. Cooper, *"Second World First: The Study of Films and the Use of Film in Social Studies"*, 1978, 20pp.
65. Peter S.J. Chen, *"Ethnicity and Fertility: The Case of Singapore"*, 1978, 25pp.
66. Rolf E. Vente, *"Urban Planning and High-Density Living. Some Reflections on their Interrelationship"*, 1979, 13pp.
67. William S.W. Lim, *"A Case for Low-Rise High-Density Living in Singapore"*, 1979, 13pp.
68. Mak Lau Fong, *"Subcommunal Participation and Leadership Cohesiveness of the Chinese in 19th Century Singapore"*, 1984, 23pp.
69. Eddie C.Y. Kuo and Huey Tsyh Chen, *"Towards an Information Society: Changing Occupational Structure in Singapore"*, 1985, 29pp.
70. Ko Yiu Chung, *"Industrial Workers and Class Formation: A Study of Chinese Industrial Workers in North China, 1900-1937"*, 1986, 31pp.
71. Geoffrey Benjamin, *"Between Isthmus and Islands: Reflection on Malayan Palaeo-Sociology"*, 1986, 43pp.
72. Habibul H. Khondker, *"Is There a Dependency Paradigm?"*, 1986, 55pp.



73. Mak Lau Fong, *"The Locality and Non-Locality Organising Principles: A Technical Report on the Taxonomy of Chinese Voluntary Associations in the 19th Century Straits Settlements"*, 1986, 33pp.
74. Chua Beng Huat, *"Reading Foucault as a Conservative"*, 1986, 40pp.
75. Vivienne Wee, *"Material Dependence and Symbolic Independence: Constructions of Malay Ethnicity in Island Riau, Indonesia"*, 1986, 46pp.
76. Habibul Haque Khondker, *"Famine Response: The 1984-85 Ethiopian Famine"*, 1986, 38pp.
77. Allen J. Chun, *"Conceptions of Kinship and Kingship in Classical Chou China"*, 1986, 50pp.
78. V. Selvaratnam, *"Ethnicity, Inequality and Higher Education in Peninsular Malaysia: The Sociological Implications"*, 1987, 44pp.
79. Trevor O Ling, *"Buddhism, Confucianism and the Secular State in Singapore"*, 1987, 42pp.
80. Mak Lau Fong, *"The Social Alignment Patterns of the Chinese in 19th-century Penang"*, 1987, 32pp.
81. Allen J. Chun, *"Durkheim Reconsidered: A Critique of Primitive Structuralism"*, 1987, 30pp.
82. Geoffrey Benjamin, *"Process and Structure in Temiar Social Organization"*, 1987, 46pp.
83. Eddie C.Y. Kuo, *"Confucianism and the Chinese Family in Singapore: Continuities and Changes"*, 1987, 32pp.
84. Tatsuko Takizawa, *"Facets of Musical Activities in Singapore"*, 1987, 35pp.
85. Geoffrey Benjamin, *"Notes on the Deep Sociology of Religion"*, 1987, 37pp.
86. Habibul Haque Khondker, *"The World According to Wallerstein"*, 1987, 48pp.
87. Mak Lau Fong, *"Solidarity Models: A Sociological Framework For Comparative Criminal Organization"*, 1988, 29pp.
88. Geoffrey Benjamin, *"Grammar and Polity: The Cultural and Political Background to Standard Malay"*, 1988, 51pp.
89. Viswanathan Selvaratnam, *"Limits to Vocationally-Oriented Education in the Third World"*, 1988, 36pp.
90. Vivienne Wee, *What does 'Chinese' mean?: an exploratory essay*, 1988, 41pp.
91. Geoffrey Benjamin, *The unseen presence: a theory of the nation-state and its mystifications*, 1988, 55pp.
92. Tong Chee Kiong, *Perceptions and boundaries: problematics in the assimilation of the Chinese in Thailand*, 1988, 30pp.
93. Alan J Chun, *Toward a political economy of the sojourning experience: the Chinese in 19th century Malaya*, 1988, 39pp.
94. Chua Beng Huat, *Public housing policies compared: US, Socialist countries and Singapore*, 1988, 41pp.
95. Eddie C. Y. Kuo and Bjorn H. Jernudd, *Language management in a multilingual state: the case of planning in Singapore*, 1988, 45pp.
96. Ho Kong Chong, *The community study: a discussion of the method with modifications for research in Singapore*, 1988, 44pp.
97. Tan Ern Ser, *Employing organizations and the dynamics of social mobility in Singapore: an analytical framework and empirical analysis*, 1988, 43pp.
98. Mak Lau Fong, *Singapore Chinese traditional voluntary associations: convergence vs divergence*, 1989, 36pp.
99. Tong Chee Kiong, *Centripetal authority, differentiated networks: the social organization of Chinese firms in Singapore*, 1989, 36pp.
100. Chan Kwok Bun and Ho Kong Chong (eds), *Explorations in Asian sociology. 100th special issue*, Singapore: Chopmen Publishers 1991, 54pp.
101. Eddie C. Y. Kuo, *Ethnicity, polity and economy: a case study of Mandarin trade and the Chinese connection*, 1990, 36pp.
102. Chua Beng Huat, *Fashion shopping: programs, stages and audience*, 1990, 29pp.
103. Georg Stauth, *Revolution in spiritless times: an essay on the inquiries of Michel Foucault on the Iranian Revolution*, 1991, 54pp.
104. Chua Beng Huat & Eddie C. Y. Kuo, *The making of a new nation: cultural construction and national identity in Singapore*, 1991, 43pp.
105. Alfred Choi, *Policing domestic disturbances: a research review of police response*, 1991, 40pp.
106. Vineeta Sinha, *Some notes on 'temple'-building and image-worship in Indian religion, in historical perspective*, 1991, 50pp.
107. Ho Kong Chong, *Studying the city in the new international division of labour*, 1991, 43pp.

108. Georg Stauth, *Critical theory and pre-Fascist social thought*, 1991, 35pp.
109. Zhang Xin-Xiang, *A methodological critique of Marx's theory of surplus value*, 1991, 37pp.
110. Lee Siew Peng, *Class and noise tolerance: some ruminations*, 1991, 39pp.
111. Paulin Tay Straughan, *Screening for early detection of cervical cancer: the relationship between social integration and preventive health*, 1992, 34pp.
112. Lian Kwen Fee, *Stratification in Maori society in the 19th century*, 1992, 40pp.
113. Eddie C. Y. Kuo, *Confucianism as political discourse in Singapore: the case of an incomplete revitalization movement*, 1992, 29pp.
114. Syed Farid Alatas, *Some problems of indigenization*, 1992, 46pp.
115. Zhang Xin-Xiang, *Crime and control: a neo-rational choice approach*, 1993, 43pp.
116. Tan Ern Ser, *Theorising the dynamics of industrial relations and trade unionism: lessons from the Singapore case*, 1993, 31pp.
117. Roxana Waterson, *What to celebrate in the United Nations Year of Indigenous Peoples?*, 1993, 55pp.
118. Zhang Xin Xiang, *Education as a vehicle for social stratificational change: the case of Singapore*, 1993, 38pp.
119. James V. Jesudason, *Statist democracy and the limits of civil society in Malaysia*, 1993, 40pp.
120. Filomeno V. Aguilar Jr, *Nouns that sail through history: reified categories and their transcendence in Marx's social theory*, 1994, 50pp.
121. Syed Farid Alatas, *Post-colonial state: dual functions in the public sphere*, 1994, 45pp.
122. Chua Beng Huat, *That imagined space: nostalgia for the kampung in Singapore*, 1994, 39pp.
123. Habibul H Khondker, *Globalization theory: a critical appraisal*, 1994, 42pp.
124. Kwok Kian Woon, *Social transformation and the problem of social coherence: Chinese Singaporeans at century's end*, 1994, 39pp.
125. Chua Beng Huat, *Culture, multiracialism and national identity in Singapore*, 1995, 36pp.
126. Nirmala Purushotam, *Disciplining differences: 'race' in Singapore*, 1995, 33pp.
127. Chua Beng Huat and Tan Joo Ean, *Singapore: new configuration of a socially stratified culture*, 1995, 40pp.
128. Paulin Tay Straughan and Tan Ern Ser, *Shiftwork, job satisfaction, and turnover propensity: nurses in a Singapore hospital*, 1996, 26pp.
129. Habibul Haque Khondker, *Competing paradigms and conflicting theories in the studies of the development of Asian NICS*, 1996, 37pp.
130. Geoffrey Benjamin, *Rationalisation and re-enchantment in Malaysia: Temiar religion 1964-1995*, 1996, 52pp.
131. Selina Ching Chan, *Negotiating and tradition: the identity of indigenous inhabitants in Hong Kong*, 1996, 43pp.
132. Geoffrey Benjamin, *Affixes, Austronesian and iconicity in Malay*, 1997, 31 pp.
133. Chua Beng Huat and Ananda Rahah, *Hybridity, Ethnicity and Food in Singapore*, 1997, 24 pp.
134. Kay Mohlman, *Home-base Workplaces and Workplace Domesticities: A Socio-Spatial Analysis*, 1998, 28pp.
135. Paulin Tay Straughan, *The Social Contradictions of the Normal Family: Challenges to the Ideology*, 1999, 18pp.
136. Vineeta Sinha, *Colonial Encounters: Transplanting "Western Medicine"; Ousting "Traditional" Healing?* 1999, 42pp.
137. Tong Chee Kiong and Lian Kwen Fee, *The Nationstate and the Limits to Globalization in Southeast Asia*, 1999, 30pp.
138. Chia Hwee Kim Karen, *Experiencing Sacred Spaces: The Negotiation of Authenticity by Tourists and Worshippers*, 1999, 45pp.
139. Leong Wai Teng, *Consuming the Nation: National Day Parades in Singapore*, 1999, 16pp.
140. Maribeth Erb, *What is a Tourist?: Tourists and Other Spirits in the Manggaraian World*, 1999, 28pp.
141. Syed Farid Alatas and Vineeta Sinha, *Teaching Classical Sociological Theory in Singapore: The Context of Eurocentrism*, 1999, 34pp.
142. Thomas Menkhoff and Jochen Wirtz, *Local Responses to Globalisation-The Case of Singapore*, 1999, 34pp.
143. Johannes Han-Yin Chang, *China: An Unintended Transformation of Class Stratification*, 1999, 32pp.
144. Srilata Ravi, *"Antivoyages-Reflections on women travellers' writings"*, 1999, 18pp.
145. Goh Pei Siong Daniel, *Space, Meaning and A "Neighborhood" Charismatic Fundamentalist Church*, 1999, 30pp.
146. Ng Tang Nah, *The Effects of Science Education on National Economic Growth in The World and Singapore*, 1999, 21pp.



- Md.Mizanur Rahman, *The Asian Economic Crisis and Migrant Workers: The Case of Bangladeshi Workers in Singapore*, 1999, 33pp
148. Vineeta Sinha, *Socio-Cultural Theory and Colonial Encounters: The Discourse on Indigenizing Anthropology in India*, 2000, 38pp
149. Chua Beng Huat, *Taiwan's Present/Singapore's Past Mediated by Hokkien Language*, 2000, 19pp