CIRCUITS OF MIGRATION: A STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF MIGRATION IN PENINSULAR MALAYSIA

by

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DECLARATION

Except where indicated, this thesis is based upon original research conducted by the author.

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FOREWORD

A thesis that is so long in finishing will inevitably suffer from the following problems. First, the data become outdated. The then most recent census data of 1970 showing the national patterns of migration and the complementary field work in the Muda region conducted between 1975-76 which was then most current had become somewhat historical by 1990. While there has been no similar surveys since of the type as undertaken by the writer in 1975-76 (except those on female migrants by the writer in 1982 and 1985-87 in the Penang and Kedah region), as of 1991, the Malaysian 1970 census has been superceded by the 1980 and 1991 census. To overcome this inadequacy, wherever relevant, the more contemporary macro- and micro-data on migration have been used.

Second, and closely related to the first point, is that the thesis material, instead of being mainly a 1970s migration analysis, has also to incorporate the 1980s and the 1990s. For a fast developing country, undergoing rapid urbanization and industralization, spurred by both domestic policies and international circumstances, this period has seen tremendous transformation. Bearing in mind the major thesis of this study, that migration is an integral component of structural change both responding and conditioning economic and social forces at the same time, the 1970s to 1990s have wrought immense changes in Malaysia with their concomitant impacts on migration. Thus, this 30-year period saw the implementation and impact of the New Economic Policy (NEP); the "new" migration of rural women workers into manufacturing jobs in urban areas, in particular electronics factories in export-platform zones; the economic boom resulting in labour deficits in estates, construction and manufacturing sectors leading to legal and illegal immigrants from mainly Indonesia and Philippines; the deep recession of the mid-1980s when Malaysia experienced unprecedented retrenchments and mass unemployment; to be followed by the economic upswing of the late 1980s, again causing labour shortages and an influx of foreign workers. Responding to the fluctuations of the economy there has been a small emigration of Malaysian professionals legally to Singapore and other Englishspeaking countries and another mainly less-educated flow to the Middle-East, Taiwan and Japan. Foreign workers continue to be drawn into the country as the 1990s saw impressive sustained economic growth of about 8.5 per cent per annum; only to be temporarily marred by the Asian crisis of 1997-98 with some retrenchment and repatriation

of foreign workers. Urbanization continued unabated as the country began to move into a new phase of capital-intensive, high technology and knowledge-based industries. Only in the last two chapters, Chapter 7 and the Conclusion, has there been some incorporation of data beyond 1991 to 2003. It was difficult to ignore recent data, especially of the 1991 Census which was published in 1996. Happily, they merely reaffirmed most of the trends already suggested in this thesis when it was first submitted in mid-1991.

This leads to the third problem, perhaps the most difficult, and that is to contend with the changing ideas of the writer – an inevitable result of any long drawn-out study. The earlier drafts of this dissertation saw a shift from a mainly demographic-geographic thesis to a development-oriented one. And even within the development paradigm, there has been an evolution in theoretical bent, from dependency, to the world systems, and to the new international division of labour of the 1980s. In the area of methodology there has also been developments. The early draft of the Introduction hinted at the potential of adopting different levels of analysis (albeit at a simplistic level) of linking the macro- and micro-levels. Since then, this idea has become the multi-level approach, analyzing the structures and processes from the international, national, regional, village to family levels. At the time of the Simpang Empat Mobility and Migration Surveys, the life-history approach was seen as within the forefront of micro-level research. This had developed further into the family life-course methodology by the time of the later surveys.

Such intellectual and methodological changes are found throughout the study, and have at times been difficult to come to terms with. Fortunately, this theoretical and methodological development has been matched to some extent by more recent research carried out by the writer. Although most of the data come from the earlier research, to update this study, the more recent research of the writer has been incorporated. In this sense it shows a natural progression, in fact the intellectual development of the writer. Much of the material had been either published or presented at conferences, alone or jointly.

Finally, a thesis that has been so long in finishing will result in the writer having more people to thank. It is impossible to name them all. I wish to thank all the *kampung* people who helped me in the field work and for being so generous in letting me share their experiences. To my main supervisors, Dr Robin Pryor, Dr Peter MacDonald and Dr Kamal Salih, I wish to thank them for their help at different stages, and even when suffering from

thesis fatigue had supreme confidence in me. This thesis is as much a test of their endurance and faith as much as my own perseverance. And as to my family, they started to wonder if it would ever get submitted. While all have been important supports in various ways, I alone take full responsibility for this thesis.

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GLOSSARY

adat perpatihmatrilinealadat temenggongpatrilinealambil upahwage workAyahfather

half and half, usually half for the owner and half for the retailer

bandar large town

batik cotton cloth printed with local designs

bee-hoon rice noodles (in Chinese)

buka open (especially buka tanah : open land)

Bumiputra sons of the soil or Malays dua warna TV black and white TV regular salary

gaya style

haj pilgrimage to Mecca by Muslims

Hari Raya festival celebrated at the end of the fasting month

Isi penuh fill all posts in the government

jaga-kerbau look after buffaloes kabota Japanese tilling machine

kampung asal village of origin

kampung village

kedai runcit small provision store

kekeluargaanfamilykendurifeastkerbaubuffalo

ketua kampung village headman kuat semangat spiritual strength

kueh cakes Mak mother

malu embarrassment or shame

mandor overseer

mukim aerial level below administrative district

Nenekgrandmothernyanuksenileorang putihwhite manorang-buatbewitchedpadikunca credit

Pak Cik uncle

pangkin raised wooden floor often used as an eating space

pasar minggu weekly markets

pekan small town usually under 5000

perangsang encouragement

pulau island

relung local form of land size measurement; 1 relung = 0.53 hectares

sarung cloth worn around the lower half of body

see-fu expert (in Chinese) surau religious hall

tahun gelap year of the eclipse of the sun

tanah pusakahereditary landtanah terbiarabandoned landTokgrandfather

transmigrasi transmigration (between islands) resettlement programme in

Indonesia

tudong scarf to cover the hair

tukang rumahhouse builderugamareligious teaching

ACRONYM

DARA Pahang Tenggara Development Authority

FELCRA Federal Land Consolidation & Rehabilitation Authority

FELDA Felda Land Development Authority

FTZ free trade zones

KABUTA Japanese mechanical soil-tiller

KADA Kemubu Agricultural Development Authority

KEJORA Johor Tenggara Development Authority
KESEDAR Kelantan Selatan Development Authority
KETENGAH Terengganu Tengah Development Authority
MADA Muda Agricultural Development Authority
MAEI Malaysian American Electronics Industry

MARA Majlis Amanah Rakyat

MIDA Malaysian Industrial Development Authority

MNC multinational corporation

MTUC Malaysian Trade Union Congress

NEP New Economic Policy

NIC newly industralizing countries
NIDL new international division of labour
RDA Regional Development Authority

RIDA Rural & Industrial Development Authority

RISDA Rubber Industry Smallholders Development Authority

TNC transnational corporation

UMNO United Malay National Organization