

ULASAN BUKU/BOOK REVIEW

AZIZ DERAMAN, *Masyarakat dan Kebudayaan Malaysia: Suatu Pengenalan Latarbelakang dan Sejarah Ringkas*. Kuala Lumpur: Kementerian Kebudayaan, Belia dan Sukan Malaysia, 1975. 148 hal.

Dalam pengertian sosiologi, Malaysia merupakan satu masyarakat majmuk *par excellence* yang terdiri dari berbagai kumpulan etnik. Tiap-tiap kumpulan etnik mempunyai bahasa, agama, kepercayaan, nilai, adat resam serta lain-lain warisan budaya yang tersendiri. Tegasnya kepelbagaian kaum dan budaya adalah salah satu ciri utama masyarakat Malaysia. Justeru itu, sebarang usaha membincangkan atau mewujudkan kebudayaan Malaysia sepatutnya mengambil-kira hakikat ini. Sebarang perbincangan mengenai masyarakat dan kebudayaan Malaysia tidaklah dianggap representatif dan seterusnya kurang memuaskan, malahan mengelirukan, jika sekiranya unsur kepelbagaian tadi diabaikan.

Dalam hal ini nampaknya karya Aziz Deraman amat mengecewakan. Dari judul *Masyarakat dan Kebudayaan Malaysia*, para pembaca tentu sekali mengharapkan satu gambaran atau pemerihalan mengenai masyarakat dan kebudayaan Malaysia, iaitu kaum Melayu, China, India, Iban, Melanau, Kadazan, Bajau, Murut dan lain-lain serta kebudayaan mereka masing-masing. Malangnya penulis hanya menumpukan perhatiannya kepada kaum Melayu di Semenanjung Malaysia. Kaum-kaum lain amat sedikit disentuh dalam perbincangannya. Jadi judul buku ini sangatlah mengelirukan. Barangkali judul *Masyarakat dan Kebudayaan Melayu di Semenanjung Malaysia* lebih sesuai dan tepat.

Pada asasnya buku ini cuba menyusur-galurkan masyarakat dan kebudayaan *Melayu* dari zaman pra-sejarah sehingga kedatangan pengaruh Inggeris. Penulis cuba menunjukkan kesan pengaruh-pengaruh luar—Hindu, Islam dan Inggeris—ke atas masyarakat Melayu dan bagaimana unsur-unsur pengaruh luar itu dapat diubahsuai untuk memenuhi kehendak-kehendak tempatan.

Dari sudut pandangan yang objektif, beberapa persoalan pokok boleh kita timbulkan. Pertamanya, konsep 'Kebudayaan' dan 'Masyarakat' tidak diberi takrif yang sejelas-jelasnya, terutama dalam konteks masyarakat Malaysia. Penulis cuba mendefinisikan istilah kebudayaan dalam pengertian yang luas, tetapi dalam berbuat demikian beliau meninggalkan beberapa ciri penting. Sebagai contoh, kebudayaan itu dipelajari melalui proses sosialisasi atau akulturasi; kebudayaan juga bersifat kumulatif dan integratif. Pengertian mengenai kebudayaan akan menjadi lebih

lengkap dan memuaskan sekiranya unsur-unsur di atas dibincangkan bersama dengan cara yang eksplisit.

Berhubung dengan hal ini, konsep kebudayaan Malaysia dan masyarakat Malaysia harus juga diberikan perhatian yang lebih dalam buku ini. Soal-soal seperti apakah kebudayaan Malaysia, bagaimanakah terbentuknya masyarakat majmuk Malaysia serta ciri-cirinya yang relevan tidak diberikan perhatian yang sewajarnya oleh penulis.

Di samping kekurangan di atas, penulis juga memperlihatkan kekeliruan apabila beliau menulis:-

Kita di Malaysia belum dapat dikenali sebagai satu masyarakat kerana kita masih belum mempunyai aspek-aspek hidup yang pokok yang boleh kita banggakan sebagai kepunyaan bersama. Kalau ditinjau dari pengertian ilmu kemasyarakatan, memang seharusnya kita sudah boleh dipanggil sebagai bangsa Malaysia tetapi bukannya satu masyarakat Malaysia. Negara kita adalah satu negara berbilang masyarakat tetapi satu bangsa iaitu bangsa Malaysia (*Malaysian Nation*). (hal. 12).

Tiga istilah telah digunakan dalam petikan di atas: masyarakat, negara dan bangsa. Malaysia, menurut pengertian penulis, adalah satu *negara*, satu *bangsa* tetapi bukannya satu *masyarakat*. Inilah yang paling mengelirukan. Bukankah masyarakat itu harus ujud sebelum ujudnya satu bangsa (dalam pengertian *nation*)? Sekiranya Malaysia belum dikenali sebagai satu masyarakat sebagaimana yang didakwa oleh penulis, mengapakah buku ini diberi judul *Masyarakat dan Kebudayaan Malaysia*? Bukankah ini bertentangan dengan kenyataan? Pada hal, ditinjau dari segi sosiologi, Malaysia adalah satu masyarakat majmuk atau masyarakat berbilang kaum. Masyarakat majmuk Malaysia memang mempunyai ciri-ciri tersendiri serta masalah-masalah yang tertentu yang agak berbeza dengan masyarakat-masyarakat yang lebih *homogeneous*. Tetapi, walau dari apa sudut pandangan pun, kemajmukan Malaysia adalah satu sifat istimewa, bukannya sesuatu yang menafikan kewujudannya sebagai satu masyarakat.

Dalam memberikan satu latar belakang sejarah sosio-budaya 'Malaysia', penulis telah membincangkan dengan panjang lebar kedatangan pengaruh-pengaruh asing terutama sekali Hindu, Islam dan Inggeris. Kedatangan kaum China dan India dalam zaman penjajahan amat sedikit disentuh. Ini seolah-olah memberi impresi bahawa kedua-dua kaum itu kurang penting dalam perkembangan masyarakat dan kebudayaan Malaysia, sedangkan pada hakikatnya kedatangan kaum China dan India merupakan faktor utama dalam pertumbuhan masyarakat majmuk di Malaysia.

Pada keseluruhannya penghargaan harus diberi kepada penulis kerana berjaya mengemukakan satu penghuraian yang sistematis mengenai sejarah masyarakat dan kebudayaan Melayu di Malaysia, meskipun di sana sini terdapat sedikit kekaburan dan kesilapan dari segi penggunaan bahasa (contoh: halaman-halaman 9, 45, 49, 51, 63, 109, 113, 121, 125 dan lain-lain lagi). Kesilapan-kesilapan ini diharapkan boleh diperbetulkan dalam cetakan kedua buku ini.

Akhir sekali bibliografi khas mengenai masyarakat dan kebudayaan Malaysia yang dilampirkan adalah jauh dari lengkap. Banyak hasil tulisan yang penting ditinggalkan, termasuklah antara lain, tulisan-tulisan K.J. Ratnam, Alvin Rabushka, Victor Purcell, Ray Nyce, W.L. Blythe, Ravindra Jain dan Tien Ju-Kang.

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H.M. DAHLAN (ed.) *The Nascent Malaysian Society: Developments, Trends and Problems*. Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Jabatan Antropologi dan Sosiologi, Monograph Series no. 3, 1976. 210 pp.

This collection of articles, written mainly by lecturers in the Department of Anthropology and Sociology, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia represents some recent research work by Malaysian scholars. Contrary to the impression created by its presentation in published form under a single rubric, the contents do not reflect a coherent unity around a central theme. Most of the chapters are extracts from dissertation work done by the respective authors. Readers would have been better served if greater pains had been taken by further adaptation and editing for the present format. Given the diversity of the contents, justification for publication in monograph format is unclear. The faults in presentation should not however detract from the substance of the articles as they stand individually.

Dahlan's introductory overview attempts to provide a thematic coherence to the collection. He tries, but necessarily fails, to weave—with a plethora of “social science” terminology—an impossible unity among the disparate articles which comprise the book. This introduction may have the unfortunate consequence of dissuading readers from pursuing the other more interesting chapters in the book, of which the editor's own contribution is analytically the most insightful.

In the first article, Rustam A. Sani seeks to characterize the radical Malay nationalist notion of “Melayu Raya”—a post-colonial “nation of intent” embracing what are now Malaysia and Indonesia—as a locally-inspired component of its ideology. This polemical interpretation is at

odds with the currently more prevalent one which dismisses "Melayu Raya" as a mere consequence of Indonesian influence. However, Rustam has possibly erred when he off-handedly contrasts Malay nationalism, as embodied by the *Kesatuan Melayu Muda* (Malay Youth Association), with the Sino-Malayan and Indo-Malayan movements. Just as he has been at pains to demonstrate the distinctly local strands of Malayan Malay nationalism, it is similarly contendable that local elements also influenced the emergence and development of at least some of the non-Malay groups. It is hardly historically accurate to assert that all these "political movements were mere extensions of the parent movements in India and China" as Rustam does. Foreign influence in the formation of these groups is of course undeniable and this too, to varying degrees; nor, however, was such influence solely from India and China. At the inception of the Malayan Communist Party, for instance, Indonesia communist fugitives (from the 1926/27 revolt against Dutch rule) and even a Vietnamese (Ho Chi Minh) were involved, compared to the negligible representation of the Chinese Communist Party.

Dr. Ting Chew Peh's article rejects the assimilationist formula for the Malaysian context in favour of a vaguely stated cultural pluralism. While the rejection of the underlying chauvinism in an assimilationist position has its validity, it is important to avoid retreating into alternative chauvinist prejudices. The writer's discussion is unfortunately based on commonplace, and one may suggest, scientifically questionable racial stereotypes which remain insensitive to other manifestations of social differentiation such as class. Thus, in his argument, he implicitly assumes, but is unable to articulate, what common interests any particular ethnic grouping *as a whole* may share. One suspects there may actually be none, although it is neither surprising nor unusual to find the interests of a dominant fraction expressed as if shared by an entire ethnic group. Any analysis which seeks to be objective needs to go well beyond the appearance of things, no matter how emphatically this may be expressed.

Three articles on *Orang Asli* (Malaysian Aborigines) follow. Dr. Baharon, Director-General of Malaysia's Department of *Orang Asli* (Aboriginal) Affairs, maintains that the Malaysian Government has an active "development" program for the *Orang Asli*. (This, of course, has its origins in the Emergency when the British colonialist state sought to win their "hearts and minds" from possible communist influence.) Hood has written a sensitive and anecdotally-rich account and interpretation of various aspects of the behaviour and ideology of another *Orang Asli* group, the Semelai. While demonstrating connections with Malay culture, Hood also portrays the intricate uniqueness of the Semelai world. Dr. Zainal Kling, of the University of Malaya, has studied the manifestations of both conservation and dissolution of magical beliefs and practices amongst the

Saribas Malays in the East Malaysian state of Sarawak. The realm of magic, he finds, is inextricably interwoven with other aspects—economic as well as political—of their, and therefore, the larger society.

If conclusions may be drawn for Malaysia's emerging national culture, three may be suggested here. First, all three articles point to the unusually diverse cultural heritage to be found. It is important that this be respected and not destroyed or commercialised for tourism. Second, the articles, by emphasizing the diversity of *Orang Asli* cultures, remind one that while there are some groups, i.e. the Proto-Malays, which are culturally closer to the Malays, these have maintained their distinct identity and have not been assimilated despite centuries of contact. It would therefore be all the more insensitive to formulate policy for the *Orang Asli* in general, on the basis of the apparent cultural affinity of some of them. Memory of the recent colonial experience offers another important lesson. Superficial religious conversions to qualify for the carrot or to avoid the stick were an understandable response to the chauvinist assumptions inspiring much of the missionary work among the *Orang Asli* during the British era. Religion, to be respected, should emerge from spiritual inspiration, rather than from political or economic coercion.

In the sole contribution on the peasantry, Dahlan's reinterpetative survey of literature identifies the societal processes of class differentiation and exploitation accompanying the generalisation of market relations and the steady pervasion of capital's dominance. Empirical evidence from work by other researchers is effectively marshalled against some existing interpretations of peasant impoverishment which attribute immiserization to alleged factors such as cultural inferiority, economic irrationality, and traditional attitudes. Instead, he emphasizes the simultaneous and related occurrence of the impoverishment of the majority of peasant producers on the one hand, and the accumulation of the productive means by a small stratum of boat, net and land owners, merchants, and the growing urban salariat on the other.

Two papers on urban issues, offering less analytical insights, round up the book. Hairi Abdullah's chapter is a case study examining the various factors surrounding post-war rural-urban migration to a small town, Bandar Maharani, in southern Peninsular Malaysia. His examination of educational and occupational background, motivations for migrating, and first place of residence on arrival amongst a sample of 131 migrants, sheds some light on this increasingly important phenomenon in post-colonial Malaysia. As in so many other Third World countries, the main impulses underlying migration are economic, suggesting that rural poverty, underemployment, and unemployment may be increasingly displaced into urban centers.

Dr. Maulud Yusof's contribution offers some description of various social aspects of an urbanizing Malay village lying on the fringe of the Federal capital, Kuala Lumpur. This includes some brief sections on issues such as kinship, marriage, land ownership, and inheritance. Unfortunately, the particularity of the urbanizing experience the village is undergoing remains unclear, since this is not contrasted with other rural villages in the paper. Nevertheless, he does allude to certain possible pitfalls in generalising for the experiences of Malay villages undergoing similar transformation.

The volume's deficiencies are not compensated for by the printer, who has adopted a print calculated to cause eye strain and has made more than a fair share of typographical errors. Nonetheless, the publication of this book remains a welcome event. It is possibly the first compilation of its *genre* prepared entirely by local scholars. It thus marks a further step in the emergence of Malaysian scholarship. To establish an identity of its own, it will be necessary to encourage more writing by local scholars, and perhaps, more importantly, to break with positivist tradition dominating Western social science in general, and the cultural chauvinism pervading orientalism in particular.

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