

should be read and studied by those who are concerned with the educational development of the Malays. By doing so, they will not repeat the "mistakes" of the colonial education system. The author suggests that the key to modern Malay literacy (as opposed to orality) lies in the understanding that the right approach is not to impose Western concepts of literacy, but rather by starting from the point of understanding the oral background of the Malays and proceeding from there. From personal experience I have found that Western-style education is not well understood by some Malay graduates. At least one of them wrote in reply to my article on university education that a student would be better off if he was plied with as much knowledge as possible while he was in the university.

A Full Hearing is not a book on a specific subject like folklore, literature, or language, yet it contains useful views and findings on many aspects of Malay Studies. Although a little diffuse, one can still see the common thread that is woven through a tapestry of many things the authors has to say: that the oral thought patterns and processes are still retained by the Malay, even if literacy exists in his culture and the modern form is being propagated widely. The book is thought-provoking, nevertheless, and the scholar of Malay Studies will be the poorer if he misses it.

Mohd. Taib OSMAN
University of Malaya
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

TAN CHEE BENG. *The Baba of Melaka: Culture and Identity of a Chinese Peranakan Community in Malaysia*. 46300 Petaling Jaya, Malaysia: Pelanduk Publications, 1988. xxi+297 pages. Plates, charts, appendices, bibliography, index. Paperback, US\$29.00, ISBN 967-978-155-0, Hardcover ISBN 967-978-219-0.

The publication of a serious monograph on Malaysian Peranakan Chinese by a local-born Chinese anthropologist is good news, not only for anthropologists whose field of specialization is Malaysia, but also for those many readers who have an interest in acculturation and the study of comparative culture. This publication is based on the work submitted for his degree by Dr. Tan at Cornell University. His description and analysis is based on information gathered through his own fieldwork (continuing from the latter part of the 1970s and into the early 1980s), all the more reliable given the author's proficiency in the native Baba language. In addition, the author's solid research framework and his careful use of reference materials make the resulting work most rewarding.

Melaka, the area studied by Tan, is the area formerly occupied by the Malacca Kingdom. Later, as part of the Straits Settlement under British colonization, it was one of the areas in which there was early settlement by Chinese immigrants. The children and descendants of the offspring of Chinese immigrants and local Malay women are called "Peranakan" in Malay. "Baba" refers to the Chinese descendants among the Peranakan who have not maintained the use of the Chinese language. (However, descendants of Chinese immigrants from the third generation on who do not speak Chinese are also referred to as Baba.) Baba speak Baba Malay, and many are also fluent in English. Although their knowledge of the Chinese language is very limited (many are descended from immigrants from the province of Fujian), they are proud of their "Chinese heritage." Thus "Baba" is a label which refers more to

a group defined by cultural rather than racial characteristics; it refers to a sub-ethnic group which should be classified by ethnicity based on language, daily customs, and a consciousness of ethnic identity.

As for the structure of this study, after the introduction chapters 1 and 2 give an overview of Baba history and demography, outlining the basic structure of the Baba community and the process whereby it was formed. Chapters 3 through 8 concern the main theme of this study, i.e. what are the Baba? Tan presents the Baba's ethnic identity (ch. 3), their language (ch. 4), their customs and religion (chs. 5 and 6), kinship (ch. 7), and ethnic change (ch. 8).

Tan writes concerning Baba ethnic identity that "Baba are both 'Baba' and 'Chinese'" (89); i.e., they have a double identity. He then comments on the process of acculturation as reflected in the case of the Baba. Acculturation does not necessarily imply a total assimilation into the host culture. Tan reaffirms Paden's idea that in multi-ethnic societies a "situational ethnicity" is brought forth at the level of the individual.

Chapter 5 focuses on the fact that the Baba share Chinese folk religion with non-Baba Chinese, and that the Baba ethnic identity is both Baba and Chinese. Chapter 6 on death rituals shows that Islam and Chinese religion are conspicuous symbols which indicate ethnic boundary and ethnic identity. Baba are more active than non-Baba Chinese in maintaining traditional rituals which have filial piety as their core. Also, although traditional rituals have been influenced somewhat by Malay culture, the world view and ethos remain practically unchanged. Chinese customs and Chinese religious ideology are steadily maintained, almost as a substitute for the loss of Chinese language, and act to strengthen Chinese identity. As the author of several studies on Chinese religion, including one in this journal, Tan's strengths are clearly revealed in these two chapters.

As a conclusion, I was impressed with the effectiveness of Tan's work, and it seems that he is indirectly criticizing the Malaysian Bumiputra-policy through his study of the Baba.

This study is not only a comprehensive ethnography of the Baba, but also contributes (with the Baba as an example) to the discussion of the relationship between acculturation and ethnic identity. The author is himself a Chinese Malaysian; he contributes theoretically to this theme through discussing it from his individual point of view. How worthwhile it is to learn about the special characteristics of the Baba and compare them to Chinese descendants in other areas: the Peranakan Chinese in Indonesia, the Luk Chin of Thailand, and Chinese descendants in North America, Hawaii, and Japan; this is the impression I get from Tan's study.

Kazuo YOSHIHARA
Kinki University
Osaka

INDIA

BLACKBURN, STUART H. *Singing of Birth and Death. Texts in Performance.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988. xxiv+263 pages. Maps, plates, figures, glossary, bibliography, index. Cloth US\$31.95; ISBN 0-8122-8097-0.

At the tip of South India, in a remarkably self-contained geo-cultural region called