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PROLETARIANIZATION, INDUSTRIALIZATION AND
URBANIZATION IN ASIA:
A CASE STUDY OF MALAYSIA

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Sinopsis

Proses pembandaran di Asia Tenggara sejak beberapa lama telah digambarkan sebagai proses pembandaran yang palsu kerana penyimpangannya daripada pola proses pembandaran di negara-negara maju yang dicirikan oleh perkembangan industri. Rencana ini mempersoalkan gambaran yang pesimistik itu, kerana sejak tahun-tahun enam puluhan terdapat bukti-bukti yang nyata bahawa proses pembandaran di Asia Tenggara mulai mengalami pola perkembangan yang pelbagai rupa. Proses tersebut dicirikan juga oleh perkembangan industri, selain daripada penyediaan bahan-bahan mentah dan separuh-mentah semata-mata. Rencana ini seterusnya menghuraikan beberapa faktor bagi perkembangan tersebut, yakni perkembangan dalam industri pengangkutan eksport, perkembangan jenis-jenis hasil tertentu, perubahan dasar tarif negara-negara maju, bandingan kadar gaji, and keadaan tenaga buruh. Satu perkembangan yang amat menarik sehubungan dengan perkembangan baru ini ialah semakin meluasnya penyertaan wanita dalam tenaga buruh. Hal ini dijangka akan mempunyai kesan yang mendalam terhadap proses proletarianisasi penduduk desa di Asia Tenggara.

Synopsis

For a while now, urbanisation in Southeast Asia has been described as 'pseudo-urbanisation' because of its diversion from the known patterns of urbanisation in developed countries which are characterised by industrial developments. This article throws into doubts some of the arguments of pseudo-urbanization, because since the sixties sufficient evidence have emerged to show that the process of urbanization in Southeast Asia has taken divergent patterns. The process has ceased to be confined to the supply of raw and semi-processed materials alone, but is also characterised by industrial developments. The article further enumerates the various factors for the development: changes in export transportation industries, development of certain products, changes in the tariff policies of developed countries, relative wage costs, and labour power. One interesting development that emanates from these changes is the increasing participation of women in the labour force. It is expected that this development will have far-reaching consequences on the proletarianisation of the rural population in Southeast Asia.

Introduction

The genesis of this paper grew out of a return visit to one of the squatter kampungs in Kuala Lumpur where I had carried out research in the early sixties (McGee, 1969). At that time there had been virtually no one employed in factory employment. The men of the kampung were the principal income earners working as drivers, gardeners and low-paid civil servants. A few of the women worked as domestic servants, or in unskilled occupations, but most remained housewives. By 1979 this picture had radically changed. While the occupations of the men had shown some diversification and upgrading it was the entry of women into the labour force who were engaged in work in the nearby factories which was of most importance. While it is obviously hazardous to infer too much from such a small case study it spurred me on to attempt an overview paper on the relationship between the industrialization and proletarianization and urbanization processes in the Asian market economies.

Writing in 1967 specifically about Southeast Asia and utilising data culled largely from the 1960 round of censuses I was profoundly pessimistic concerning the prospects of the urban transformation in Southeast Asia particularly as it related to labour absorption. So much so that I labeled the urbanization process "pseudo-urbanization" indicating that the mix of demographic, economic and social factors were operating in a different manner to the Western developed countries. High rates of city migration and the type of economic growth was creating insufficient employment opportunities in the wage earning sector leading to a proliferation of people in low-income tertiary sectors. In such a situation it seemed that urban transformation was unlikely to occur unless there were radical structural changes throughout the economy. (McGee, 1967)¹.

However by the early nineteen seventies it was clear that a much more divergent pattern of urbanization was emerging in the region with some countries such as Malaysia and Singapore experiencing a rapid growth of manufacturing. Writing about this process in Southeast Asia I drew attention to these diverging paths of urbanization within the region indicating how it was modifying the homogeneous picture of the early sixties. (McGee, 1971abc).

¹This position was challenged in a series of papers given by Dotson at various SEADAG meetings. Dotson argued that urbanization in Southeast Asia was the catalyst that would bring about development. See Dotson, 1972.

Almost a decade later although we have not yet comprehensive census data² it would appear that these trends have been further accentuated. As Table 1 shows a majority of Asian countries show a remarkable increase in the employment in industry and it is only in the more lowly urbanized countries such as India and Indonesia that this development is not marked.

While it is clear that these divergent urban trajectories have been brought about by a complex mixture of resource endowments, demographic characteristics, historical patterns of incorporation into the international economy, types of technological development and particular development ideologies adopted by countries there have been few attempts to explore what role the industrialisation process has played in contributing to these divergent patterns.³ In the next section we will explore this question.

Urbanization and Industrialization: The Main Components of The Relationship

One of the most persistent generalizations concerning the urban transformation in the developed countries is the assertion that it rested upon a series of technological and productive changes which led to a large growth in industrial and agricultural production. These changes led to a change in the occupational composition of the population of these countries from agriculture to a dominance of non-agricultural pursuits and an increasing concentration of people in urban places. While there was great variation in the temporal sequence of this process in the developed countries there is no doubt that this process was the basis upon which the urban transformation was accomplished.

In the context of the less developed countries it has been asserted that this relationship between industrialization and urbanization is very different. The historical incorporation of these countries into the world economic system has led to a sharp division of economic activity in which the Third World countries have become largely suppliers of raw or semi-processed materials to the developed countries, and importers of manufactured goods from the developed

²The problems of accurate definition of the labour force participation in various industrial sectors is very complicated in the Asian context where many people engage in more than one activity and household labour inputs are not always recorded adequately. (See Hauser, 1971, 1972) and McGee (1979, 1980) and 1980 and Breman (1976, 1978).

³The most comprehensive discussions have emerged in a series of studies by Lo and Salih (1978, 1979) which develop a broad model of the types of Asian economies taking into account these various factors.

Table 1
Selected Data of Asian Market Economies

	Population (millions)	Average Annual Growth of Population	Percentage of Total Population	Urban Population	Average Annual Growth Rate of Urban Population	Percentage of Labour Force in			
						Agriculture	Industry	Services	
	1960-70	1970-77	1960	1960-70	1970-75	1960	1977	1960	1977
Type I									
Hong Kong	4.5	2.5	89	90	3.1	1.7	52	57	40
Singapore	2.3	2.4	100	100	2.4	1.5	8	2	69
Taiwan	16.8	2.7	36	51	3.7	3.0	56	34	33
Korea Rep.	36.0	2.4	28	49	6.2	4.7	66	45	33
Type II									
Malaysia	13.0	2.9	25	49	3.5	4.6	63	44	25
Philippines	44.5	3.0	25	30	4.2	4.7	61	51	24
Type III									
Thailand	43.8	3.1	12	14	4.7	5.3	84	77	12
Sri Lanka	14.1	2.4	18	24	4.4	4.2	56	54	31
Type IV									
Bangladesh	81.2	2.9	5	9	4.7	10.9	87	78	10
Burma	31.5	2.2	19	25	3.7	4.7	68	55	19
India	631.7	2.3	18	21	3.5	3.7	73	73	21
Indonesia	133.5	2.2	15	18	3.7	6.2	75	60	17
Pakistan	74.1	2.4	17	24	4.5	5.2	61	58	21

Source: William Dillinger, *A National Urban Data File for 114 Countries* (Washington: World Bank, 1979) (Urban and regional report; no. 79-5); and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, *World Development Report* (Washington, 1979).

countries. There is very little development of indigenous industry. This has meant that the urbanization process is very different with a growth of large urban places which act as the foci in the funneling of these commodities to and from the Third World countries. The occupational structure of these cities is highly concentrated in the tertiary sector and the overall levels of urbanization remain low. Rapid population increase resulting in rural-urban migration and high rates of natural increase in the cities have further exacerbated this situation in Third World cities leading to considerable pessimism as to the likelihood of urban transformation in many Third World countries.

While this contrast may have been true of the decade of the fifties for the market economies of Asia there is increasing evidence that this situation is undergoing considerable change. In the period between 1960 and 1977 industrialization has been growing quite rapidly in many of these countries. Table 2 shows that virtually every Asian market economy has experienced a sizeable increase in the contribution of industry to the Gross Domestic Product. Care should be taken in interpreting these figures, however, for they include many different types of industrial production which have different locational and employment effects. For instance, Thailand shows an 11%

Table 2
Selected Asian Market Economies, Structural Contrasts in the Distribution of the Gross Domestic Product, Grouped by Urbanization Trajectories.

	Agriculture		Industry		Manufacturing		Services	
	1960	1977	1960	1977	1960	1977	1960	1977
Type I								
Hong Kong	4	2	34	31	25	26	62	67
Singapore	4	2	18	35	12	25	78	63
Taiwan	28	12	29	46	22	37	43	42
Korea Rep.	40	27	19	35	12	25	41	38
Type II								
Malaysia	37	26	18	29	9	18	45	45
Philippines	26	29	28	35	20	25	46	36
Type III								
Thailand	41	27	18	29	11	20	41	44
Sri Lanka	38	39	16	21	11	15	46	40
Type IV								
Bangladesh	61	55	8	13	6	7	31	32
India	50	37	20	25	14	16	30	38
Pakistan	46	33	15	23	12	16	38	44
Indonesia	54	31	14	34	8	9	32	35
Burma	33	47	12	11	8	9	55	42

increase in the contribution of industry to Gross Domestic Product which is identical to that of Malaysia. But in the case of Malaysia is almost entirely due to urban located industrial activity while in Thailand this represents semi-processed agricultural materials, e.g. lumber milling or rice milling.

In Table 3 I have attempted to show the considerable diversity of the industrialization process and its locational, linkage and economic effects.⁴ It should be stressed that this table represents a very simplified picture of the process of industrialization and makes no attempt to introduce any temporal phasing into the descriptive typology. In fact most Asian market economies have pursued industrialization strategies by first encouraging import substitution, particularly in the production of consumer durables.⁵ There was also an important distinction in the product mix in this process of import substitution. In a country such as India considerable effort has been made to build up the iron and steel industry as a basis for the development of a significant capital goods industry which has enabled that country to become one of the major Third World producers of capital goods (Mitra, 1979). South Korea has entered by another path beginning to develop its capital goods industry after its substantial development of lower order exports (Kas, 1980)

On the other hand most other Asian market economies have followed policies of import substitution of consumer durables which often involved assembly of imported components. This form of industry is highly concentrated in the major cities close to the major market made up of a growing middle and upper income class. Malaysia and the Philippines were very active in encouraging this activity in the late fifties and sixties. It was certainly an important factor in the growth of the major metropolitan areas in many Asian centres although the high capital/labour ratio did not always lead to rapid labour absorption particularly in the light of the very rapid growth of the labour force. Finally while both forward and backward linkages have developed for different products subject to import substitution policies (for instance, the Malaysian motor car assembly industry has an increasing local content). This has not been sufficient to see a significant flourishing of local industry in most Asian countries.

During the nineteen sixties and seventies there has also been a considerable growth of export-orientated industries in many Asian countries which has important implications for the urban structure.

⁴This table is based on the work of R. Torchinsky (1980).

⁵This was not true of the city-state of Hong Kong.

Table 3
The Industrialization Process in Asia

Type of Industry and Ownership	Location	Linkages	Effects	Examples
A) Commodity processing				
1) TNC owned	1) At or close to raw material site	Backward linkages Local materials	Small and large scale industry	All Asian Market Economies
2) Local ownership	2) Near transport			
B) Capital goods prod.				
1) State	1) Often special towns	Backward & forward linkages	Capital intensive proletariat. Creates additional employment through linkages	India
2) Local ownership	2) Near transport			
3) TNC's (?)				
C) Import substitution				
1) TNC owned	1) Major cities	Possibility of forward linkages	Capital intensive proletariat	Malaysia Philippines
2) Local large scale	2) Near market — particularly high income purchases 3) Industrial estates	limited backward linkages		
D) Export production				
1) TNC owned (Assembly operations)	1) Export processing zones — various urban locations 2) Major cities	None (import material export products)	Foreign Enclave proletarianized labour provides job opportunities — labour intensive	Taiwan Malaysia Singapore
2) Local Ownership — sub-contractors	1) Export processing zones 2) Major cities	Possibility of backward linkages		Hong Kong
3) Local sub-contractors (also supply local markets)	1) Cities — small scale industry	Possibility of both backward & forward linkages	Linked to local economy	Taiwan Korea Hong Kong

There is little doubt the value of manufactured exports from the less developed countries has increased substantially. In the period between 1965 and 1975 these exports increased from 4.6 billion U.S. dollars to 33.2 billion U.S. dollars at the rate of 16.3 per cent compared to 10.8 per cent in the developed countries.⁶ Secondly, this increase was geographically most unevenly distributed with over 50 per cent of the increase occurring in the major Asian export platform economies of Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore. Thus between 1963 and 1976 the percentage of world export manufacturers contributed by these 4 countries rose from 1.37 to 4.10 per cent. Indeed in the period between 1970 and 1976 UNCTAD researchers have pointed out that this concentration was much higher for certain products. Thus Hong Kong and Korea alone accounted for almost 70 per cent of the increase in exports of clothing to developed countries in that period by the less developed countries. For miscellaneous light industrial products (electronics dominate) the figure was almost as high (UNCTAD, 1978: 11). Thirdly, while the product mix has been dominated by the textile, clothing and electronic products there has been an increase in both machinery, transport equipment and chemicals. Finally, while these increases have been considerable they only increased the share of the less developed countries' manufactured exports in the world total from 4.0 per cent to 7.4 per cent (Keesing, 1979: 24).

In order to understand these developments it is necessary to trace out some of the major changes in the international economy which have facilitated these developments. These changes are quite diverse and to a large extent account for the complex mixture of ownership and production processes that characterize the manufacturing export activities of the Asian market economies.

First, at the technological level developments in the transportation of goods have greatly facilitated the growth of export industries in the market economies of Asia. Most important in this respect is the "container revolution" and bulk air cargo carrying. Investments in the transportation infrastructure of Asian market economies, most notably in port handling equipment as well as improved airport facilities, have also enabled firms to take full advantage of these transportation developments.

Secondly the type of commodity being exported has an important influence on this process of industrialization in the market economies of Asia. For some products, particularly those associated with the

⁶These figures are cited in current U.S. dollars (see Table 6, Keesing, 1979: 12).

electronic industry it is possible to separate production processes rather than produce in one integrated unit at one location. This has meant that it has been possible to put out the labour intensive assembly parts of the production process into the export processing zones of the market economies of Asia. This has been further helped when the production is under the control of large Transnational Corporations who control the whole production process from the purchase of raw materials to the marketing of the produce (Helleines, 1975; Nayyar, 1978). Finished products which rely on labour intensive inputs such as textiles, toys, shoes, etc., are more likely to be produced by sub-contracting to local firms by large marketing firms in the developed countries (Watanabe, 1972; Sharpston, 1973).

A third factor of considerable importance has been the tariff policies of the developed countries. The adoption of U.S. Tariff Items 807.00 and 806.30 has been responsible for a considerable growth of export industry in the market economies of Asia (Finger, 1975). It is no coincidence that this move occurred at a time of growing shortages of 'unskilled labour' and rise in wages in many of the industrialized countries. The existence of other special arrangements, as for instance, the special relationship of Hong Kong with Britain are also examples of this process. It should not be imagined however that the developed countries have lowered tariff barriers completely and in the current recession there is much pressure to reestablish tariff barriers. This will certainly encourage Asian exporters to seek markets in order Third World countries.

Fourthly there is the factor of relative wage costs. Virtually every writer on this subject emphasizes the fact that wages in the less developed countries are very much less than those earned in the developed countries. Ratios of U.S. earnings to those of market economies of Asia are often ten times as great for the same job. In addition the low degree of unionization often positively encouraged by the State means that wage rates are rising only slowly in the Asian countries and the labour force is a much less active in demanding improvements in its working conditions (Helleiner, 1973ab)

Finally there is the factor of *labour power*. This expansion of export processing into the Asian region is largely motivated by the attraction of cheap labour. The wages which are paid in these countries are approximately 10 to 20% of those paid for the same job in traditional industrialized countries; the working day (week or year) is considerably longer and shift work and Sunday work are common. Because of the "decomposing process" in production

and the relatively short-time it takes to train a new worker it is relatively easy to hire and fire workers and finally because these firms are drawing from a large surplus labour force this further facilitates this process (see Froebel, et. al., 1980 for further documentation).

It is also true that governments have often discouraged the activities of unions which might have acted to help the condition of the workers. Thus in Malaysia which has well established trade union legislation many newly established firms have been accorded tax and trade incentives under the 'pioneer enterprise' section of the Industrial Relations Act of 1967 as amended in 1971 which includes a provision that 'conditions of service more favourable' than those established in the Employment Ordinance of 1955, has been used to prevent the formation of unions.

In Singapore where foreign investment has not prevented unionization a somewhat similar situation existed from 1968 when the basic labour law has abrogated the union's right to challenge management over promotion, transfer assignment layoff or reinstatement of employees. This leaves little for the union to accomplish (see Kassalowo, 1978).

This brief review has traced the main elements of the growth of industrialization in the market economies of Asia. In the last section we shall attempt to show how this industrialization process is related to the different urbanization patterns.

Industrialization and Urbanization in Asia: Evolving Patterns

The effects of industrialization on the urban patterns can be discussed in terms of the various types of industry and ownership outlined in Table 3. The first category of commodity processing occurs throughout Asia and is variously controlled by both international and local firms. But it tends to be more important in the countries such as Thailand, Bangladesh and Indonesia engaged in Type 3 and 4 urbanization trajectories in which a majority of people are engaged in rural occupations and urbanization rates are low. As

Table 4
Employed Males, Females in the Manufacturing Sector of Peninsular Malaysia,
1957 — 1976

	Total	Male	Female
1957	135,382	112,837 (83%)	22,545 (17%)
1970	251,939	178,881 (71%)	73,058 (29%)
1976	584,341	342,828 (59%)	241,513 (41%)

(After Ariffin, 1981)

backward linkages to the raw materials are paramount, plants are often located close to the site of supply. They are therefore important sources of employment generation in rural areas and have little impact on the urban hierarchy. This form of industrial production clearly represents better opportunities for integrated decentralized production.

The second category of capital goods production is most advanced in India which has created a substantial industrial base which has generated both forward and backward linkages. This had led to the creation of new industrial towns and the building-up of a local machinery industry, etc. While these activities are capital-intensive it can be argued that its multiplier effect on employment is considerable and has greatly increased employment in manufacturing of consumer durables in large urban centres.⁷

Thirdly there are the import substitution industries which have generally been located close to the large urban centres such as Kuala Lumpur and Manila where the market for these commodities, particularly among middle and upper income residents is in existence. While there are many doubts as to the employment generating capacity of this form of industrialization, partly because it is generally capital-intensive and partly because it has often been "nuts and bolts" assembly of imported parts, there can be little doubt that this form of industrialization has contributed to the growth of the large metropolitan centres.

Fourthly there are the various categories of locally owned sub-contracting firms which are of major importance in Taiwan, Korea and Hong Kong. It has been argued recently that this form of production is increasing at the expense of Transnational Corporation ownership (Helleiner, 1979). This form of industrialization is particularly common in Taiwan, Korea and Hong Kong where improvements in transportation have allowed the growth of this industry in rural locations where there is often a close relationship with the rural labour force. Generally such activities locate in the large cities although there are some possibilities of smaller city locations where local materials are important. Another example of this type of development has been described by Watanabe with respect to the Kimono industry in Korea (Watanabe, 1972b).

⁷Census data has not always been helpful in indicating this increase in manufacturing employment. Joshi (1980) reports how a failure to include areas adjacent to Bombay in surveys led to a gross under-estimate of employment in manufacturing.

Export Processing Zones and Urbanization: Female Proletarianization in Malaysia

A final category of industry which needs special treatment because of its implications to urbanization and the process of proletarianization in Asian cities is the growth of export manufacturing. In this process transnational corporation subsidiary plants are primarily involved in assembly operations. These plants are often established in export processing zones which are typically built close to large transportation facilities (ports, airports). Virtually all inputs are imported and the majority of processed outputs are exported so that the zones are totally integrated into the international economy. There has been a rapid growth of these export zones in Asia over the last decade and they now number forth (Ho, 1980). Many of these export zones have been located outside the major metropolitan centres. Thus seven of Malaysia's nine Free Export Zones are located outside the Kuala Lumpur Metropolitan area. The growth of these forms of export, together with other manufacturing, has led to increases in employment. For instance employment in manufacturing in Singapore and Malaysia was estimated to have increased by well over 100,000 in each country between 1970 and 1975 (UNO, 1977: 44). There is considerable evidence which will be presumably verified in the decadal round of censuses of 1980 — 81 that much employment generated in this activity is made up of female workers, often additional workers, which has presumably led to an increase in household income.

It is this significant process of the proletarianization of women that I wish to analyze in greater detail. While we do not have figures for all Asian countries Frobel et al (1980: 307) has estimated that in 1975 some 725,000 workers were working in what he labels world market factories in the Third World, both inside and outside free export zones, of which approximately 420,000 workers were from Asia. While we do not have precise figures for male/female employment to link with this data there is overwhelming evidence that particularly in the garment and electronic assembly and food processing industries women now dominate the workforce. For instance of the 13,874 workers in the Bayan Lepas Free Zone, Malaysia in 1974 83% were women. In the garment and electronics industry of the Phillippines 90% of the workers are females (Paglaban, 1978: 18). These figures are repeated elsewhere in Asia and have important implications for the growth of urban labour force and proletarianization in Asia. These trends are analyzed in greater detail with respect to Peninsular

Malaysia in the next section. Early research on the labour force activities of women in Malaysia has been carried out by Gavin Jones (1965) and Fong (1975) which seemed to support declining female labour force participation until 1957, except for a slight upturn among younger females (18 — 24 years) in urban areas. A later paper by Hirschman and Akbar comparing 1957 and 1970 census data began to indicate increasing participation in urban areas. More recently work of Lim (1978) and Ariffin (1980; 1981) have provided much more detailed information on female workers in urban areas, particularly those engaged in manufacturing.

Ariffin points out that manufacturing has been one of the fastest growing sectors in the peninsular Malaysian economy. Utilising data from the 1976 labour survey she shows that between 1957 and 1976 the employment in the manufacturing sector has grown dramatically by more than 30%. But most significant has been the increase in female labour (912%) which has seen their proportion in the manufacturing labour force grow from 17% in 1957 to 41% in 1976.

Table 5

Employed Males — Females in the Manufacturing Sector: Peninsular Malaysia (1957-76) by Race

Year	Total	Malay			Chinese			Indian		
		Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
1957	135,382	26,588	17,699	8,889 (39.4%)	97,502	84,054	13,448 (59.6%)	10,086	9,937	149 (0.7%)
1970	251,939	73,051	45,012	27,949 (38.3%)	164,497	120,758	43,739 (59.9%)	13,254	12,061	1,193 (1.6%)
1976	584,341	210,868	101,097	109,771 (45.5%)	328,985	209,453	119,532 (49.4%)	41,005	29,415	11,590 (4.8%)

Note: OTHERS have been excluded from this table so numbers do not add up exactly.

Source: Ariffin, 1981.

In the context of Malaysian political economy this is a revolution of major consequence for it involves the introduction of a growing number previously rural dwellers into urban factories. The growing number of Malay female workers is also of major importance. Table 5 shows that the most significant increase in the racial mix of this labour force has been the growth of Malay female workers who have increased their numbers in manufacturing from 9,000 in 1957 to some 110,000 in 1976. This means they now have almost as many female workers as the Chinese who are much more highly urbanized.

Working in the early nineteen sixties few researchers would have

predicted this remarkable increase in female and particularly Malay female participation in manufacturing.

What are the reasons for these patterns emerging? In part they are a reflection of the trends we have discussed earlier in the paper which have emphasized the role of government incentive and the expansion of multi-national industry. Another factor which should be emphasized is the operation of the New Economic Policy on Malaysia begun in 1970 after the disastrous riots of 1969. At least one part of that policy has been the enforcement of rules for new industries (with pioneer status) that ensure that 30 per cent of their workforce should consist of Malay workers. Ariffin report that "... since its implementation, reports on the composition of the labour force of manufacturing industries showed that more than 50 per cent of their unskilled workers are Malays and in the case of firms employing a majority of female workers most of them are Malay girls from rural areas (Ariffin, 1981: 19).

While these are more general features of Malay female participation in the labour force a closer analysis of recruitment systems, the work and payment system, job security and occupational mobility and the factory socio-cultural system provides more specific information on the process of proletarianization among these workers.

While the majority of firms do recruit in urban areas there is also increasing evidence that they recruit in rural areas and have greatly speeded up the rate and volume of single Malay female migration to urban areas. These labour-intensive firms prefer rural labour for it can be dislocated from its social context and the labour force is more pliable. Secondly they prefer female labour because they pay lower wages than males and because females are said to be more dextrous at assembly operations. They also prefer female workers because they can be easily dismissed and learn the skills (2 weeks) more rapidly. Studies in Malaysia and elsewhere⁸ indicate that there are substantial differences between the work situation in Japanese and American owned factories.

It is perhaps too early to estimate what effect this process of proletarianization will have on Malayan society. But some commentators have argued in the Malaysian context that the creation of a Malay proletariat in urban areas raises the prospects for an emerging non-racial working class front. Whether, in fact, given the special nature of Malaysian society and politics this will occur is

⁸Grossman (1978) and Safa (1980) have both discussed the manner by which Management "controls" female labour in these factories.

for the future is speculation but there can be no doubts that this growth of manufacturing has important consequences for the cities and societies of Malaysian.

Conclusion

Clearly this growth of proletarianization in Asian cities is an important trend which throws into doubts some of the arguments of 'urban involution' which the author made over a decade ago. But one should also not place too much emphasis on this form of industrialization as a means of changing the class structure of Asian cities. The footloose nature of many of these manufacturing firms⁹ coupled with current recessionary trends in the world economy raise real doubts as to the permanency of this process of proletarianization. For much of Asia it would seem the rural revolution will still have to precede the industrial revolution if a genuine established urban proletariat is to emerge.

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⁹Singh's (1979) discussion is of particular value with respect to this assertion.

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