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NOTES ON CHINESE AGRICULTURAL COLONIZATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

With 1 figure

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Zusammenfassung: Zur chinesischen Agrarkolonisation in Südost-Asien

Unter allen Einwanderer-Gruppen in Südost-Asien sind die Chinesen die bedeutendste, insbesondere was ihre Rolle als Vermittler zwischen der Agrarproduktion und dem weltweiten Handelssystem betrifft. Neben dieser traditionellen Funktion spielten die Chinesen zusätzlich eine Rolle bei der landwirtschaftlichen Kolonisation. Obwohl die Beteiligung an der landwirtschaftlichen Produktion in der Vergangenheit stärker war als heute, so existieren doch noch einige bemerkenswerte Überreste früherer chinesischer Agrarkolonisation. Diese Überreste stammen vornehmlich aus dem Beginn dieses Jahrhunderts, als die Formen landwirtschaftlicher „Raubwirtschaft" von einer mehr permanenten Landbewirtschaftung in Betrieben abgelöst wurde, von denen sich noch zahlreiche in chinesischer Hand befinden. Neben diesen bis in die Gegenwart fortdauernden Beispielen chinesischer Agrarkolonisation gibt es auch solche, bei denen die Kontinuität unterbrochen wurde, bei denen chinesische Betriebe und die chinesische Bevölkerung wenige oder gar keine Spuren hinterlassen haben.

Mit der Ausnahme von Vietnam waren die landwirtschaftlichen Kolonien der Chinesen in Südost-Asien niemals Kolonien Chinas. Sie waren vielmehr relativ kleine Regionen, die Ländereien, Dörfer und Städte umfaßten, in vielen Fällen unabhängig oder halb-unabhängig waren oder zuweilen von Chinesen unter der Oberherrschaft eines autochthonen Landesherrn regiert wurden. In den meisten Fällen wurde die chinesische Bevölkerung in diesen Kolonien von einer einzigen Dialektgruppe gestellt. Jede Kolonie war hinsichtlich der grundlegenden Nahrungsmittel und Lebensbedürfnisse autark und produzierte darüber hinaus einige Güter für den Export.

Frühe Berichte zur chinesischen Siedlungstätigkeit sind vage. Obwohl Chinesen mindestens seit dem 4. Jh. n. Chr. in der Region reisten, erscheint der erste Hinweis auf eine Kolonisationstätigkeit (in Java) nicht vor dem 10. Jh. Ein Hauptteil des Aufsatzes untersucht die Hinweise auf Kolonien vor der Mitte des 19. Jhs. Zu den Beispielen zählen die Kolonien von Bantey Mas, Ayodhya (später Ayuthia), Java, Terengganu (malayische Halbinsel), die Fälle der christlichen Chinesen-Siedlungen auf Luzon oder auch die Kolonien in Sulu, Brunei sowie im nördlichen und westlichen Borneo. Seit etwa der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts wurde die politische Landkarte der Region nachhaltig verändert, da der von den westlichen Kolonialmächten kontrollierte Bereich von den ursprünglich isolierten Stützpunkten aus expandierte. Konfrontiert mit häufig dünn besiedelten Territorien und unter dem Druck, aus diesen Einkünfte ziehen zu müssen, bedienten sich die Kolonialverwaltungen häufig chinesischer Siedler, um mit deren

Hilfe die Gebiete zu bevölkern und zu entwickeln. Die Wanderungen wurden durch die Regierungen in der Regel zwar nicht finanziell unterstützt, sie sorgten jedoch für die grundlegenden administrativen Strukturen, insbesondere bei der Verwaltung der Ländereien, zur Bewältigung der auftretenden Probleme. Spezifische Beispiele, die im Detail diskutiert werden, umfassen Indochina, Burma, Siam (Thailand), Sumatra, die malayische Halbinsel und Borneo. Die Philippinen - aufgrund eines strengen Verbotes von seiten der Regierung -, Java und die östlichen Inseln des damaligen Holländisch Ostindien spielten nur eine geringe bzw. gar keine Rolle in dieser recht großräumigen Entwicklung der landwirtschaftlichen Kolonisation. Die Untersuchung führt zu dem Schluß, daß der gegenwärtige Erkenntnisstand zu diesem Themenbereich eher lückenhaft ist, sowohl was den räumlichen als auch den zeitlichen Aspekt betrifft.

Of all the groups which contribute to Southeast Asia's rich and variegated patterns of life the Chinese are among the most important, not so much because of their numbers but because of their function as intermediaries between the evolving world economic system and traditional systems, which, over several centuries, have steadily been drawn into that world system. Though there must be some doubt as to who is Chinese, particularly in Thailand where ethnic mixing has long been the rule as much as the exception, the overall ratio of Chinese to non-Chinese is probably closer to one in 20 than one in ten. But numbers alone are misleading for the 'intermediary' function, which has existed in the region for at least a millenium, has allowed a considerable concentration of wealth and power in Chinese hands, though there are almost insuperable difficulties in the way of estimating just what that concentration might be. As the economies in the region have developed, with the notable exception of Burma, and more recently, of the countries of Indochina, people of Chinese descent have probably been more able to move away from agriculture, agriculturally-based trade and industry, into other, often more-remunerative fields.

In the past, however, partly because all economies were basically agricultural, Chinese involvement in agricultural production as well as trade was greater than it now is though there are significant survivals.

These modern survivals date mainly from the early decades of this century when highly-exploitative and environmentally-damaging forms of agricultural *Raubwirtschaft* such as manioc or pepper and gambier cultivation began to give way to more permanent forms of enterprise such the growing of rubber, coconuts, coffee, pineapples and sisal. In Peninsular Malaysia, for example, Chinese own about half of all rubber smallholdings as well as having managerial control over significant areas of estates (Barlow 1978, 231, 446-7). While no data are available, many of these holdings were originally carved from wasteland by Chinese pioneers. In Sabah, Chinese interests still own significant numbers of both small estates and smallholdings originally developed from forested land under the administration of the British North Borneo Company.

These modern survivals of agricultural colonization are paralleled by a fair number of cases where such colonization has not survived to the present, where indeed, Chinese enterprise and the Chinese themselves have left little or no trace. The reasons for such 'disappearances' are complex, reflecting acts of war, reflecting ethnic absorption facilitated by often strongly-masculine sex ratios amongst Chinese immigrants, reflecting upwards class mobility or shifts from agricultural production to processing and trade.

The purpose of this paper is thus to focus upon some of the lesser-known examples of Chinese agricultural colonization in the region. In bringing these into focus no claim of exhaustiveness can be made for sources are often fragmentary and uncorroborated. Nor are they balanced as to origin since those in European languages, English especially, far outweigh those in the language of the settlers themselves.

Nature of Chinese colonization

The agricultural colonies founded by Chinese were, if one excepts Vietnam from 181 B.C. until A.D. 939, never colonies of China. Rather they were larger or smaller areas of land surrounding towns and villages, also Chinese, in which most of the inhabitants were Chinese by origin. The degree of their political independence varied from place to place and from time to time, Bantey Mas (Ha Tien), founded at the end of the seventeenth century, was an enclave in the Kingdom of Siam to all intents independent (Gaspardone 1952, 367). In the Chinese districts of western Borneo, the Lan-Fang Presidency founded by the Hakka Lo Fang-pai in the 1770s was independent to the extent that, it is claimed, the local sultan recognized the suzerainty of the Lan-Fang President (Lo Hsiang-lin 1961, 1). Elsewhere in what is now part of Indonesia, Chinese also exercised political control at Pekalongan where Raffles (1814, 34) noted that this province of Java had long been under Chinese administration. In most of the Malay Peninsula, Chinese, mostly tin-miners, managed their own

Fig. 1: Southeast Asia: Places mentioned in the text. National boundaries are those of the present
Südost-Asien: Lage der im Text erwähnten Orte

affairs but never exercised political power except locally as 'Kapitans China', i.e. Chinese headmen. However, in the Phuket, Ranong and Singgora districts, which to this day contain significant numbers of Chinese farmers and miners, Chinese to all intents possessed the same powers as rajas elsewhere while remaining under the suzerainty and often-spasmodic supervision of the Siamese Crown (NEWBOLD, 1839/1971 II, 72).

The basic reason why these and other colonies of settlement never became colonies of imperial control was the Chinese Imperial policy of non-intervention outside the China's borders, a policy generally strictly adhered to[1]. Indeed, from the Imperial viewpoint, the Chinese diaspora was unwanted and illegal and it was only after the setting up of the Republican government in 1911 that the existence of the Overseas Chinese was officially recognised, for example by sending consular officials to such settlements as that of northern Chinese, near present-day Kota Kinabalu, a settlement that survived as a recognisable entity into the 1980s.

One particular feature of Chinese colonization is the marked degree to which local communities, often whole districts, comprised, almost exclusively, people of a single dialect group. The Hakka in western Borneo have already been mentioned, and in western

[1] One notable exception was the Chinese invasion of Burma in 1658–61. At the beginning of the Ching Dynasty 'great numbers' of Chinese were said to have settled in the Shan state but this seems not to have become a permanent affair.

Sarawak most settlers were also Hakka, many having come from Dutch-controlled areas to the south in the middle of the nineteenth century[2]. In Sarawak during the early years of the present century other dialect-based colonization schemes were promoted: Foochow-speaking farmers to Sungai Merah, near Sibu, Binatang and Sarikei; Hakka farmers direct from China settled near Kuching; Cantonese pepper-planters in the Sibu district; Henghua-speakers, brought in by a Methodist missionary, in the same district (JACKSON 1968, 59–61). Another mission settlement was that of Hakka in the Kudat Peninsula of North Borneo where the *Evangelische Missionsgesellschaft zu Basel* played an important organizing role. Other evidences of this strongly marked characteristic could be quoted though it should be remembered that evidence dates from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, earlier observers failing to distinguish amongst the many, often mutually-unintelligible dialect groups.

A further characteristic, and one that reflects changing economic conditions in the region, is that the earlier Chinese colonies were substantially self-sufficient in basic staples while nevertheless producing some agricultural (or mining) commodities for export. This characteristic seems to have persisted well into the nineteenth century in most parts of the region where slow and unreliable transportation, not to mention insecurity of life and property, hindered the emergence of specialized, market-oriented production. This had often to wait until the imposition of Western colonial rule though in some instances, such specialized forms of *Raubwirtschaft* as pepper and gambier or manioc production preceded actual control. One such case is the Negeri Sembilan (Peninsular Malaysia) before the 1870s where the presence of Chinese of British nationality in an independent 'native state' was a factor leading to British intervention.

Colonies founded prior to the early ninetheenth century

The earliest Chinese contacts with Southeast Asia extend into a distant past, so much so that no dates can be put upon them except for northern Vietnam as noted earlier. Chinese dynastic histories, provincial gazetteers and accounts of travellers, such as the pilgrim Fa Hsien who spent some time in Java at the end of the fourth century AD, all are almost totally silent on the question of Chiness settlers in the *Nanyang* – the 'South Seas' – for their presence, in official eyes was illegal and thus beneath notice. Nevertheless there are fragmentary reports. ABEL-RÉMUSAT (1836, 364) held that one reason for an increasing number of embassies to the Imperial Throne from the tenth century was a consequence of the 'établissements' that Chinese had formed in 'Ye pho ti', i. e. Java, settlers being called 'Tang' after the name of the dynasty under which this colonization had operated. The same author's translation of *Chen-la Fung Tau Ki,* a chronicle of Chen-la (Champa) in modern south-central Vietnam, possibly dating from the thirteenth century, suggests the presence of Chinese farmers (ABEL-RÉMUSAT 1829, I, 130). In the same general region CHARLES CHAPMAN (1778–9, fol. 32 r) speaks of a Chinese colony in the fifteenth century though this may be a simple error of dating, the late seventeenth century colony at Bantey Mas possibly being meant.

In a more speculative vein, BARING-GOULD and BAMPFYLDE (1909, 36–38) suggest an 'invasion' of Borneo in 1292 with the consequential establishment of a Chinese province. They speak of Ahmed, the second sultan of Brunei, taking as wife a Chinese from Kinabatangan, a toponym they identify as meaning 'Chinese river'. Earlier, LOGAN (1848, 2, 611) indicated that the *Sulu Annals* show that a Chinese, one 'Songtipeng' settled a Chinese colony in northern Borneo around 1375. Such speculations may have a basis in fact but they have not been followed up by modern scholarship which, however, confirms the existence of many trade links in these early times (see, for example, MEILINK-ROELOFSZ 1962).

Indochina

Though that part of northern Vietnam early known as 'Annam'[3] – the conquered territories – was under Chinese control for almost a millenium, actual colonization by Chinese was probably quite limited, it being a favoured destination during several dynasties for those sent into exile. Little is known, however, of specifically Chinese agricultural settlement until after

[2] As late as the early 1950s Hakkas comprised 89 and 83 per cent, respectively of Chinese in the Bau and Serian districts (TIEN JU-K'ANG 1953, 35).

[3] This territory was not conterminous with the Annam of French colonial times for it included much of the Red River plain (colonial Tonkin) and parts of the coastal plains of northern central Vietnam.

the fall of the Ming Dynasty in 1644 when some 3000 men, supporters of the deposed Ming Emperor fled south, eventually to show up on ship-board in Vietnamese waters. Having submitted to the Vietnamese emperor Hien-vuong they were sent beyond the then southern frontier where they extended nominal Viet sovereignty by displacing the Khmer population and settling in the regions of modern Bien-hoa, Ba-ria and My-tho. At Bien-hoa, as BOUDET (1942, 120) describes it, '. . . some gave themselves over to commerce, others to agriculture. The place was very well chosen and soon attracted not only natives but also Chinese, Malays, Japanese and even Europeans. A veritable hearth of Chinese civilization developed'. All these centres seems rapidly to have become polyglot but as to what may have been produced beyond rice, the presumed staple, the sources are silent. On the question of how long the 'veritable hearth of Chinese civilization' remained identifiably Chinese the sources are equally tacit.

A similar but later 'Chinese' colony was that at present-day Ha-tien known by its Khmer name of Bantey Mas, variously corrupted as Ponthiamas, Pontiamas, Ponteamas. This was founded at the end of the seventeenth century by a Cantonese adventurer one Mak Kau who attracted all manner of vagabonds, Chinese, Khmer, Malays and Chams, settling them on the land around the new fortified port. This settlement was subsequently sacked by the Siamese, perhaps, as WILLIAM DAMPIER noted in 1689, because they chose to use their weapons rather than their instruments of husbandry (DAMPIER 1717, II, 37)[4]. The settlement was reconstituted however, for Mak made an act of fealty to the Viet throne in 1708 (GASPARDONE 1952, 376)[5]. The original settlement was quite substantial, according to a Vietnamese source quoted in GASPARDONE (1952, 373–8) comprising seven communes though how large it was following its reconstitution is not known. The location of Bantey Mas in what was originally Cambodian territory laid it open to attack. The Siamese, however, effectively destroyed in 1771 though again it was partly reconstituted in the 1780s under Vietnamese administration. By the turn of the century the former colony was repopulated by Chinese, Vietnamese, Khmer and Malays. Though the Vietnamese emperor Gia-long appointed a descendant of Mak Kau to govern what was by then Ha-tien, it was now firmly Vietnamese. Like other Chinese colonies in the region, Bantey Mas, later Ha-tien, necessarily foundered upon the demographic realities of small number, lack of women in the original population and lack of significant contacts with the homeland and consequently of immigration which would have aided the maintenance of a specifically Chinese cultural identity.

Siam and Burma

Information on early Chinese settlement in Siam (now Thailand) is extremely scanty. Chinese were settled in ports and markets around the Gulf of Siam well before the thirteenth century. Many were able to move up the Thai social ladder to the extent of marrying into royalty. Uthong, the founder of Ayuthia in 1351, was Chinese on his father's side. But as to whether such folk can be considered part of colonization is another, unanswerable question though there is evidence of a considerable Chinese refugee community at Ayodhya, the forerunner of Ayuthia, in 1282. Given the strongly agricultural nature of the economy then it seems likely that most of these people were agriculturalists. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Chinese scarcely appear as a distinct group though DE LA LOUBÈRE (1693, 19) attributes to them the introduction of agriculture itself. The Abbé DE CHOISY (1741, 273) noted thriving agriculture and animal husbandry at Ayuthia in the 1680s noting also that the villages were inhabited by 'different nations' amongst which the Chinese may have been numbered. In 1745, PIERRE POIVRE estimated them to total 6000 within the Kingdom but was silent as to what they were doing there (MALLERET 1968, 73).

If records are scanty for Siam, they are positively exiguous for Burma, surprisingly so for a country long in direct, overland trade contact with China, albeit via a particularly difficult route. Chinese seem not to have been settled in the country in any number, except possibly for a few merchants in the Bhamo area though at old Amarapura (Ava) there is a report from the period from 1783 until c. 1808 of Chinese recently beginning to refine cane-sugar (SANGERMANO 1833, 149).

[4] PIERRE POIVRE, a French government agent, in a paper read in Lyon in 1768, spoke of the area as being uncultivated 'since about 50 years ago' (see GASPARDONE 1952, 367).

[5] BOUDET (1942, 122) however indicated that Mak reconstituted the settlement in 1715 making homage to the Viet throne in 1725. This is not the only point of disagreement between BOUDET and GASPARDONE. Mak died in 1735 but his rule was continued by his son.

The Western Archipelago: Java, Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula

Though there is good evidence of Chinese trade contacts at least as early as the seventh century, when the T'ang emperor sent a trade mission to the region, little is known of actual Chinese settlement until much later and even then this seems to have been substantially for trade rather than agriculture[6]. This pattern of involvement was solidified under Dutch colonial rule during some of which actual production was forbidden to the Chinese, who, in reality had little motivation to engage in it when trade was so profitable. During the seventeenth century, Chinese, like the Dutch and the British, were substantially involved in the pepper trade of Sumatra and western Java as the British East India Company records testify (see, for example, DANVERS a. FOSTER 1896–1900).

Nevertheless, there were Chinese growing various crops though whether they had developed waste lands under some form of organization or even formed distinct communities is unclear. SCOTT (1606/1964, 171) for example, picturesquely noted that, 'the Chinese do both plant, dresse and gather the pepper, and also sowe their rise; living as slaves under them [the Javanese]'. Similarly, STAVORINUS (1798/1969, III, 318), speaking of late eighteenth-century Java, noted Chinese farmers tilling the land. In the British enclave of Fort Marlborough (Benkulen) 'the more industrious Chinese colonists' were held by MARSDEN (1811, 79) to have been mor successful than the 'different gentlemen' who had laid out 'extensive plantations' of coconut, *pinang [Areca]* lime, and coffee-trees.

Further north, at Terengganu in the Peninsula, Chinese involvement in the production of export crops was noted by ALEXANDER HAMILTON early in the eighteenth century who specifically says, 'The ground is cultivated by the *Chinese* ...' who also exported pepper to an annual amount of 300 'Tuns' (HAMILTON 1727, 83). This, together with the fact that the town of Terengganu contained a substantial Chinese population (WANG 1960), points to their presence in significant numbers but not, as in Indochina, as a semi-independent colony. The group, though Hokkien in language, possibly originated from Guangdong Province as oral traditions and modern survivals indicate. However, the settlement of Marang, south of Kuala Terengganu, seems to have been at least a semi-independent colony growing rice for subsistence and pepper for export. But pepper, in the absence of manuring and stringent pest control, requires new soil every fifteen to twenty years, so that the Chinese settlers were forced to shift periodically (GOSLING 1964). These colonies remained as identifiable entities throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, during the early years of which pepper (and gambier) were dropped in favour of areca, coconut, sugar-cane, fruit-trees and a certain amount of rice as settlement became more stable. As GOSLING notes, the surviving rural Chinese communities are assimilated to Malay practices in most respects except language and religion (GOSLING 1964, 211–2). Religion, probably, is a key factor in explaining this survival for in Terengganu the Chinese were swimming in an Islamic sea, in contrast to the Chinese in Siam and Indochina where a Buddhist/Confucian ethic placed no great barrier in the way of assimilation.

The Eastern Archipelago: Borneo and the Philippines

There can be little doubt that, as in the Western Archipelago, Chinese merchants in some number were present from early times even if the speculations of BARING-GOULD and BAMPFYLDE concerning their settlement may be unfounded. However, firm evidences of Chinese cultivators do not appear before the beginning of the seventeenth century in the Philippines when a certain Bishop Benavides complained to the Spanish King, of laymen and religious who employed Chinese agricultural workers (DE MORGA 1609/1971, 277 n). Earlier, the *Ming Shih* mentioned a colony on Luzon before the taking of Manila by the Spanish in 1571 but this source is silent as to what they were doing there. The Chinese seem to have been urban in location, being largely confined to be suburban ghetto of Pariàn, prohibited from leaving Manila without a pass or sleeping within the walled Spanish section of the city. Those who married Filipino women and became Christians, however, could take up uncultivated lands in the suburbs (PURCELL 1965, 517–518)[7]. The policy of permitting only Chinese Christian agriculturalists to remain in the country-

[6] For example, three-quarters of the population of Batavia, now Jakarta, was Chinese in the 1680s (CHOISY 1741, 167).

[7] In 1804 the Spanish attempted to drive the Chinese into the countryside by imposing severe taxes upon shopkeepers. These were to be remitted if they became agricultural labourers. But the Chinese were driven back to the towns by Filipinos. See WILLIAMS (1900, 504).

side continued into the nineteenth century, indeed until virtually the end of Spanish rule in 1898 (PURCELL 1965, 532–533). JOHN WHITE (1824/1972, 119), for example, noted the importance of Chinese growing sugar-cane and indigo. One consequence was the formation of Chinese mestizo villages in various parts of the Islands, though the sources do not, at present, permit the specific identification of many of these.

Sulu was a less important trading centre than Manila and its small land area necessarily placed limits upon agricultural settlement. Whether Chinese agriculturalists settled at Sulu is not altogether certain but THOMAS FORREST noted (1780/1969, 323) that as a consequence of many Chinese having settled among the Suluks, the latter had learnt the art of ingrafting and improving their fruit-trees.

If Manila and Sulu were emporia to which Chinese resorted in considerable numbers, so too was Brunei, long referred to as 'Borneo Proper' to distinguish it from the island as a whole. Though a trading centre, the inland regions, like those of Terengganu in the Malay Peninsula, were the focus of pepper-growing, a Chinese enterprise not one undertaken by the local Murut, as JOHN JESSE noted in 1775 (in DALRYMPLE 1808, II, 2). At that time the annual production reached 4000 piculs, roughly 230 tonnes. THOMAS FORREST, who was in Brunei at about the same time, confirms this, noting that, 'here are many Chinese settled, who have pepper gardens.' Their settlement extended at least 60 miles up the Limbang River but the colony gradually died out for lack of fresh immigrants and by the mid-nineteenth century Chinese pepper-growers were little more than a memory (ST. JOHN 1862/1974, 31, 79)[8].

Further to the west, FORREST (1780/1969, 378) also reported the presence of 'many pepper-gardens belonging to Chinese in a delightful country' up the Putatan river. But as to how many there were, how long they had been there or how they were organized he is silent. The present existence of Hakka Chinese farmers in this area is hardly proof of their having been there in the distant past given the fact that so many Hakka farmers there are descendants of late nineteenth and early twentieth century immigrants.

But in terms of what is known and probably also in terms of actual importance the agricultural settlement described thus far pale into insignificance compared with those of western Borneo, even though the latter were initially founded in the pursuit of gold, diamonds, and, dare it be suggested, freedom. Since these politically-independent settlements have already been described in a number of languages it is not necessary to do more than outline their major characteristics (see DOTY a. POHLMAN 1839, GROOT 1885, SCHEGEL 1885, WARD 1954, LO 1961 and JACKSON 1970).

Though the colonies of western Borneo originated from the search for treasure, agriculture was basic to their survival given long lines of communication to the sea and the lack of a food surplus amongst coastal Malays or inland Dayaks who might otherwise have supported specialized mining communities by trade in foodstuffs. All the Chinese communities seem to have produced some food, if only fresh vegetables. DOTY and POHLMAN (1829, 287–289) speak of the villages of Sabawi, Seminis and Tahran as being almost exclusively devoted to mining, only a few of their inhabitants engaging in gardening and raising vegetables as well as pigs. Other villages were engaged almost exclusively in the production of fruit, vegetables and, sometimes, rice. These were located along the roads from Montrado to other towns such as Singkawang, Larah and Mandor around all of which there was a ring of dispersed settlement producing similar commodities. But, as JACKSON (1970, 40–41) notes, the most distinctive Chinese agricultural settlements were those specialized in producing rice from irrigated fields located on the lower Sebangkau and Mampawah rivers. These probably emerged during the third quarter of the eighteenth century surviving well into the nineteenth when Chinese colonies as a whole came under Dutch attack.

The Chinese colonies were partly unified under a 'personalist' form of republican, or corporate rule, initially under the Hakka leader Lo Fang-pai who had migrated to Pontionak in 1770. Under his guidance the Lan-Fang presidential system was set up in the Mandor district. This linked several *Kongsis,* each *Kongsi* uniting in itself the notions of a commercial corporation invested with municipal and administrative powers and at the same time having judicial and political authority (SCHEGEL 1885, 451).

Demographically, survival was ensured, despite the strongly masculine character of the immigrant population, by the custom of taking wives from amongst the pagan Dayak population, which, unlike the Muslim Malay populations down-river, placed no long-term barriers in the way of such unions. Children were invariably raised in their fathers' culture ensuring the maintenance of a population

[8] CRAWFURD (1856/1971, 69) however, indicates that there was still a scattering of Chinese pepper-growers in the inland areas of Brunei at this time.

culturally Chinese, or more accurately *peranakan,* though genetically mixed.

Politically, though, survival was far from ensured. From 1822 until 1854 when the Dutch military expeditions against the small Chinese republics finally succeeded, the Chinese were hard-pressed, particularly as a major outlet of the sea via Pontianak was blockaded. Some of the inhabitants fled north and east into Sarawak. Others stayed, for their descendants still exist as an identifiable element in the population.

Colonies founded from the early nineteenth century onwards

The period from end of the eighteenth century until about 1870s saw the political geography of much of Southeast Asia transformed. Earlier the Western colonial presence was represented by spatially insignificant *points d'appui* whose function was basically the diversion of ancient trade patterns towards Europeans thus cutting out Asian and Arab intermediaries. Examples are Melaka, Manila, Batavia (Jakarta), the spiceries of Aceh, Bantam, Banda and Ceram, later Pulau Pinang and Singapore. But with the French forward movements in Indochina, British expansion in Burma and the Malay Peninsula coupled with the replacement of nominal Dutch suzerainty by real sovereignty and territorial control in much of the East Indies the political picture was transformed. Only in the Philippine lowlands had the Spanish exercised real territorial control but there Chinese colonization was stringently, often brutally controlled perhaps out of a feeling that great masses of population just a few days' sail to the northwards were ready and able to challenge their political, economic and religious hegemony in the Islands if given half a chance.

These developments brought many colonial governments into a situation in which they had control over vast areas of territory often thinly-peopled or at least occupied by a peasantry sometimes reluctant to be forced into a Western-dominated capitalist system, a peasantry from which the raising of a revenue to meet the costs of modern bureaucratic government might well prove difficult. In these circumstances it is not to be wondered that some colonial governments, especially those of the British, actively fostered Chinese agricultural colonization. In this they were aided by private capitalists, both Chinese and Westerners, as well as by various Christian missions as has been indicated earlier[9].

Agricultural colonization, however, was far from being the only reason for a flood of immigrants from China. Many were indentured mine-workers or merchants and craftsmen, moving into burgeoning towns and cities where they provided a ready market for Chinese market-gardeners who were, and are, to be found in the suburbs of most urban areas in the region.

Indochina

The progressive establishment of a French presence in Indochina unquestionably fostered the influx of Chinese, Saigon's neighbour Cholon, for example, being almost entirely a Chinese city. It is much less easy to document the existence of Chinese agriculturalists in the countryside. Their numbers do not seem to have been particularly large, one estimate of 1822 giving a total of 40 000 (Chaigneau in Crawfurd, 1856/1971, 108). In the Cochinchina of 1886 the total Chinese population was only 56 000 (out of a total of 1 745 000–only 3.2 per cent) reaching 115 000 c. 1919. Just what proportion was employed in agriculture is unclear though Crawfurd (1856/1971, 108) speaks of the labours of the field ordinarily being their lot. An association of agriculture and dialect existed as in western Borneo, though in Cochinchina the farmers were mostly Hainanese (Nguyen Van Nghi 1920, 26). In the process of developing land for rice in the Mekong delta during the early twentieth century, labour was apparently imported from southern China, Tung-an *hsien* in particular, and some of this was deployed, through a system of *metayage,* in rice cultivation (Wu Feng-bin, pers. comm. April 1987). Across to the west in Cau-doc and Ha-tien districts, near the Cambodian border, Chinese were reported as growing pepper in the 1890s (d'Enjoy 1896–7, 36). The same author also reported Chinese market-gardening near Saigon and Cholon as well as a recently and illegally-settled Chinese agricultural population working 'veritable miracles' on the dune sands between My-thanh and Bac-lieu (d'Enjoy 1896–7, 105).

In the north Chinese formed a distinctive agricultural community in Cho-chu district, Thai-Nguyen province, where a group of 'submitted pirates' originally from Kwangsi were reported to have taken

[9] Many observers urged the settlement of Chinese on 'waste' lands. One example must suffice. St. John (1862/1974, 127) for instance enthusiastically noted how lands along the Sarawak River could be developed by '... the Chinese [who] can render the soil admirably suited for sugar-cane and other cultivations'.

Tho or Vietnamese wives and settled down as 'incomparable cultivators' (CONRANDY 1904, 439). But in Indochina generally, little attention has been given to Chinese cultivators, there being, for example, no confirmation of TOMLIN's report from 1829–30 of a substantial presence of Chinese, some thirty or forty thousand, growing pepper and sugar 'in the interior' of Cambodia (TOMLIN 1840, 281).

Burma and Siam

The Chinese agricultural presence in Burma can be dismissed in small space. Though YULE (1858/1968, 144) refers to their role as merchants and moneylenders in the cultivation of cotton this seems to have been the entire extent of their participation in that production. However in the production of sugar, the Chinese were active at 'Umerapoora', some six miles from Ava, where, according to MALCOM (1839, 178) some 10 000 of them 'mostly married to Burman females' had extensive plantations which furnished a considerable quantity for different parts of the country. According to the 1931 census, some six per cent of the 193 600 Chinese in the country were engaged in agriculture. In the Kokong Circle of North Hsenwi state, bordering Yunnan, some three-quarters of the population was Chinese but this is the only place were large numbers were engaged in agriculture (CHRISTIAN 1942, 270).

As in Burma the Chinese in Siam were also substantially involved in the production of sugar, both in growing it and processing the cane, an involvement which seems to have begun in 1810 (CRAWFURD 1856/1971, 381). Indeed, MALCOM (1839, I, 128) noted that sugar, the principal export, was 'wholly made' by Chinese, though whether this refers to both production and processing is unclear, Sir JOHN BOWRING's account (1857/1977, I, 203) simply indicating that, 'it is produced almost everywhere in the Kingdom, under the direction of the Chinese settlers . . .'. The bulk of it was exported to China.

Just how many Chinese were involved in agricultural production generally is impossible to establish though the nineteenth century saw a substantial growth in estimated numbers from around 5000 at the end of the seventeenth century to half a million in 1826, and three-quarters of a million by 1850 (CRAWFURD 1857/1977, 384)[10]. Nor is it possible to be very precise as to where these activities were taking place. BOWRING (1857/1977, I, 16, 203) noted a 'large number' at Ayuthia in 1855, some of whom were agriculturalists, with extensive plantations of sugar in Nakhon Chai Si (Nakhon Pathom) province. The same author also notes the presence of Chinese in the Meklong, Chantaburi and 'Banghatung' (probably Bang Pakong) areas. Given the strongly agricultural character of these it seems reasonable to suppose Chinese involvement in production, not only of sugar but also coffee, cardamoms, pepper and tobacco (BOWRING 1857/1977, I, 24, 26, 28).

The Western Archipelago: Java, Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula

Chinese involvement in agricultural production in Java and Madura seems to have been quite limited though their numbers throughout the island were not insignificant, reaching some 150 000 by the middle of the nineteenth century (PURCELL 1965, 430). But both PURCELL and then-contemporary observers such as RAFFLES (1817/1978) make no mention of colonization or a direct role in production though EARL suggests at least an entrepreneurial role in sugar production (EARL 1837/1971, 34). The Chinese were largely urban in location and intermediaries in function.

Not so in Sumatra, where Chinese colonization took an entirely new form. Hitherto, Chinese farmers had been independent producers, admittedly marketing their produce through Chinese companies such as the Lan-Fang Corporation of western Borneo, but basically independent. This situation changed in many parts of the Western Archipelago as western and Chinese capitalists took up land as a speculation or for plantation agriculture. The latter required wage-labour in considerable quantity for the tobacco-growers at Deli in north-east Sumatra, for pepper and gambier, later manioc, later again rubber in Johor, Negeri Sembilan, Melaka, Selangor and Perak in the Malay Peninsula, not to mention the Chinese and British sugar plantations of Province Wellesley.

This was quite a new form of economic organization in most of the region. Though this type of production persisted, indeed thrived, it was nevertheless marked by great instability in terms of the areas occupied and of participants in the labour force. Spatial instability derived from two main characteristics. First, there was abundant land available virtually for the asking. Second was the nature of the crops initially chosen. Pepper and gambier, grown together in a single enterprise, manioc (and sugar if grown on

[10] MALCOM's estimate of 350 000 in the 1830s is more conservative (MALCOM 1839, 120).

upland sedentary soils) are particularly nutrient-exhausting and, generally speaking, the upland soils where these were grown had very moderate to low nutrient status. Thus many initial exploitations merely used up the nutrients stored in the forest cover and released by burning. Pepper and gambier had a 'cycle' of 10–15 years before abandonment, manioc only five or six years, and tobacco even less. It was only with the introduction of coffee and later rubber that individual enterprises stabilized their locations. As the settlement frontiers closed, in part for forest conservation, less and less virgin land was available, leaving plantation owners and small-holders alike the choices of continuing to grow nutrient-demanding crops like tobacco with manuring and fallows or crop-rotation, shifting to lower-demanding tree crops or abandoning cultivation altogether. More permanent forms of Chinese farming presumably existed near the towns to supply fresh vegetables, as also on the 'tin island' of Bangka (COURT 1821, 168).

In Sumatra, many thousands of Chinese plantation laborers entered the Deli plantation region, over 300 000 via Belawan alone from 1888 to 1931 with around 21 000 in the area at the latter date (PURCELL 1965, 434). But this was a transient population, by the 1930s already being replaced by Javanese.

Across the Straits of Melaka both European and Chinese capitalists promoted various forms of plantation enterprise beginning from the end of the eighteenth century in Pulau Pinang. Chinese concentrated initially upon pepper leaving Europeans to other spices such as nutmegs and cloves. But costs were high even though yields were said to be seven times greater than those at Fort Marlborough (Benkulen). These initial plantings were moribund by the 1820s when Chinese from Swatow had already begun to pioneer sugar planting, mainly on the virgin alluvial soils of British-owned Province Wellesley on the mainland. This largely Teochew (Chiuchow) colony was not large, occupying only about 400 hectares, supporting about 2000 farmers and their families. JACKSON (1968, 128–133) gives details.

The 'robber economy' represented by pepper and gambier, later followed by manioc was widespread in the western Malay States as well as on Singapore and Bintang islands to the south, the two latter being early foci. At Bintang, for example, some 300 pepper and gambier plantations were entirely in Chinese hands in 1825. But even then production had begun to decline 'on account of the antiquity of the plantations' (BEGBIE 1834, 308). These plantations were presided over by Capitans China who, as in the Peninsula, negotiated leases from the indigenous authorities. They were thus to all intents semi-independent, if spatially ephemeral agricultural colonies. JACKSON (1968, 1–83) has a detailed discussion concerning Singapore and the Peninsular States.

Chinese were also involved in European plantations as contract labour, on sugar estates in Province Wellesley, Singapore and Melaka, but not on European-owned coffee estates, established particularly in Selangor later in the century, largely because Europeans had preferred South Indian labour (JACKSON 1968, 188). Chinese participation in coffee-planting was insignificant but it did represent a move from the *Raubwirtschaft* of earlier in the century, a move seen more clearly in the spread of rubber. This was, and is, a relatively low-bulk (when processed), high-value, nutritionally-undemanding crop which produces all the year round – thus economising on labour. Chinese entrepreneurs took considerable advantage of the offer of abandoned agricultural lands once in pepper and gambier or manioc, by the 1890s and 1900s a waste of useless *Imperata* grass or scrub, as well as developing rubber by interplanting thier existing manioc or pepper lands.

Though labour on most European-owned estates was Tamil rather than Chinese, the latter nevertheless made up 11.5 per cent of the estate work-force by 1908 (JACKSON 1968, 239). In Johor, Kedah and Kelantan, Chinese comprised at least half of the workers on rubber estates. By 1917 some 55 200 were recorded as working on rubber estates in the Federated Malay States[11], with an estimated twenty or thirty thousand on plantations elsewhere in the Peninsula. In addition there may have been anywhere between fifty and a hundred thousand others occupied, at least part-time, on rubber small-holdings (BARLOW 1978, 45).

Outside the plantation sector, Chinese farmers played but a small role in the Peninsula. Chinese market-gardeners and pig-rearers were present near most towns and in the 1930s this integrated form of production spread to include the growing of temperate vegetables at Cameron Highlands, an exclusively-Chinese activity. Participation in rice agriculture was even less significant though it did occur. In 1845 small communities of Chinese, some from Macau, were reported as growing rice in Province Wellesley (HILL 1977, 75). At Melaka, too, Chinese were long established, growing rice and vegetables for the town market, a community which survived into the very recent past (HILL 1983, 557). In later times Chinese rice farmers formed other tiny enclaves within a

[11] Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Pahang

Malay context as at Alur Janggus, Kedah where, about 1902, migrants from An Ch'i prefecture, Fujian province settled, initially as tenants on Malay-owned lands (MAEDA 1967, 21).

The Eastern Archipelago: Philippines, Borneo and the Eastern islands

The subservient status of Chinese farmers in early twentieth-century Kedah lasted but a moment compared with subservient status of all Chinese in the Philippines where physical violence and legal disabilities continued well into the nineteenth century. So far as can be determined no new Chinese agricultural settlements were begun and from 1804 only those Chinese who were agriculturalists were permitted to remain in the provinces. Indeed there were those who justified anti-Chinese measures on the ground that were Chinese permitted, they would 'monopolize agriculture to the detriment of the natives' (CASAL Y OCHO in PURCELL 1965, 533). The policy of exclusion of Chinese immigrants was continued by the Americans effectively confining them to trade, notably in agricultural commodities and in processing. In the early 1930s, for example, Chinese were estimated to control 75 per cent of the rice mills (CALLIS 1942, 21).

The settlement of Chinese agriculturalists in Sarawak has been referred to already, the 1840s seeing a considerable influx from the *Kongsis* of western Borneo following attacks by the Dutch. How this migration and resettlement was organized, if indeed it was, is not known but the *Kongsis* were certainly not reconstituted. This migration stream soon was supplemented by increasing arrivals from the Straits Settlements[12] and direct from China with people taking up land for subsistence at first but soon supplementing this with pepper from the 1870s and with rubber from around 1910. Though some of the settlements were initially established by the efforts of formal organizations, some of them Christian missions, many of the later arrivals came as a result ov chain migration through family and other kin ties. By 1939 there were about 124 000 Chinese in Sarawak, a quarter of the population (JACKSON 1968, 61), many of them farmers. Under Brooke rule, however, plantation agriculture was kept out so that small-holdings were, and remain the rule.

This situation contrasted very much with that in British North Borneo, a state owned by a private company whose policy it was to develop agriculture by all possible means. Amongst the earliest developments for plantations were those owned by European capitalists, some British, others Dutch, near the then capital of Kudat, especially around Marudu Bay. Tobacco was a major interest but coffee was also important. Labour was a problem, however, and in contrast to entrepreneurs in the Federated Malay States, Tamil labour was not imported. Chinese were often-times preferred. In 1893, for example, six tobacco estates in the Kudat district employed 1572 Chinese workers and 417 Malays (*North Borneo Herald,* 1 April 1893). Tobacco quickly collapsed, however, as a result of drought, low prices and probably soil nutrient exhaustion as well, to be followed by the decline of coffee. Not until the late 1900s did plantation agriculture revive with rubber. By 1912 every district had some estates and these covered a total of 88 000 ha though only 10.5 per cent had been planted, much presumably by Chinese labour.

Official policy was also to encourage Chinese small-holder settlements, for as one official noted, '... the land, as land, is comparatively useless' (ELPHINSTONE to MAYNE, 5 Sept. 1892, CO 874/206). Organized groups were, as a matter of policy, settled in widely separated places. Hakka farmers and their families seem to have been preferred, not least because their women, unlike those from North China, did not have bound feet and were used to field labour. They were also cheaper to bring in, the British North Borneo Company footing the bill by way of an advance against the revenue expected from the land. Christian missions in China were active in settlement, particularly the Swiss Basel Mission which settled Hakka farmers and the British Church Mission Society (see documents in CO 874/736–740). As in Sarawak Chinese colonies were not permitted to become *Kongsis* which could easily have led to the explotation of Chinese by other, more wealthy Chinese or to the emergence of states within the State (CO 874/904).

Fairly successful though Chinese colonization in North Borneo eventually was, the small farmer component in particular leading to a considerable degree of stability of settlement and production from the outset, the numbers involved were not particularly large. The 1911 Census, for example, reported that Chinese comprised 12.5 per cent of the total population of 208 000 (CO 855/26). Of that number 10 684 were described as 'laborers' most, presumably in agriculture, for there was little else, and 2348 as 'agriculturalists', presumably independent farmers.

[12] Singapore, Pulau Pinang and Melaka

Conclusion

From the foregoing descriptions it will be obvious that knowledge of Chinese agricultural colonization in SoutheastAsia is extremely patchy, largely because scholarship has not yet expanded the pioneering work of JACKSON (1968) in space and time. In many instances it is far from clear whether settlement was in any way organized or whether migration was as much or more a private family or kin affair. Clan associations, wealthy individuals as well as governments and charitable institutions obviously played roles but the details are often lacking.

Throughout the region governments had very different attitudes to the prospect for Chinese colonization. Many British, particularly in North Borneo, maintained that land would never be developed unless substantial Chinese migration were to be tolerated or, better, encouraged. On the other hand the Spanish, and after them the Americans in the Philippines were at best equivocal in their attitudes and the former, at worst, murderous. For others the application of a crude kind of social Darwinism demanded that local people should to some degree be protected from what was perceived to be Chinese competition. But whatever the attitudes and policies the Chinese came, many succeeded and stayed to add yet further complex strands to the tapestry of Southeast Asia's cultural and economic geography.

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