

The "Little Businessman" of Bukit Timah:
A Study of the Economic, Social and
Political Organization of Traders
in a Market Complex in
Singapore

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To
Tiat, Chee Lin,
Lim, Bin, Liam, Meng
My Mother,
and
My Late Father

28802

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Abstract

This study seeks to understand the economic, social, and political organization of small scale traders in a market complex in Singapore. The range of material is discussed within one framework, the relationship between the State and the marketplaces. This is carried out through the detailed analysis of the processes that have been involved in the formation of marketplaces, the organization of marketing activities, the organization of social relationships for marketing, and the role of voluntary associations for marketplace traders. In all these the State exerts its control and effects change because it is concentrating economic growth in the large scale sector of the economy. The State acts to foster rapid economic growth, but at the expense of the small scale trading sector.

Preface

This study deals with the relationship between the State and the socio-economic organization of marketplaces in Singapore. It discusses the processes by which, under certain political conditions marketplace traders are adjusting to social and economic changes. It emphasizes the involvement of the State in marketing operations and how vital a role it plays in not only bringing about change but also escalating these changes to meet the requirements of a highly industrialized capitalist economy. This study is based on the detailed analysis of the interconnectedness between economic, social, religious and political processes to understand the workings of the State at the local level. This is made possible by focusing the discussion on one community which is thus used as a basis for both analysis and presentation.

The field work on which the study is based was carried out in a town in Bukit Timah for a period of 14 months, between mid-July 1975 and early September 1976. Bukit Timah Town was not chosen as being either typical or peculiar in its social organization. Its choice was in a sense fortuitous. While undertaking a national survey of the small scale sector in Singapore in 1974, I could not fail to notice the national prominence traders at Bukit Timah acquired for their role in the highly spectacular Hungry Ghost Festival. A celebration on such a scale must surely involve a massive mobilization of manpower and financial resources. So I had been impressed by the suitability of the marketplace as a

subject for research. Attention was focused on the social structure and organization of marketplaces, a focus which shifted to the problem of the State and marketplaces. State interference in Singapore's marketing system assumes overwhelming importance: the number of people engaged in market trade is rapidly declining, and urban redevelopment schemes taking place in different parts of the Republic affect marketplaces and have implications for their social and economic institutions.

The materials for the dissertation were collected through participant observation, informal conversations and lengthy open-ended interviews. Many people based outside the marketplaces were also interviewed including officials, members of the families of marketplace traders, and customers. I owe a great debt of gratitude to the many people who gave freely of their time, particularly Loh Ah Hnee, one of the town's elders. During the first phase of field research, between July and early September 1975, I apprenticed myself in turn to seven traders dealing in different commodities at the largest private marketplace in Bukit Timah. During the second phase I made observations at the new government market in the same neighbourhood but continued regular visits to the private market. This period of field work ended after the first week of October 1975. I then left the field to evaluate my work and to submit written reports to my supervisor and grant-awarding body. I returned to the field during the last week of December 1975 and did not leave it until the end of field work. During this extended period I examined the relationship between marketplaces and the wider community that they serve. As for the various Chinese dialects

and languages used in the field, they were, arranged in order of importance, Teochew, Hokkien, Mandarin, Hakka, Cantonese, English and Malay. I do not pretend that I made a good command of all of these. For the first three months in the field I depended on my knowledge of Hokkien and gradually used more Teochew, these two dialects being mutually intelligible. I could usually follow the sense of all conversations and if I did not comprehend completely, I asked for it to be repeated, sometimes in another dialect or language that I had better command of; this was feasible because marketplace traders are frequently bi-lingual and have a good command of several dialects.

During field work I was helped in many ways by many members of the staff of the Sociology Department at the University of Singapore. Dr. Michael Walter and Dr. Geoffrey Benjamin were always ready to discuss my work and field problems. Professor Hans Dieter Evers, despite a tight schedule while on a brief visit to Singapore, went on a tour of the town with me and gave valuable advice on my work.

I am grateful to Dr. Jeremy Kemp, my supervisor. I also owe special thanks to Dr. Jerry Eades without whose insight this study would not have been possible in the present form.

Thanks must go to the Ford Foundation for the award of a Southeast Asian Fellowship which made the study possible.

Finally warmest expressions of thanks go to both my family of procreation and orientation who have had to bear the ordeal of dissertation development and writing and all its frustrations. Those who have struggled through the process knows what a vital part an understanding and longsuffering family plays.

List of Abbreviations

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BWM	Beauty World Market
BWT	Beauty World Town Shops Complex
BWTM	Beauty World Town Market
BWTSA	Beauty World Town Shopkeepers Association
CCC	Citizens' Consultative Committee
EDB	Economic Development Board
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
HDB	Housing and Development Board
HLA	Hwa Liang Association
HLPL	Hwa Liang Private Limited
HUDC	Housing and Urban Development Company Pte. Ltd.
INTRACO	International Trading Company
JTC	Jurong Town Corporation
MC	Management Committee of Community Centres
NHAM & DA	Nam Hwa Amateur Musical and Dramatic Association
NTUC	National Trades Union Congress
NWC	National Wages Council
OECD	Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development
PAP	People's Action Party
PSA	Port of Singapore Authority
RC	Residents Committees
SPHPAA	Singapore Pak Hock Pai Athletic Association
STST	Seu Teck Sean Tong
TPK	Ta Pai Kung Temple
YMA	Sin Chew Yat Meng Association

The rate of exchange is £1 : S\$4.40

Introduction

Third World urban economic structures

One of the most striking features of the urban economies of Third World countries is the persistence of the small scale sector characterized by small scale enterprise. This small scale sector includes the thousands of petty traders, commission agents, transport operators, craft workshops, repair shops and the host of self-employed artisans or odd-job men and women. The small scale sector is distinguished from the activities carried out within factories or by those services associated with large scale production such as financial and professional services, large retailing and wholesaling establishments or transport and construction enterprises possessing substantial amounts of capital equipment. Because of these apparent differences earlier writers claim that there exists a dual urban economy in which the modern sector is clearly segregated from the subsistence activities of the poor.

The distinction between these two sectors in the urban economy has been emphasized by Geertz (1963a) within the Indonesian context. Geertz's analysis is that the bazaar economy, in contrast to the firm economy, is made up of a large number of highly competitive small enterprises which rely on the intensive use of labour often drawn from the family and in which operators seek to minimize risks rather than seek profit maximization. The bazaar economy in Geertz's study is found in commercial and personal services, the tertiary sector of the economy. He argued that the bazaar sector is 'irrational' because of its large number of ad hoc exchanges and

its tendency to use labour intensively rather than to raise productivity. The bazaar economy has its parallel in the rural areas where in agriculture, increasingly refined techniques of labour absorb extra farm labour but reduces per capita productivity. The bazaar economy prevents capital accumulation and is not conducive to economic development; it only represents a way of life and an important means of absorbing surplus labour. In contrast the firm economy is based on rational methods of production and capital accumulation for further investment and expansion. So to Geertz the two economies are directly opposite to one another.

Geertz's analysis of the tertiary sector was extended by McGee (1971) to examine the systems of production operating in the bazaar and firm economies. McGee argued that the bazaar economy is basically that of a peasant household economy where the most important consideration is the effective use of the labour of its members and not simply profit. So even as the peasant household has the capacity to absorb increasing labour and cause diminishing returns, the bazaar economy similarly is able to absorb labour. To McGee the bazaar economy in urban areas represents the transfer of the peasant mode of survival to the cities of the Third World. He further asserted that it is a dynamic form of economic activity found in both rural and urban areas and is a basic strategy of social and economic survival. The subsistence base of the urban bazaar economy is provided partly by its exchanges with peasant producers and partly by ownership of the tools of the trade and of urban plots of land. This urban bazaar economy is interlinked with the firm economy through a flow of goods and services, just as the peasant economy is linked with capitalist agriculture through labour services. The basis of the bazaar economy is the

internal flow of goods and services, just as in the peasant economy subsistence agriculture remains the basis for economic survival. In McGee's model of these relationships, the flow of goods and services between the urban bazaar economy and the urban firm economy are relatively insignificant compared with the flow of goods and services between the urban bazaar economy and the peasant sector. This dualism in urban economies is thus viewed as an extension of the type of dualism which has long characterized Third World countries, in which an export orientated commercial sector was juxtaposed to peasant agriculture. McGee's model of the bazaar-firm economy helps only in the understanding of the early stages of rapid urbanization where the boundaries between city and countryside are often unclear.

Citing Latin American countries, writers in recent years have argued that such apparent paradoxes of Third World economic structures are the result of capitalist expansion. Roberts for example showed that the transfer of technology from advanced to less developed countries has led to rapid economic transfer and more importantly, to a premature displacement of craft and related small scale production, rather than that the subsistence activities that have long characterized the rural areas of underdeveloped countries are transferred to the cities simply as a result of overurbanization (1978: 109). These writers (eg. Hart 1970; Roberts 1978) also argued that the small scale sector survives because it complements the large scale sector of the economy, producing those goods and engaging in many services for which the market is so reduced and so risky that large scale enterprises are not interested to enter. Furthermore the capital intensive large scale sector makes use of the small scale sector as a reserve of unskilled and casual labour: more specifically

as a means of putting-out work, and as a means of providing cheap services such as transport, commerce and repairs, which in turn facilitate the expansion of the large scale sector. Hart for example demonstrated that small scale entrepreneurs contribute to Ghana's economic and social development because they operate much of the transport system, are largely responsible for the internal distribution of food, provide housing in situations of high demand, introduce services and amenities into even the most isolated parts of the country, and act as sub-contractors for the Government and its ancillaries in local development (1970: 109). In a later writing Hart argued that the small scale economy in aggregate possibly acts to countervail the full effects of increasing urban unemployment: indeed the small scale sector, with its emphasis on tertiary activities may be developing at a rate faster than other sectors of the economy and thus taking up some of the slack created by inadequate rates of growth in the modern sector (1973: 70).

In the same vein Eckstein wrote that petty commerce persists in Mexico because it is a form of adaptation to an industrializing economy which absorbs only a small proportion of the labour force (1975: 136). She argued that although few petite bourgeoisie are able to convert their businesses into progressively profit-generating enterprises, there is no evidence that the petite bourgeoisie are disappearing as a class, contrary to Marx's prediction that the petite bourgeoisie would decline as industrialization advanced because they would be increasingly unable to compete with large scale capitalists. On the contrary the petite bourgeoisie are not disappearing because this class is absorbing many people who cannot get jobs in other sectors of the economy. In other words Eckstein is taking Quijano's (1974) marginality position, the concept of the exclusion of part of

the urban population from better-paying jobs, a say in politics, adequate housing, and all other urban infrastructure enjoyed by the urban proletariat (see Roberts 1978: 160). But Eckstein and Quijano underestimate the extent to which capital-intensive industries can generate employment opportunities and contribute to the capitalist transformation of an underdeveloped country. In Singapore rapid industrialization has successfully absorbed the increasing population who are seeking work. In contrast to Latin American as well as other Third World countries, while industry and the interests of large-scale capitalists are expanding, petty commerce in Singapore is rapidly declining. This decline is a function of State intervention. So while the Mexican Government is encouraging 'petite bourgeoisification' (Eckstein 1975: 143cf.) through maintenance and regulation of the petty market system and through such urban land distribution schemes as legalization of squatter settlements which altogether encourages the maintenance and probably development of the small scale economic sector, the Singapore Government in contrast actively discourages the petite bourgeoisification of its labour force. As we will see in due course labour is virtually Singapore's only capital resource; it is in short supply and so carefully controlled to meet its expanding industrial sector. In contrast to the Mexican situation studied by Eckstein, Marx's prediction of the decline of the petite bourgeoisie as industrialization advances acquires significance in Singapore.

Singapore's economic success is dependent on capitalist investments. As the following ethnography will illustrate the State has assumed growing importance in Singapore's economic development and acts to foster rapid growth but these economic developments are achieved at the expense of the small scale economic sector.

In McGee's descriptions of Southeast Asian cities and Roberts' of Latin American cities, both writers refer to those suburbs in which small scale agriculture continues as a supplement to urban work. The lots on the periphery of these cities are sufficiently large to allow animals to be raised and crops to be grown; the shack houses a family in which several members journey to work in the city leaving others such as an elderly relative or a young child to cultivate the plot. This same kind of mixing of urban and rural occupations has been observed in Singapore by Gamer (1972) within the context of the Kallang Basin Reclamation Project. Gamer showed that most of the houses of Kallang Basin were of simple wood construction but fairly large inside. Outside there was often room for a fruit tree, a vegetable patch, and some chickens or a pig. Some lived there because their jobs were near by, others carried on small manufacturing pursuits or storekeeping operations right in their houses, but equally important, rents were very low, seldom rising above \$10 a month. But because Kallang Basin was delineated for an industrial estate by the Government in April 1960, some 18,000 people, all attap- and zinc-roofed housing, all backyard agriculture, and in fact all other obstacles which stood in the way of the industrialization programme were forced to go. Government budgeting paid no attention to the economic and social strains of the people forced to be resettled, the effects of the project upon small scale family enterprises already in the basin, or the suitability of the Basin for industry which might move into the project. The Government having chosen industrialization as its developmental path had to make land and labour available to capital intensive industries. The Basin illustrates how traditional settlements and small scale enterprises were replaced by high-cost residential and commercial developments. These

processes provide land and a supply of labour living near to places of work. In other words the concentration of population in high-rise Housing and Development Board (HDB) flats located in industrial estates brings labour to the doorsteps of industrial establishments. The great readiness of the Singapore Government to intervene radically in the urban economy is shown in the above policy of eradicating squatter settlements from its city centre. More importantly the above illustrates that the Singapore Government has drawn the boundary between urban and rural, between modern and traditional, and rural-traditional forms do not have any place in its development. So political ideology is important in understanding economic policy in Singapore.

In Singapore speedy bureaucratic implementation of programmes seem more essential than careful coordination to ensure that the rapid changes do not disrupt the lives of individuals. As development progresses, both the industrialization and disintegration of personal environments have an opportunity to increase at a faster pace. Translated into small scale commodity trading, we see that it is similarly being eroded to serve the capital intensive sector of the economy. The Government is primarily interested in the modernization of large business enterprise and lack interest in marginal activities, whether trade, agriculture or traditional housing structures. To the Government a healthy commercial situation implies healthy big business and not the thousands of little men carving niches for themselves in the economic structure of the country; instead more attention is given to rapid construction, industrialization and increase in exports, communications, banking and tourism. In this respect Singapore is not an exception: Hart showed that the emphasis on planning in less

developed countries has often been on altering the structural relationships of the economy (1970: 115). In these countries it has been argued that the industrial base should be widened and the dominance of the primary and tertiary sectors diminished. Planners have concentrated on attempting to introduce new forms of enterprise while virtually ignoring altogether its indigenous forms which flourish under their noses. Instead indigenous enterprise has frequently been dismissed as 'cottage industry' and peripheral to their main concerns.

Using marketplaces I attempt to illustrate the patterns of social, economic and political life that have resulted or are in the process of developing from the exigencies of proximity to capitalist expansion in Singapore. In this discussion political and social forces are attributed as much importance in shaping the course of economic development. In other words the focus of this study is the interconnections of local small scale events with general, large scale structural changes in the society. I will attempt to show that small scale events are not isolated and are in fact linked with the organizations of power within the large scale society of which the small scale face-to-face community is a part. The variables that are relevant to this particular sociological problem are economic, political, social and religious. So the study of Bukit Timah is a study of the interrelationships of the market town with the State.

Bukit Timah town and its marketplaces

Bukit Timah town is located at the outer fringe of the region defined by the urban planners as the City Area. It is a shopping centre serving the vital role of meeting the needs of a very mixed

population of farmers, industrial workers and professional groups. It has always been an important town and an official report of 1954 described it as the focus of the daily activities of an area stretching from Bukit Timah Road to the village of Tuas in the west (Singapore Electoral Boundaries Delimitation Committee Report 1954: 7; Figure 1). The principal section of the town's commercial district consists of the marketplaces and adjoining shops (Figure 2). All the main roads are lined by enterprises providing a mixture of household provisions and services. For example, one of the main roads, Jalan Jurong Kechil, is lined with shophouses dealing in provisions, fruits, furniture, religious paraphernalia, jewellery, watches, dresses, poultry feed, Chinese drugs and newly hatched chicks. There are also barbershops, hair salons, four photograph studios, tailoring shops, a clinic, a bakery and several coffee shops. The other main road, Upper Bukit Timah, is lined with shophouses on one side dealing in tyres, furniture, cooked food, provisions, spectacles, electrical appliances, bicycles, a variety of household requirements, a clinic, a finance company and two coffee shops. On the other side of the road are public buildings, commercial banks and private land. Behind the facade of shophouses are settlements of corrugated- and to a lesser extent attap-roofed planked houses. To the north and west of the marketplaces are modern, middle class housing estates. The area of the town is recognized by local people as stretching from Bukit Timah Circus in the southeast to Ewart Circus in the north and from Jalan Anak Bukit in the east to Jalan Jurong Kechil and the Lam Soon Cannery factory in the west (Figure 3). This is the primary service area of the marketplaces. It is also the geographical unit where social interaction occurs and where bonds of kinship and friendship are major elements. The secondary service area radiates approximately

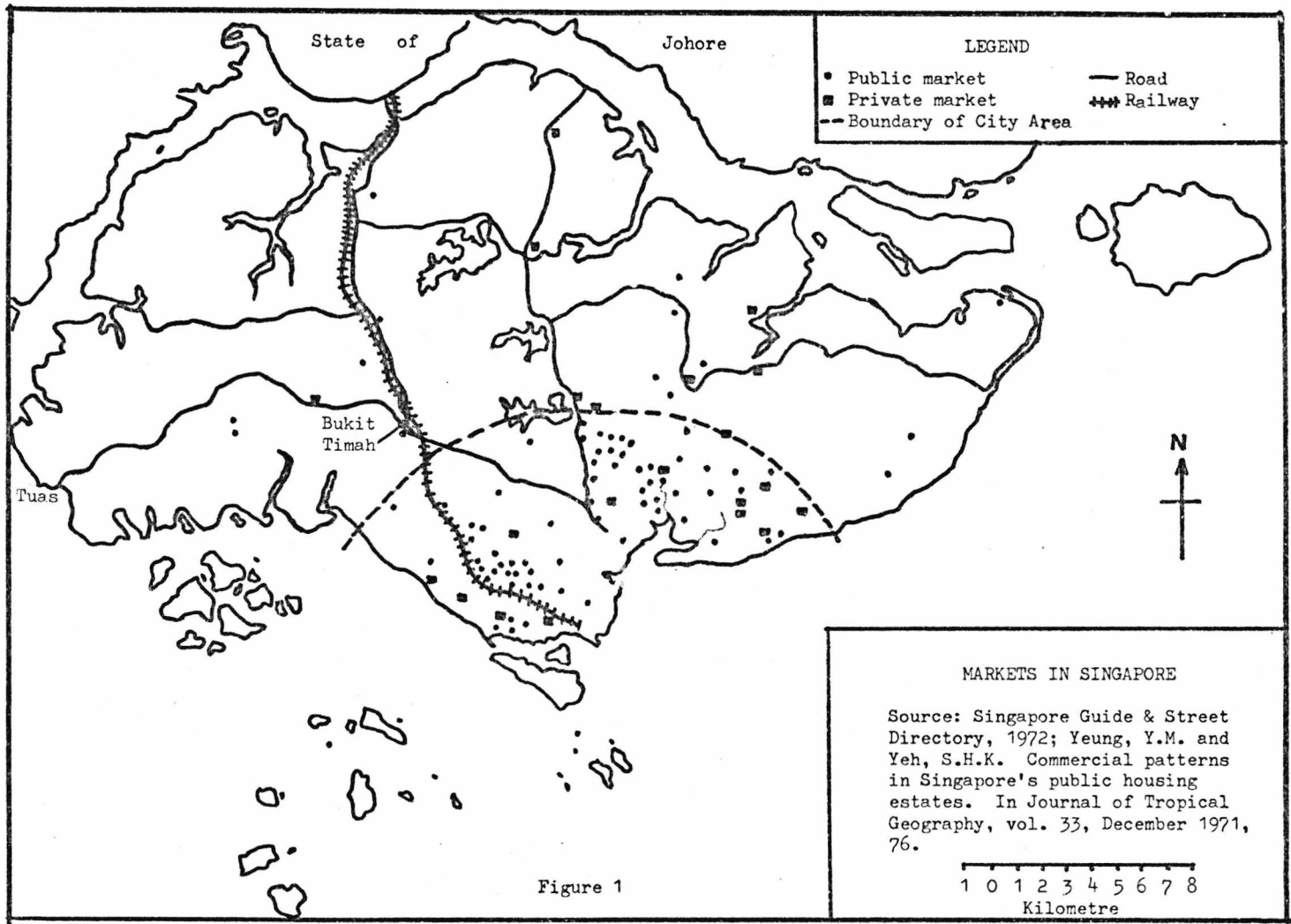
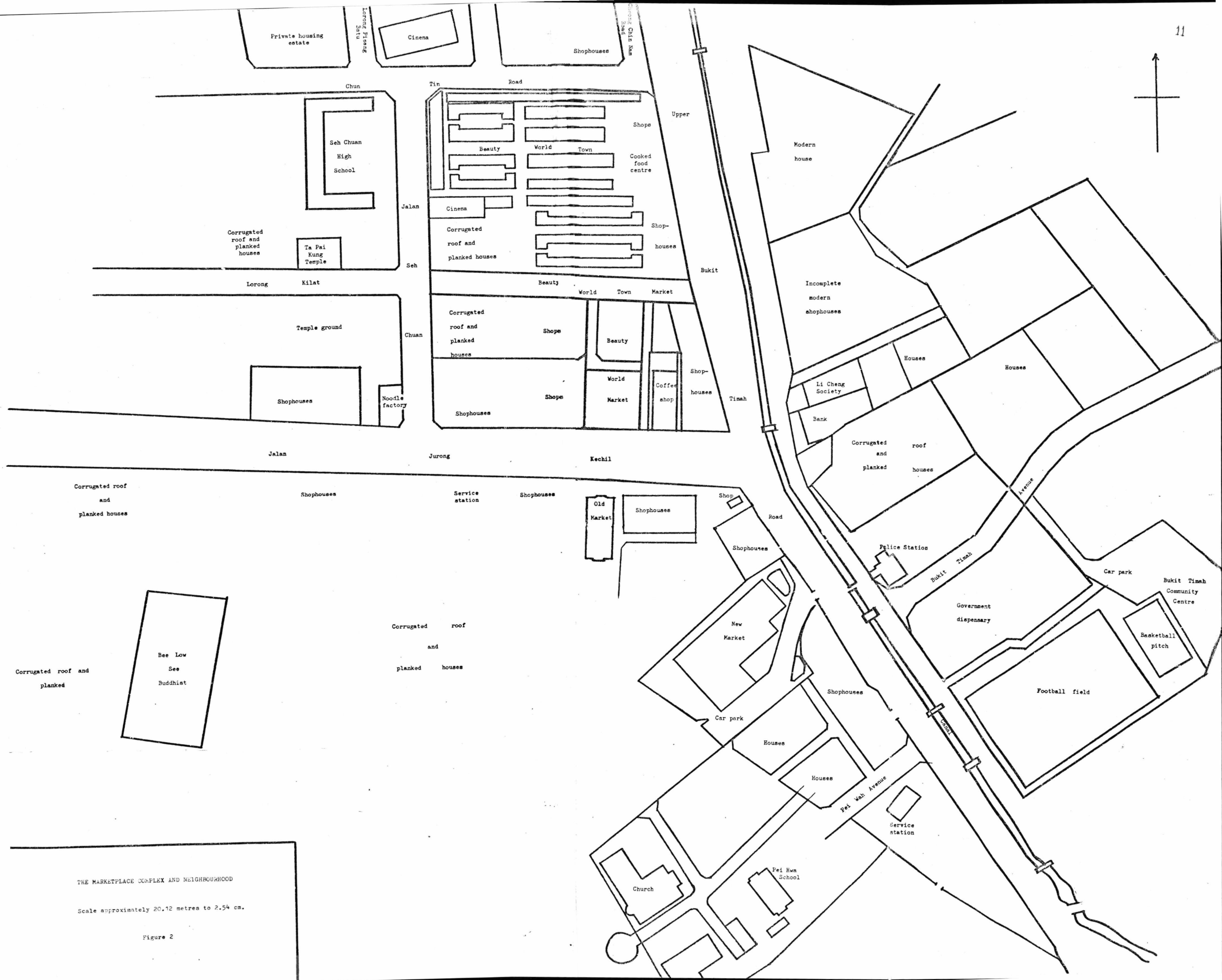
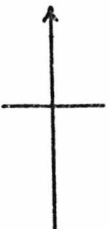
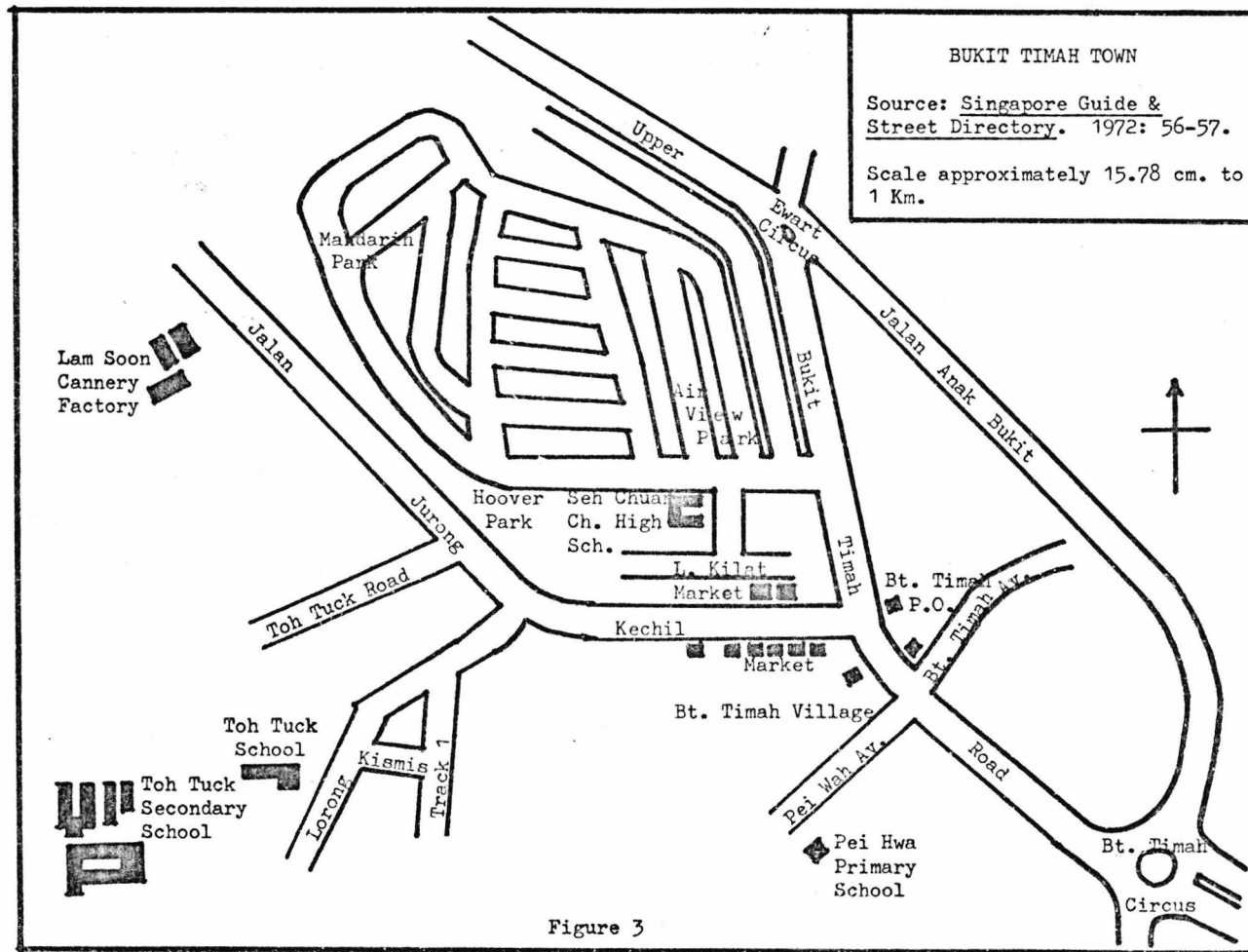


Figure 1



THE MARKETPLACE COMPLEX AND NEIGHBOURHOOD
 Scale approximately 20.12 metres to 2.54 cm.

Figure 2



3 kilometres and incorporates several villages and many more middle and upper class housing estates. Clients from the secondary service area attend the marketplaces less regularly, once or twice weekly, and frequently buy large quantities of food supplies at weekends. The estimated total population served is 28,000 and that of the primary area is 7,000.¹

There are four marketplaces in Bukit Timah town: the Old Market, Beauty World Market (BWM), Beauty World Town Market (BWTM) and the New Market. The first three are private concerns and the last is owned by the public authority. The Old Market is situated in an old, brick building which accommodates nine stalls dealing in a limited variety of goods. It is a small marketplace serving a small section of the population in its immediate neighbourhood. Only the fruit stall undertakes wholesale and distribution activities while the rest of the sellers are in the retail business. Across the road from the Old Market is BWM which is located in an extensive shed-like structure with corrugated roofing. The stalls are arranged haphazardly although there is still some indication of past stall apportioning. Around the marketplace are shops of varying sizes and many more stalls. The original alleyways between these shops and the main shed have been roofed over with corrugated sheets, zinc, canvas and other rough shelters providing the space for more hawker pitches. The whole marketplace is congested and the atmosphere is hot, humid and stifling. During heavy rainstorms parts of the roof leak and sections of the market flood. Adjoining BWM is BWTM. It developed as an appendage at the northern entrance of BWM. This marketplace is old, dirty and in a dilapidated state.² To the outsider the two marketplaces, BWM and BWTM appear to be one but in fact are internally differentiated being separated by an inconspicuous drain. Adjoining BWTM is a complex of

shops: at the core are the double storey shophouses around which single storey shops have been established. Contrasting markedly with these congested and cluttered trading areas is the New Market, a double-storey modern market complex, with its neatly arranged stalls and small shop units. The building is well ventilated and different parts of the marketplace are allocated for the sale of different classes of commodities: fresh fruit in the fruit section, vegetable in the vegetable section, and so on.

This study describes and analyses the role of Government in the economic, social, religious and political processes of a market community. Although marketplace traders are highly independent operators, nevertheless the State has also penetrated and inflicted social structural changes. As a result, marketplace traders have been changing demographically, economically, religiously, and politically. I present in chapter one a profile of Singapore, the city-state. In chapter two I discuss the setting, more specifically the development of marketplaces in Bukit Timah. The third chapter deals with marketplace traders in economic, social and moral fields. The fourth chapter discusses the interdependence between economic, social and political variables, more specifically kinship, friendship, trade and State. The fifth and longest chapter analyses voluntary associations and how custom is revived in the changing relations of power between individuals and groups in contemporary society. In the sixth I discuss the effects of Government policy on marketplace trade. In the Conclusion I summarize the interconnections of local small scale events with general, large scale structural changes in the society. I seek to show that small scale events are not isolated and are in fact linked with the organizations of power within the large scale society of which the small face-to-face community is a part. So the study of Bukit Timah is a study of the interrelationships of the dynamic involvement of the city-state with a small market town.

Footnotes

Introduction

- 1 As no local population estimates are available, the figures are computed in the following manner. The Singapore Register of Electors 1973 lists names and addresses of citizens aged 21 and above. I treated persons with identical addresses as a complete household unit. Thus 5281 such units were identified in the total service area of the marketplaces and this number was multiplied by 5.35, being the average size of the household during the census year 1970. Similarly, the units within the boundaries recognized by the people as that of the town were enumerated. There were 7302 (1365 x 5.35) persons. These figures are broad estimates since even the sources of such data are derived from unidentical base years. (Sources: Singapore Register of Electors for Electoral Division of Bukit Timah, Parliamentary Elections 1973; Singapore Report on the Census of Population 1970: 1, 208).

- 2 In September 1977 a fishmonger corresponded to say that after a fire followed by rebuilding part of the market, it now looks attractive.

Chapter One

Singapore: The City-State

Introduction

This study is concerned with markets and marketing in a highly industrialized city-state. Marketplace traders have been studied extensively in Latin America, Africa and Asia (eg. Bohannan & Dalton 1962; Firth & Yamey 1964; Foster 1948; Geertz 1963a; Mintz 1964; Moyer & Hollander 1968; Skinner 1964, 1965) but most of the sociological surveys and statistical findings are taken from non-industrial societies giving accounts of peasant marketplaces in the Third World. Nevertheless some accounts have been written of marketplaces in urban situations but in the context of dual economies where the bazaar is contrasted with the firm (eg. Armstrong & McGee 1968). As far as I am aware the study of the social, economic and political organization of markets and marketing in an industrialized city-state is still unexplored territory.

The Republic of Singapore is a modern and highly industrialized society but it poses a sociological paradox for it continues to support a large and extremely important bazaar or marketplace sector. This sector is concentrated in the hands of professional traders involved in wholesale, distribution and retail trade. Their activities assume added importance as Singapore is dependent upon imported commodities for its sustenance, being solely self-sufficient only in pork, poultry and eggs. Market gardening produces only 26 per cent of total consumption of fresh vegetable and local fishermen supply only

29 per cent of the fish consumed (Singapore '76: 135 - 136). In this context the marketplace sector has especially important functions channelling basic subsistence commodities to a predominantly non-agricultural, urban population. But small scale commodity production and distribution activities are gradually being supplanted with the capitalist mode of production. Contrary to the underdeveloped economy of Third World countries where industrial workers are both few and relatively privileged, the shift in emphasis of Singapore's labour force into industrial employment is causing the small scale businessmen to be an increasingly prosperous group. This will become evident in the rest of this chapter. What I want to emphasize here is that the key to the understanding of this situation is unquestionably Singapore's position as a city-state.

Singapore occupies a unique position in world politics because it is one of the few cities which is an independent state. Within the context of Southeast Asia it is the only developing nation which is a metropolitan area economically, culturally and politically distinct from its traditional primary-producing hinterland. Physically it measures 42 kilometres in length and 22 kilometres in breadth, the smallest state in Southeast Asia. It is also the most densely populated with some 3,770 persons per square kilometre. But its people are the most prosperous in Southeast Asia. Its economic structure emphasizes industrialization as an important adjunct to its entrepot functions in contrast to the primarily agricultural nature of the economies of its neighbours. Ecologically the population is predominantly urban, almost wholly of immigrant origin, and ethnically the city is predominantly Chinese. The population age structure is youthful with half under 20 years of age. Culturally it is a society

orientated towards objectives similar to those found in Western industrialized countries, namely the attainment of the good life through the acquisition of wealth. Ooi argued that in these circumstances individual initiative and the entrepreneurial spirit are encouraged which in turn contributes to accelerated economic growth for the nation (1969: 2). Politically Buchanan has termed it a peculiar form of democratic socialism characterized by a unique blend of one-party authoritarianism, bourgeois liberalism, devout anti-communism, state welfareism, unbridled free enterprise, and Chinese chauvinism (1972: 19). He describes such a political system an aberration in a Southeast Asian context: it reflects the island-republic's role of middleman within the wider economy and politics of the Malay world, and, a sophisticated, urban, and basically Chinese middle-class response to the needs of administering a free-port city-state geared to servicing foreign enterprise in the surrounding primary-producing hinterland. It is a system that has emerged over the past twenty years.

When Singapore emerged from British colonial rule in 1959, its immediate problems were explosive population growth, housing and high unemployment. The 1960s also witnessed several political ups-and-downs. Singapore first joined and then withdrew from the Federation of Malaysia. This Federation which came into being in 1963 was a response to the threat of a radical socialist government assuming power in Singapore, a threat brought closer by the split between left and right factions of the People's Action Party (PAP) in 1961, the PAP's loss of an absolute majority in Parliament in 1962, and the impending 1964 Singapore elections (Buchanan 1972: 252 - 253; Singapore '76: 43 - 53). The Malayan Alliance government wanted to

control both left-wing and Chinese communal infiltration from Singapore. The PAP government of Singapore on the other hand wanted to ensure that neutralization of the local left-wing movement took place in a Malaysian context rather than a colonial context, thus avoiding the problem of turning communists into anti-colonial martyrs. As for the British they saw Federation as a way of countering the left-wing threat without making an explicit stand on the issue, and as a way to perpetuate control over the constituent territories. But internal conflicts, expressed in ideological and communal bitterness caused Singapore to secede from the Federation on 9th August 1965 leaving the new state of Malaysia only comprising the Federation of Malaya, Sarawak and Sabah. Separation was the result of several factors. Buchanan summed them up as the conflict between Malay and Chinese chauvinism, the love-hate relationship between colonial city and agrarian hinterland, the clash between urban evolved bourgeois politics and traditional feudal-compradore rule, financial and market jealousies, conflict of personalities, political ambition, and the lingering legacy of a divide-and-rule policy which had institutionalized communal disparities on top of rural-urban and rich-poor differences (1972: 253). During the same politically turbulent period 1963 to 1965, Singapore faced the Indonesian Confrontation which deprived her of her largest trading partner. When Singapore separated from Malaysia, West Malaysia embarked on production of many commodities formerly imported from Singapore and imposed a large number of tariff barriers which shut Singapore off from the Malaysian market. The British military withdrawal east of Suez between 1968 to 1971 presented Singapore with more problems; British military expenditure totalled \$550 million in 1966 contributing 16.3 per cent of GDP, and some 40,000 locally employed civilians had to be retrenched. In spite of this wide range of social, economic and political difficulties,

Singapore has responded successfully. Its economic growth rate topped 15.3 per cent in 1968 and 12.9 per cent in 1969 while the simple average growth rate for the 1960s was 10 per cent (You & Lim 1971: 2). Between 1970 and 1973 the nation experienced an annual economic growth rate of 13 per cent (Goh 1972: ix). As a result of the 1973 oil crisis 1974 and 1975 were years of slow growth, 4 per cent and 2 per cent respectively. Growth in the mid-1970s has been slower than the real annual growth rates maintained in the 1960s but has been well within the Government target of 6 to 8 per cent per year (Financial Times 22nd Nov. 1978). This compares well with some other Asian countries who have yet to recover from the oil crisis, and the OECD countries which expect an average growth of 4.5 per cent only in 1978 (Far Eastern Economic Review 25th Aug. 1978). Population growth was at an annual average of 3.9 per cent between 1957 and 1962 (Singapore '76: 66) but after 1962 population growth rates dropped, falling to 1.3 per cent in 1975. Per capita income was about \$6,250 (US\$2,500)¹ in 1978 and Singapore's gross domestic product was \$13,681 million in 1975. So, Singapore has been able to isolate itself from the problems typical of the Third World: the economic problems of unemployment, rapid population growth, unbalanced occupational structures characterized by the dominance of the tertiary sectors, poverty and inequality of incomes, the social problems of the in-migrant and the problems of adjustment to city life which so often lead to delinquency and crime, the physical problems of overcrowding in tenement slums and burgeoning squatter settlements, and the administrative problems of establishing efficient urban services. These problems continue to overwhelm the administrators of the Southeast Asian cities but virtually no longer concern Singapore. Instead her problems are those of a modern highly urbanized state and differ

markedly from those of the rest of Southeast Asia where the problems are rural and agricultural rather than urban and commercial/industrial in nature.

The economic development of Singapore

Singapore has no natural resources of importance but its greatest asset is its natural harbour and strategic location at one of the major maritime crossroads of the world. The island's location in the middle of the richly-endowed primary producing countries of Southeast Asia makes it the natural collecting and distributing centre for the region's products and for manufactured goods en route to the region's markets. In terms of tonnage passing through its harbour and roads it has now become the fourth largest port in the world. However to create employment opportunities for the expanding labour force and to diversify the economy to provide an alternative base to entrepot trade, Singapore shifted emphasis from its international entrepot economy which predominated from her founding in 1819 until the 1950s, to a highly industrialized economy. The larger and more varied the economic base of a state, the more the potentialities and opportunities for economic advancement.

The broadening of the economic base was aided because the requisite economic infrastructure was already in existence. As a successful trading centre Singapore had established its port, communications and transport facilities, public utilities, banking and financing and business expertise. In addition a labour force of young English speaking and bi-lingual school leavers was available for taking up jobs in industry. It is much easier for experienced traders with extremely

good world trade connections to switch to manufacturing than for an essentially domestically oriented agricultural community as is found in the non-city-states of Southeast Asia. Agriculture cannot be expected to contribute much to Singapore's economy and so the only road forward for Singapore is industrialization.

To industrialize Singapore embarked upon the development of free market capitalism, a strategy which has been the key to its economic success. Since indigenous businessmen, nurtured in entrepot trading, lacked the experience and the massive resources to establish capital intensive plants on the scale required to ease the job situation, expatriate capital and technology have dominated from the very beginning. With a small internal market and capital base, Singapore had to look to the multinationals. The Republic in turn offers skilled but cheap labour and more important, a politically secure environment. However the pursuit of a capitalist system of development in Singapore separates her from the development ideology of the majority of the governments of many Third World countries which are strongly influenced by socialist doctrine. In Africa for example, capitalism is regarded as an unsuitable system. It is associated with the colonial economy, imperialistic, and is regarded as inadequate to meet the pressing development needs of poor countries, where individual enterprise cannot be counted on to mobilize resources on the required scale, where the market mechanism is regarded as a wasteful imperfect regulator of economic activity, and where the state is to be the driving force in development, undertaking new initiatives and intensifying existing controls over private economic activity (Berg 1968: 24 - 25). Similarly in Southeast Asia there is a strong inclination towards socialist or communist solutions to the problems of underdevelopment as

illustrated by Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Burma. Capitalist development is abhorred because it would mean development by foreigners and permanent economic dependence on the outside world. Singapore's capitalism for example has been described by Buchanan as dependent or subordinate capitalism because basically its field of operation is determined in London, New York and Tokyo (1972: 120). This socialist intellectual, one of Singapore's most severe critics, had asserted that there had been little integral, overall economic development in Singapore in the 1960s and that in the early 1970s, because of the bleak economic prospects, there would be civil unrest and that insurrection will threaten the very survival of the city-state. He argued that the profits of Western enterprise have been either repatriated, invested in large-scale tertiary activities or put into the more sophisticated branches of the export-oriented manufacturing sector; and profits earned by Chinese investors, when not remitted or invested overseas, have generally been re-invested in the tertiary sector in small-scale manufacturing or in foreign controlled joint ventures. Buchanan had predicted that the long-term effect of this investment would be the perpetuation of an economic structure with a low rate of job creation and a heavy tertiary imbalance in the utilization of capital, skill, labour, and land. On the contrary national and world capitalism have offered a way out of underdevelopment in Singapore.

The Republic is the vital element in the regional economy and in the network of foreign enterprise currently consolidating itself in one of the richest primary-producing areas in the world. It is what the Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, has called 'the linchpin' of Southeast Asia (Buchanan 1972: 22). It helps hold together and facilitates a

certain pattern of economic activity in the region. It is the catalyst of regional economic and social development. It is a vital centre in the prevailing pattern of regional development and has long played such a role. This in turn has contributed to its rapid growth relative to its surroundings. In other words Buchanan altogether underestimated the extent to which dependent development could take place outside metropolitan countries. Furthermore Berg (1968) has shown that the socialist path to development, and particularly state intervention in the distribution system is ill-suited to many developing countries because of practical, political and cultural factors. In a similar vein Singapore's Deputy Prime Minister, Dr Goh Keng Swee, points out that many countries of the Third World entertain the notion that politicians and civil servants can successfully perform entrepreneurial functions (1972: ix). The successful emergence of a western-type capitalist industrial economy in Singapore has proved the potential of free enterprise.

But what are the implications for the rest of Southeast Asia? The neo-Marxist approach to the analysis of development is to view the world as basically a single integrated unit. In this framework Singapore's development illustrates the classical neo-Marxist approach that today's underdeveloped countries have been underdeveloped in order to develop industrial capitalism in the metropolitan countries (see Foster-Carter 1974: 81). Singapore is an important link in the metropolis-satellite chain. In this context Singapore is in league with the industrial metropolitan countries, operating as their middleman, and a spring board from which the West (and Japan) exploit the region's primary-producing countries. Operating within a satellite of primary producers, surplus from the latter is continuously extracted

via Singapore to the Western world contributing to its development at the expense of the supplying countries. So on a geopolitical level, development ironically occurred in the West, and Singapore where there had been poverty, and underdevelopment occurred in Southeast Asia and the rest of the Third World countries which are wealthy in primary resources.

Singapore's development strategy is wholly the result of its situation as a city-state. This means that although political independence has been achieved, its economy is heavily dependent upon external forces. Singapore is dependent both upon foreign economic interest and control, and upon its Malayan hinterland. Its whole course of development up to 1959 was dependent upon handling raw materials from a large primary-producing hinterland and manufactured goods from more industrialized countries. Much of the business transacted in Singapore was on behalf of establishments engaged in the export of primary products from, and the import of manufactured goods into Malaya. From the 1960s Singapore has been very much a middleman between Malaya and Britain, and at the regional level between ASEAN nations and the West and Japan. In other words it is part of what Frank has labelled a 'world metropolis-national metropolis-satellite relationship' (1967: 25) in which Singapore acts as a centre for the expropriation of surplus wealth to be transferred to the developed countries. But a middleman is not independent: his fortunes lie inextricably with those of the consumers and suppliers he services. By the same token the middleman's role is essential to the functioning of the overall system which created him. So like the overseas alien communities who grew rich through middlemen roles between farmers and consumers such as the Indians in East Africa, the Syrians in West Africa, the Greeks and Armenians in the Middle East, and the Chinese

in Southeast Asia, Singapore's middleman role contributed to its wealth. Southeast Asia's history has been affected by the widespread impact of colonial forms of primary exploitation. With independence, Singapore has taken up this role in collaboration with the United States and Japan.

From the 1960s the Republic's trade has become more diversified, reflecting the shift to industrialization. However in 1975, it still handled 40 per cent of the rubber produced in the region. Its imports from the ASEAN countries (excluding trade with Indonesia) was 14 per cent (by value) of Singapore's total import trade in 1975 and crude petroleum from Saudi Arabia, Iran and to a lesser extent Kuwait totalled 21 per cent of total imports (Singapore '76: 15 - 16, 125 - 127, 260). Imports from the West, including Japan, comprised 48 per cent of all imports. The bulk of Singapore's imports were in crude petroleum, non-electrical machinery, electrical machinery, iron and steel, and manufactured goods which altogether form slightly less than half of the total imports. In the export trade 27 per cent (by value) of all exports goes to ASEAN countries (excluding Indonesia) and 41 per cent to Western Europe, the United States and Japan. Petroleum products were by far the most important item followed by electrical machinery, crude rubber, and non-electrical machinery.

Singapore's development since 1960 has also been within the same dependent framework. This new pattern of external dependence is industrialization with virtually all capital attracted from overseas. The appearance of this pattern provides the protective framework within which Singapore has made the transition from an inherently

unstable economic dependency to a viable and diversified economy, capable of rapid and sustained growth, and a higher and more equitably distributed standard of living than on entrepot trade alone. However its economic dependence has not lessened but on the contrary has increased.

Singapore's industrialization is heavily dependent upon imported capital and technology. Foreign investment has been attracted to both capital intensive and labour intensive industries geared to export markets and the servicing of primary exploitation, into the expansion of tourism such as hotel construction, and into the establishment of regional headquarters for international marketing and financial houses. The Singapore government actively encourages foreign investment through the legislation of numerous incentives and offers a disciplined and cheap labour force. The neo-Marxists will argue that the national bourgeoisie, the PAP leadership, is in league with the foreign imperialist exploiting its population. With the government in tight control, socialist movements have been suppressed, thus clearing the way to steer people into the industrial capitalist economy at the expense of small scale commodity production and distribution. How this is done will be elaborated later on in this chapter. What I want to emphasize here is that the PAP would be characterized by neo-Marxist scholars as 'comprador bourgeoisie'.

But the Singapore Government has pointed to the country's economic development and rising standard of living at all levels of society in claiming that criticisms from the left are unfounded. In a hard-hitting essay on "The pitfalls of western intellectual radicalism," Dr Goh Keng Swee lambasted radical Western critics of

Singapore and termed the criticisms nebulous and the critics arm-chair pundits (The Mirror 11th Dec. 1978: 2 - 3, 6). Writing as an economist, not of the academic kind but as a practitioner, he argued that while theoreticians emphasize rigorous logic, by contrast a practitioner is not judged by the rigour of his logic but by results and that experience is a harsh school in which there are no alibis for failure. Singapore has never had any inhibitions in borrowing capital, know-how, managers, engineers, and marketing capabilities. Instead of limiting the entry of foreign managers, engineers, and bankers, they were encouraged. Its industrialization programme has been successfully achieved by importing wholesale western technology and foreign entrepreneurs instead of working from first principles. As a result, economic development has been rapid. Fast economic development has produced visible results and the free market mechanism untampered by monopoly restrictions has ensured the spread of benefits to all strata of society.

A study by the Economic Development Board (EDB) of all export-orientated industrial firms set up since 1960 disclosed that the bigger and more established a multi-national corporation is in its field, the higher its success rate and the bigger its contribution to jobs and Singapore's GNP (The Singapore Bulletin Vol. 7 no. 3, Nov. 1978: 7). What is striking in this study is that not a single major multi-national corporation has failed. The second major finding is that the less experienced the industrialist and the less advanced his technology, the higher the failure rate. Wholly-owned foreign enterprises from the USA, Europe and Japan had a failure rate of only 6 per cent. Other wholly-owned foreign enterprises, mainly from Hong Kong and Taiwan, had a failure rate of 13 per cent. The failure rate of wholly-owned

Singaporean enterprise was 38 per cent. However when Singaporeans went into joint ventures with US, European, or Japanese foreign entrepreneurs who provided the know-how, the experience, and the marketing, their casualty rate went down to 7 per cent, just 1 per cent higher than the failure rate of the wholly-foreign enterprises. When Singaporeans had less advanced partners from Hong Kong and Taiwan, their failure rate was 17 per cent. What the EDB study has clearly demonstrated is that learning from scratch is a costly business and economic take-off is far more rapid with foreign intervention.

For Singapore it has always been and will always be an economically heavily dependent state. This makes its economy precarious. Kumar's study of development and futurology has shown the tendency for the more developed world to become not merely integrated and inclusive, but autonomous and exclusive (1974: 345). He argued that the growing attraction of the industrial nations for each other is their repulsion of the non-industrial Third World. In this respect there is the changing pattern of world trade. For more than half a century the greater part of the increase in the sales of capital goods was taken up in trade between the industrial and non-industrial countries. In the early 1950s there first occurred a reversal of this pattern; world trade in primary products fell, and there has been the dramatic expansion of trade in manufactures between industrial countries. The cause of the changes has been the industrial societies' improved techniques in manufacturing and agriculture. Economically the Third World is becoming less relevant. As the industrial societies take on increasingly post-industrial features, their characteristic interests, concerns and problems will make them more inward-looking. The Third World may only be relevant perhaps as an area for tourism, for the siting of some of the more polluting

industries of the industrial world, or as a source of cheaper labour in some sectors. What is of sociological importance in Kumar's argument is that the chain of exploitation linking exploiters and exploited is in the process of dissolution. Such a forecast is gloomy for the Third World but not necessarily gloomy for Singapore as the Republic is virtually integrated into the economic system of the industrialized countries. Kumar also argued that aid and intervention in all underdeveloped societies have been to a considerable extent an incident of the Cold War and that the relaxation of that war may make that involvement both less necessary and less attractive. However aid is not significant in Singapore's economic growth in comparison with other Asian countries. For example between 1967 and 1969 more than US\$2,000 millions of aid went to Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia either through inter-governmental channels or by way of non-government lending bodies but the major recipient was Indonesia which during 1967 to 1969 received about US\$1,300 million in economic aid. A further argument may be the continuing political instability of Southeast Asia making foreign investment precarious and so discouraging involvement of the purely profit-making sort but as I will argue in due course, Singapore's political stability is most reassuring to foreign investors.

The Republic is now well equipped in metal engineering, shipbuilding and repairing, petroleum, chemical and plastic manufacturing, electronic and electrical products manufacturing, the manufacture of precision optical products, car assembly, oil refineries, and textile industries. In 1975 35 per cent of the work force was in industry and only one in four working persons were in the sales or service sector (Singapore '76: 242 - 243). There is

virtually no unemployment problem; in recent years Singapore has imported Malaysian workers on work permits to perform jobs which Singaporeans are now too highly paid or too fussy to undertake themselves. In 1978 arrangements were introduced to supplement Malaysian work permit holders with Thai workers. This situation contrasts sharply with the early years of development where, for example, in 1959, 46,000 persons were unemployed and the Development Plan for 1961 - 64 projected an increase of economically active persons at 52,000 excluding the backlog of unemployed registered at the Employment Exchange. During the mid-1960s, even the introduction of compulsory national service for a period of two to three years from February 1967 for those reaching 18 years of age, those who joined the Government Service on or after 1st January 1967 as well as those receiving higher education was in part a device to help absorb a sizeable portion of the new labour force and to alleviate the unemployment problem. Currently the major economic preoccupation for the Singapore Government is to upgrade the quality and value-added content of Singaporean industry by attracting to the Republic more investment in sophisticated areas such as radar and transceivers, aircraft components, medical instruments, industrial electronics, oil field drilling equipment and pharmaceuticals, while gradually phasing out some of the simpler industries that are both labour intensive and liable to face import barriers in some of Singapore's major markets. To this end Singapore continues to keep an 'open door' policy to investment by multi-national corporations which may own 100 per cent of the equity of their ventures on the Island and repatriate all of their profits. Singapore's industrial development serves both foreign interests as well as gives rise to economic spin-offs for the local population: much needed jobs are created, and new technology

and skills acquired. But what is implicit in this new development is that the Singapore leadership, hand in hand with the foreign nationals, are exploiting Singapore's manpower.

As a small island state with a poor natural resource base, labour takes on added importance as capital goods in themselves. The wealth of developing nations depends as much upon their ability to develop and effectively utilize these human capital goods as upon the investment of physical capital in productive enterprises and no where has this been brought out more clearly than in China under the leadership of Mao (see Gray 1974: 62 - 64). There is still a shortage of skilled manpower in Singapore today particularly in the technician and sub-professional classes. So the predominantly academic educational system geared in the colonial period to the production of white collar workers is being restructured to allow a technical bias. A considerable number of vocational schools and technical institutes have been built. The streaming of pupils is deferred till the end of secondary two instead of primary six and greater flexibility is allowed for transfer from academic to technical education. At the tertiary level the higher institutions of learning are urged to increase their output of engineers, management and technical personnel. These changes in the educational system are essential for the success of Singapore's industrialization programme. But what Singapore will in the near future have to come to grips with is that with an increasingly skilled labour force coupled with a declining birth rate, wages may rise above its present level. Rising domestic wages will make Singapore increasingly uncompetitive with other Asian countries and contribute to declining foreign investment. However the Singapore Government has taken measures in recent years

to create a link with high-paid labour in the West instead of being compared to cheap labour in Asian countries. The Government has consciously sought more skill-intensive industries and because they employ more sophisticated and automated machines, they can pay higher wages. This new development raised general wage rates and forced the low wage factories to do likewise, increasing productivity by using better machines, or to move to a low-wage country. The older factories whose products had a high labour content - flour mills, sawmills, textiles, simple assembly of integrated circuits - stopped expansion in Singapore. Some have moved out, first to Malaysia and later to Indonesia. Some have moved to Thailand, and others are planning to move to Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. Small Singapore shipyards are expanding abroad instead of in Singapore, and Singaporean shipbuilders and ship-repairers are in joint ventures with the Philippines, and are discussing terms with Bangladesh. Singapore entrepreneurs are caught in the cycle of change as rising costs and keener competition force them to look for new low-wage countries with good workers and stable social and political conditions. Only in this way can they stay competitive. The Singapore Government actively encourages this for the transfer of labour-intensive industries frees valuable land and labour in Singapore for higher skill and capital-intensive factories. These are but recent trends. To arrive at this level of industrial development, the Singapore Government had first to mobilize its labour force. Its cooperation was enforced from the very beginning of the industrialization programme through the legislation of several measures. The discussion of the development of Singapore must take into account its political and administrative structure.

Apart from changes made to the educational sector to satisfy the industrial sector's requirement, various economic and fiscal incentives have been employed to woo foreign capital. The first of these, the Pioneer Industries Ordinance 1959 served in the initial stage to fill Jurong Industrial Estate with industries mainly of the import-substituting type. (Located at the south-west of the Republic, the site of the Jurong Industrial Estate has been transformed from hilly and swampy terrain to an almost level platform between 1961 and 1966, providing adequate space for heavy and light industries). Among other things the Ordinance provided exemption from payment of company tax for 5 years. This was succeeded by the Economic Expansion Incentives Act of 1967 which reduced company tax from 40 per cent to 4 per cent for export orientated industries for a period of 15 years. In 1968 after the announcement of the British military pullout, the Employment Bill and Industrial Relations Ordinance were passed, this time directed at attracting foreign investors with the 'highest discipline in labour relations' (You & Lim 1971: 20). A new immigration scheme was also established enabling foreign investors to bring in experts in certain technical fields and for those who invested a certain minimum amount of capital in the industrial field to become eligible to apply for permanent residence. Foreign investors from many countries too enjoyed double taxation relief. By 1978 the total investment commitments reached \$530 million of which 6 per cent are by local investors (Far Eastern Economic Review 25th Aug. 1978: 48).

The labour laws of 1959 were enacted to ensure industrial stability: industrial disputes were to be settled through collective bargaining, conciliation and arbitration. The Employment Act of 1968 forced workers into making the most stringent sacrifices. It made

arbitration compulsory, curtailed the unions' right to strike, gave management sole jurisdiction in hiring and firing and transfers, increased working hours and reduced overtime as well as cut back retirement benefits and maternity and sick leave. This Act was fully endorsed by the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC), a confederation with fifty-three affiliates. The NTUC is no longer a powerful economic and political force, but one which has been tamed into an awareness of its limitations and constantly abides by them. The PAP effectively purged the organized labour movement of its left-wing leadership between 1960 and 1970, and cancelled the registration of left-wing unions. Only the NTUC maintains any semblance of liaison between workers and the government. However government subsidy accounts for some 90 per cent of the NTUC's running expenses (Buchanan 1972: 297), and government employment policy gains respectability through endorsement by NTUC leaders. While self-interest has been the prime mover of Hong Kong's economic growth (Potter 1964: 5), Singapore's has concentrated on appeals to overriding national aims. So, what has emerged is that the Singapore labour force must be skilled, industrious, and docile: they have to conform to a wide range of rules and regulations, and are forced to receive low wages in order to continue to attract a continual flow of investments from abroad and at the same time ensure that invested capital does not take flight. What then is of sociological significance is that both for the illiterate and semi-literate, the commercial sector becomes especially attractive.

The factory situation provides regular employment and steady income part of which a person can save but essentially it is a closed mobility system. Well paid white collar and supervisory posts are out

of most workers' reach, for these are the preserve of those with qualifications and a training gained before entering in industrial employment. As in Ikeja in Nigeria (Peace 1974) wealth, prestige and local community political influence are the preserve of the uneducated and semi-literate marketplace traders, general provisions store owners, and contractors. These men are an 'elite' in Nadel's (1956) sense, an imitable reference group that provides a model for the aspirations of the unskilled and uneducated. These self-employed occupational groups are perceived to be less dependent or 'exploited' than others such as industrial workers and so entry into the former type of occupation is sought by many whether in Nigeria or Singapore. But a distinction must be drawn between Singapore marketplace traders on the one hand and most small scale traders in the Third World on the other, although Buchanan (1972) had argued otherwise. He asserted that between 1967 and 1970 secondary employment in Singapore increased at a rate faster than during previous years but that the growth and structure of the Singapore economy are such that the labour force has expanded out of all proportion to the increase in productive and profitable means of employment. This has meant not only continuing high levels of unemployment but also a large concentration of people in small scale tertiary activities such as hawking, domestic service, trishaw-peddling and 'pirate-taxi' driving (Buchanan 1972: 147 - 148). To Buchanan small scale trading in Singapore is an attempt to cope with poverty, a 'marginal' business, and a reflection of poverty and near poverty amongst a large section of the population. On the contrary the Singaporean traders are not like the 'micro-traders', the 100,000 little men who clip a few shillings off the handling of minute amounts of palm-oil, the tens of thousands of market women who make pennies or fractions of pennies out of selling relish, matches, fish, mirrors, or

kerosene in the markets (Worsley 1969: 217). For these traders, like some of their African counterparts (Cohen 1969), marketplace trading is serious business. Large sums of money are involved and the operations yield sizeable profits and steady incomes to the men who are involved. In Singapore, if it was not so profitable, the government would not have had to impose measures to keep numbers from increasing. Government controls as well as the effects of industrial development in Singapore have on the whole been beneficial to marketplace traders. These traders are remarkably prosperous by Asian, African or Latin American standards. During the whole period of field work among marketplace traders one of the most topical subjects among those in government was to devise a system of taxation of these traders. From the marketplace some of the most expensive commodities are for sale: choice fish, meat, and quality fruits and vegetables. Among the small scale traders there are those who have invested in large-scale business, those who own property, drive air-conditioned automobiles, and among whom modern electrical appliances are commonplace. In the view of many Singaporeans the marketplace traders are some of the richest people in Singapore. Together with the rest of the population they have derived prosperity from the effects of development within a capitalist framework.

The State and development

The Government's participation in the economic development of Singapore is basically that of a stimulant: the provision of economic and social infrastructure, and political stability. Roberts argued that the nature of the facilities needed are such that they must often be provided collectively and through the agency of the

State because private enterprise is reluctant to pay the taxes needed in the social and physical infrastructure of the city as they are not directly profitable (1978: 7). So private enterprise normally puts pressure on the State to provide the infrastructure that contributes directly to its own profitability (good roads, telecommunications and so on). Ooi maintains that political stability more than any other factor is an essential pre-requisite for economic and social development; such advancement in turn will help reduce the economic and social inequalities which make for political unrest (1969: 4). At the international level political stability assumes added importance in a region where politics is often turbulent. At the national level political stability is especially significant in a nation like Singapore so heavily dependent on foreign investment. For this reason alone it has become the PAP Government's platform for remaining in power. They assert that only they are able to provide a stable, effective, efficient and non-corrupt Government. I will discuss how the PAP in fact manages to stay in power later in this section. What I want to consider here are the economic and social infrastructures that have brought about economic development.

Direct Government involvement in industrialization is limited and selective. It formed the International Trading Company (INTRACO) to trade with communist countries, the Neptune Orient Lines to tranship cargo, and has equity participation in some industrial ventures such as shipbuilding and repairing, and electronics and engineering (You & Lim 1971: 21, 26). In Singapore, Government participation in industrialization is largely indirect. It provides industrial sites, the establishment of development agencies and the construction of infrastructural facilities. It is also engaged in export promotion

activities which include the organizing of trade missions abroad, participating in international trade fairs, entering into trade agreements and collecting and disseminating overseas product requirements to local manufacturers. More specifically we have seen that there is a tight control of trade union activities to induce the influx of foreign investments into Singapore. The education system has also been revised to supply industrial workers. In addition the quasi-governmental HDB provides low-cost housing in industrial estates. The provision of housing for its population in different parts of the State has had the immediate effect of expanding the construction sector. Water, gas, and electricity services have been expanded by another statutory board, the Public Utilities Board, to serve the growing economy. The Port of Singapore Authority (PSA) contributes to the rapid rate of growth of the trade sector through the modernization of port facilities including the installation of facilities to handle container cargo. The promotion of tourism through the Tourist Promotion Board contributes to the tourist trade and in the year 1978 the number of visitors had reached 2 million. Last but not least economic growth has been assisted by arresting the explosive population increase prevailing in the late 1950s through the Singapore Family Planning and Population Board. With regards to population growth the city-state has an advantage over other cities that it is able to control inward migration thus not adversely affecting problems of unemployment or placing a strain on its social services.

Singapore is dependent upon trade and commerce, the manufacturing sector, and tourism, which are all in turn heavily dependent on the economic development of the Western World. McGee pointed out that in this sense Singapore's city-state status is both an advantage

and a disadvantage; an advantage because its resources can be fully thrown into the task of development of the economy, and a disadvantage because this economy rests on the political stability of its neighbours and the goodwill and good economics of its trading partners (1976: 68). For this reason its economy has been termed 'fragile' (Buchanan 1972; McGee 1976). But for Singapore a tiny island state with 2.3 million people this seems to be the only way forward. Its high growth rate, low inflation rate, full employment and high investment commitments have been achieved by a Government pursuing a policy linking the country to the world economic system.

The imprint of the Government is everywhere. It has been the co-ordinating, driving and aggressive force in the economic, technological, demographic and social transformation of Singapore. But success has been achieved at the expense of democratic practices. In order to achieve development, 'dialectical' processes (Wertheim 1974: 318) are curtailed and emancipation forces from below are discouraged. But as Wertheim has aptly demonstrated, economic development is not a one-way process initiated from above by the leadership; any social process is a two-way affair of interaction and no process started from above takes root without the actual involvement of the people who must be mobilized to take an active part therein (1974: 318). So, to achieve success the PAP has created conditions in the course of its governance that have effected co-operation for its policies from all sections of the society.

Chan's (1976) study provides some insight into the methods employed by the PAP. She showed that from the beginning the political leadership took definite steps to secure the co-operation and partnership of civil servants many of whom were hostile to the PAP leadership

in the early years because it was believed to be pro-communist, anti-English-educated, and contemptuous of a colonially nurtured civil service. The alliance was necessary because the new Government leadership had to rely on the Singapore civil service to carry out its programmes. The result is that the long years of partnership between the PAP and the civil servants have accelerated the fusion of the party and Government identity, a development which has led to the institutionalization of the party as synonymous with the State. Secondly the geographical size of the city-state has contributed to the formation of a centralized and co-ordinated political apparatus. The population is easily mobilized, public policies are rapidly executed, and so too are the communication of ideas, the regulation of behaviour, and the redistribution of goods and services. Thirdly the party leadership has built up an extensive network of local level community bodies that has gained wide acceptance because of the use of local leaders which help to blur the distinction between party and Government. These bodies act to disseminate policy objectives to the people and ensure their attainment. They also provide information on what is happening on the ground so that serious grievances may be responded to before they mount to dangerous proportions. Chan also tried to explain the absence of any aggressive opposition or the rejection of the PAP leadership along psychological lines by emphasizing a Confucian tradition stressing deference to authority and filial piety as the basis of superior-subordinate relations. This is less convincing because there had been opposition in the past. For example in Bukit Timah the PAP lost the constituency to the Barisan between 1963 and 1966. In brief the most important left wing opposition to the PAP emerged in July 1961 when the dissident wing of the party, which included 13 PAP assembly men and 6 prominent trade unionists broke off

to form the Barisan Socialis. The Barisan drew its strength from the Chinese educated and was particularly influential in the rural areas, among the factory workers, hawkers, and old boys associations. In the ensuing years the PAP strengthened its hold over domestic politics with the arrest of opposition leaders and their detention without trial. With the aid of the Government bureaucracy to fight its opponents, the PAP is now the only effective open party in Singapore politics. However the most devastating measure taken to control the population was implemented after Chan completed her study. The ballot is no longer secret because since 1972, voting slips have been indexed. People are aware that the governors are able to discover how they voted. This is really the most important development contributing to the consolidation and maintenance of the predominant position of the PAP. In Singapore a steady and systematic depoliticization has taken place. The style of government seeks to eliminate politics, disdains the need for conciliation and trusts in the expertise and judgement of the leadership to plan and implement its plans with complete and irrevocable power (Chan 1976: 232 - 233). So, unlike the illiterate peasants in other societies able to say 'no' to government officials who sought to manipulate them (see Bailey 1957; Banfield 1958; Foster 1965), the urban population of Singapore say 'yes' to virtually all changes initiated from above. The absence of resistance is not from the lack of a strong sense of tradition but from the tight stranglehold that has been achieved over the population under the PAP leadership. As an informant lamented,

the People's Action Party has been transformed into merely an Action Party; when they tell us to walk, we walk, and when they tell us to run, we run.

But the stifling of opposition has contributed to Singapore's rapid economic development; the PAP Government has been able to uphold the pace of economic development and prosperity amid changing external forces. Furthermore the continuity in political leadership undoubtedly contributed to political stability. In Singapore the State is very much in control. The study of Bukit Timah marketplaces illustrates the dynamics of this control.

Chapter One

Footnotes

- 1 In 1977 the World Bank attempted to reclassify Singapore as a developed nation but faced with the prospect of losing its share of handouts from the IMF gold auction and more important, risking the loss of preferential status for the Republic's manufactured goods exports to developed nations, Singapore convinced the World Bank that its economy is still uncertain. This is because of Singapore's tiny size, the total absence of natural resources, the comparatively lowly skills of its workforce, and that much of Singapore's wealth is generated by and retained by the small expatriate population. The director of the Economic Research Centre pointed out that although Singapore had a per capita income of about \$6,250, 70 per cent of its wage earners received less than \$400 a month in 1977. So, for the time being Singapore remains within the ranks of the world's developing nations. (Sources: Financial Times 22nd Nov. 1978; Singapore Bulletin Jan. 1978: 6).

Chapter Two

The Setting for Marketplaces

This chapter examines the development of markets in Bukit Timah. The presentation of detail serves to provide additional insight to realize a deeper understanding of the realities of local problems and the processes transforming Bukit Timah into a complex arrangement of four marketplaces and a shops complex in close proximity to one another. Before I begin let us examine Singapore markets in general to provide the background against which Bukit Timah is described.

The development of markets in Singapore

Public markets have been a prominent feature of Singapore trading for well over 150 years. The oldest market in Singapore, Telok Ayer market was referred to by Raffles in 1822 (Buckley 1965: 85). The Singapore Municipality Administration Report of 1895 described the Ellenborough Market built in 1845 (Buckley 1965: 430, 441) as the 'main market' which is always 'well filled and overcrowded' (Singapore Municipality Administration Report 1895: 9). The Clyde Terrace Market built in 1894 was also described in the same enthusiastic manner (Singapore Municipality Administration Report 1895: 9). Originally these public markets were leased to private individuals or partnerships who in turn let stalls to different traders. For example, the Ellenborough Market was let to Seng Chin Guan at \$3,405 a month under a lease that ran until 31st July 1899 and the Clyde Terrace Market was initially let to Seng Yong Cheng at \$3,381 a month and then

subsequently to Chop Chin Heap Heng for three years from the 1st March 1898 at \$5,000 a month. This type of arrangement continued until 1909 when the arrangement for these markets together with another were taken over by the authorities at the expiration of their leases (Singapore Municipality Administration Report 1909: 11). This move was taken because the leasees had failed to maintain order and cleanliness but more important, had taken advantage of the popularity of market stalls by imposing unauthorized fees on traders. Other forms of abuse were rampant. These included the payment of \$2 to \$3 a month as a sort of quit-rent to former occupiers of stalls who had ceased to trade, but who, for this payment, had transferred their imaginary rights in a stall of which they never were more than tenants (Singapore Municipality Administration Report 1893: 6 - 7). Sometimes this payment was exacted on behalf of persons who were dead or had retired to China. Another device by sellers of one class of goods was for a few traders who were in league or in partnership to monopolize a large number of stalls under various names and so kept out competitors who might lower prices. The measure to control activities in public markets also occurred within the decade when legislation was implemented to control increasing numbers of private markets whose popularity in many instances exceeded that of public markets.

Registration of privately owned markets commenced in 1905 (Singapore Municipality Administration Report 1905: 26) and the By-laws for the registration of hawkers setting up stalls in public streets were enacted in 1907 (Singapore Municipality Administration Report 1907: 9). Before these the authorities had maintained a laissez-faire attitude towards the establishment of private markets. Such an attitude had been recorded in 1899 when 'irregular street markets'

were observed in the centre of Singapore's Chinatown (Singapore Municipality Administration Report 1899: 16). After World War II the establishment of further private markets was discouraged. The causes for the reversal of government policy were attributed to firstly that private markets were solely concerned with profit much to the detriment of the housewife who had to pay higher prices for commodities, and secondly that they were invariably kept under unhygienic conditions (Report of the Rural Board, Singapore 1949: 11). The responsibility for the establishment and administration of markets is currently with one government and three quasi-government bodies.

In October 1976 there were one hundred markets; seventy-eight are public and twenty-two private.¹ Of the former, thirty-four are administered by the Hawkers Department, forty-one by the HDB, two by the PSA, and one by the Jurong Town Corporation (JTC). Marketplaces operating in locales administered by the statutory boards come under the control of each respective body.

The majority of marketplaces are concentrated in the City Area where the population is most dense (Figure 1). A higher proportion of private markets are located outside the City Area, a reflection of the neglect of the needs of more rural residents by the State resulting in the vacuum being filled by private entrepreneurs. Traditionally most marketplaces were situated at strategic positions in the transport and communications network. Very frequently they are named after the road upon which they are located; for example, the Jurong 10 m.s. Market at the tenth milestone on Jurong Road, and the Carpenter Street Market on Carpenter Street (Singapore Guide and Street Directory 1972: 85 - 87).² However because of the intensification of the public

housing programme from the 1960s onwards, marketplaces have been established on the various public housing estates dispersed throughout the Republic (Tan 1975: 195 - 197). The Senior Parliamentary Secretary (Environment), Mr Chor Yeok Eng disclosed that the government planned to build thirty-seven more markets and food centres in the next five years (1978 - 82) with a total of more than 7,300 stalls mainly at HDB estates or other statutory board estates (The Straits Times 18th March 1978). What I wish to emphasize here is that the increase in market numbers in no way suggests an upsurge in the number of traders: the stalls will be filled by registered traders currently operating from street and temporary sites. The relocation of street traders into public marketplaces is for purposes of control: marketing activities may be regulated, abuses averted, and fees exacted.

Public marketplaces are divided into Class A or B markets; the former are located at densely populated sites where fees are proportionately higher, and the latter are smaller marketplaces in less densely populated neighbourhoods. These traders pay the Hawkers Department fees ranging from \$10 to \$60 a month.³ Fees are paid on a three months advance basis and this method of payment has been enforced since 1970 in the place of the monthly collection (Chan 1976: 84). Additional costs such as water and/or electricity are borne by respective stallholders at public markets while at private markets, these are largely provided by the market owner.

Traders in private marketplaces pay fees on a monthly basis to private individuals. The collection of these fees is shrewdly timed to coincide with a weekend when business is brisk. In Bukit Timah fees range from \$3 to \$25.60 a month, the upper limit being paid by tenants

of proper stalls and the lower by traders squatting along passageways selling from overturned boxes or rough tables. The private landlords in turn pay an annual licence fee to the Hawkers Department. These fees vary as follows for markets outside residential and industrial areas of statutory boards:

\$6 per stall or pitch per annum (whether or not the stall or pitch is occupied), subject to -

- i) a minimum fee of \$240 per annum and a maximum fee of \$360 per annum, for private markets not exceeding 80 stalls or pitches;
- ii) a maximum fee of \$720 per annum, for private markets of more than 80 stalls or pitches (Government Gazette Subsidiary Legislation Supplement 30 December 1969: 2).

The private landlords whose market sites are in residential and industrial areas of statutory boards pay an uniform fee of \$600 per annum to the Hawkers Department. As for HDB market stallholders, fees calculated monthly are as follows:

Poultry	\$40
Meat	30
Fish	25
Vegetable, miscellaneous	20
Dry goods sold at 'lock-up' shops	
Corner shop	\$50
Middle shop	40
Small shop	30
Open pitches	
2.7m x 1.2m	\$15
1.8m x 1.2m	10

As for the number of marketplace traders, 14,809 were enumerated in 1975 (Koh 1975: 4)⁴ a figure constituting 48.9 per cent (N=30,275) of the total number of licensed hawkers in Singapore.⁵ The vast majority of these marketplace traders are professionals, persons engaged in buying and selling as their primary occupation. Only a small proportion are primarily concerned with the sale of their own produce. As we have previously seen, the rapid demise of primary producer-sellers over the last twenty years is an effect of the Government's policy of releasing valuable land for industries, public housing and a modern transportation network. Singapore imports its subsistence requirements while its people engage in manufacturing industries with a higher volume of net returns.

The development of Bukit Timah markets

The Old Market

In its structure and organization the Old Market (老巴剎) was a 'standard market', a terminology developed by Skinner (1964, 1965). In his analysis of central places (a city, town or other nucleated settlement with central service functions), Skinner assumed that the economic function of a settlement is consistently associated with its position in marketing systems which are arranged in a regular hierarchy. Accordingly the market town is limited to three types of central places positioned at adjacent levels of the hierarchical system of economic centres, and each of the three corresponds to a type of market. So at the lowest of these three levels is the standard market and in ascending order the other two types are termed the 'intermediate market' and the 'central market'. That type of rural market which

provided for the exchange of goods produced within the market's dependent area, but more important which serves as the starting point for the upward flow of agricultural products and craft items into the higher reaches of the marketing system and which is also the termination of the downward flow of imported items for rural consumption is the standard market. In contrast the central market is situated at a strategic site in the transportation network and has important wholesaling functions. Its facilities are designed on the one hand to receive imported items and distribute them within its dependent area and on the other, to collect local products and export them to other central markets or higher level urban centres. As for the intermediate market it has an intermediate position in the vertical flow of goods and services both ways. The site of a standard market is termed a 'standard market town' and the 'intermediate market town' and 'central market town' are similarly defined. So, the origin of Bukit Timah settlement was that of a standard market town.

The Old Market was established towards the end of the nineteenth century. It had served as a source of necessary goods and services unavailable in the village community and as an outlet for local produce. In the early 1920s the Old Market served a town of a few hundred whose main occupation was plantation work (mainly rubber but also some pineapple and mangosteen) and mixed farming. The local farmers produced vegetables, tropical fruits, and raised pigs and poultry. Those who produced more than their household requirements brought their surplus to the Old Market. Some who did not trade personally at the Old Market contracted their produce to agents who sold it to market traders as well as directly to consumers. City traders and distributors also purchased vegetables and fruits from the

Old Market and in turn supplied household goods and imported foodstuffs such as rice, dried prawns and a wide variety of preserved food. Informants reminisced that in the early days they relied upon bullock carts to commute between the Old Market and the main supply centres like Ellenborough Market and Clyde Terrace Market some 17 kilometres away. Both the Ellenborough and Clyde Terrace Markets were and continue to function as intermediate markets in terms of the central place typology utilized by Skinner. Another important supply centre is in the city. The latter does not have any marketplace as such but is defined by traders as the area comprising Hong Kong Street, Carpenter Street, Upper Circular Road, New Bridge Road, and Tew Chew Street, where several shops engage in wholesaling functions, receive imports, and distribute them to the hinterland and lesser markets.

The Old Market was a major focus of the rural social structure. Shops and residences sprang up around it. The village that evolved was modelled on villages in China.⁶ It had a certain number of communal enterprises, the market, a temple, a graveyard owned by the dominant clan (in this instance modified by the overseas Chinese to encompass all the local Teochew population), and a school often controlled by the dominant clan (here again adapted to local conditions) but to which village children who could pay the fee or receive sponsorship were admitted (see Newell 1962). To outsiders the village was known as the Beh Chia Loh Boey (Hokkien); that is, the 'terminal of the horse carriage way' because at one stage it was the terminal of the Bukit Timah Road beyond which was jungle. On the other hand the local inhabitants referred to the Old Market and its immediate neighbourhood as Kang-ka (Hokkien) 'port', the reason being that a large monsoon drain flowed past the front of the Old Market. This

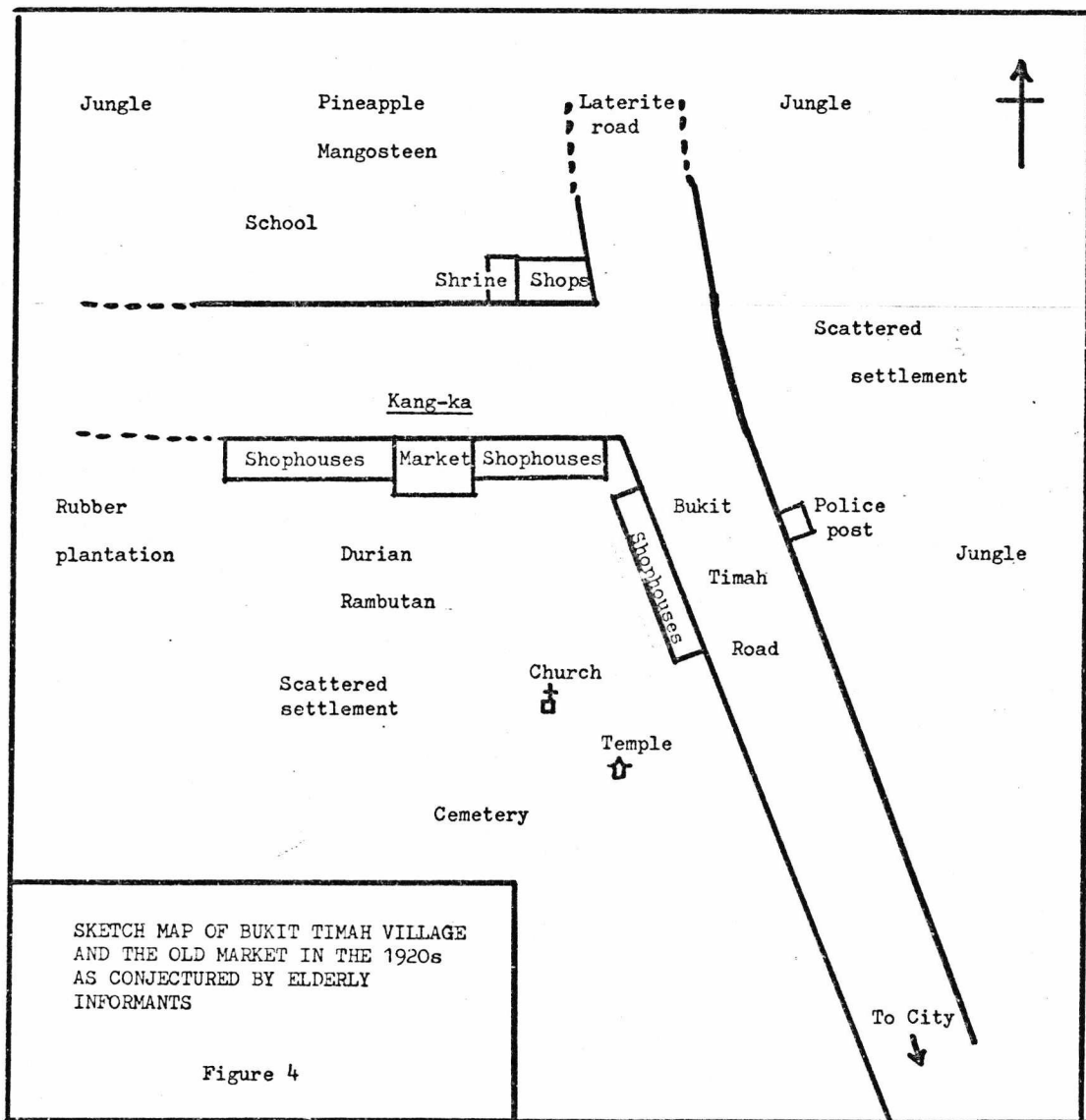
expression continues to be used by older marketplace traders and long-resident villagers. Figure 4 shows the location of the Old Market in the early twenties as suggested by informants.

In the early years marketing hours at the Old Market were short. Selling began at about 6 a.m. and reached a peak by about 7 a.m. after which activity rapidly diminished. By 9 a.m. the marketplace was virtually deserted. However, despite the short hours, the market was continuous rather than periodic, operating a seven-day week. Although much of the business took place in the marketplace some traders peddled their goods from house to house during off-peak hours to increase their sales. One such trader is Old Loh who daily tramped over a radius of 3 kilometres bringing his vegetables to the homes of settlers with the aid of a carrying pole.⁷

With the rise in population the number of stalls and variety of goods available increased. Stallholders encroached onto pedestrian paths and onto every available space at the front of the marketplace. This problem of congestion was finally relieved in July 1947 with the opening of the Beauty World Market (BWM). The opening of BWM also signalled the beginning of the decline of the Old Market.

Beauty World Market

At the beginning of World War II, two friends, Kwan and Giam, both Hokchia⁸ and now both dead, obtained permission from the occupying Japanese authorities to operate an amusement park. This had a raised stage (later the site of Beauty World Town Market),⁹ a dance hall, coffee parlours, and a large gambling hall where every known Chinese game of chance¹⁰ was played including cards, dominoes, fan-tan or dice,



and chap ji kee (Colony of Singapore Annual Report 1950, 1951; Ying 1969).¹¹ The whole complex was known as the Tai Tong Ah Amusement Park.¹² Its popularity declined in the post-war period and Giam applied for permission to the British authorities to convert the park to a marketplace. He is reputed to have observed the growing demand for market space at the Old Market. The licence was finally issued in 1949 although the authorities were aware of the existence of the market in 1948. As for the name of the marketplace, 'Beauty' is the name of Giam's eldest daughter by his second wife and 'World' is a reminder of its previous existence when it was an amusement park.¹³

When the site of the marketplace was an amusement park, the land had been leased to Giam, the ground tenant. In 1953 a disagreement within the landlord's household prompted the land sale. The livelihood of the market traders was seriously jeopardized as Giam, a noted gambler and drinker, did not have the resources to purchase the site. In the event of it being bought by some other person the market could have been demolished for a residential cum business complex. Twenty-six traders including Giam, reacted to this threat and contributed varying sums to more than the \$80,000 required to buy the property. Instead of compensating Giam for what he had spent on the structure of the marketplace, that is, the roof, stalls and other fixtures, the arrangement decided was for him to continue to 'own' the market and retain the lease and pay the ground rental to the new owners (which of course included himself). As shopkeeper Lim recalled,

We allowed him to continue to be our towkay.¹⁴

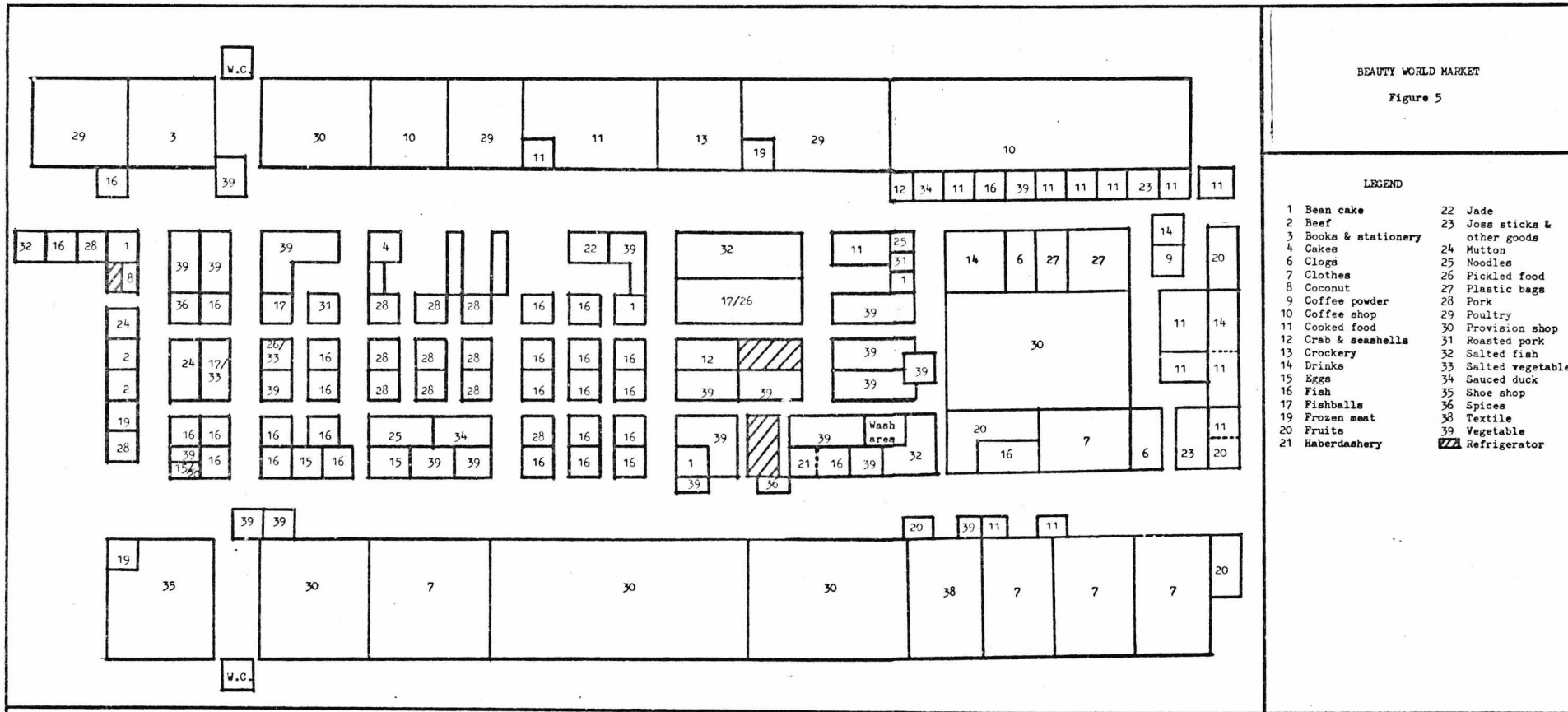
The new owners officially registered themselves as a corporate body in the name of Hwa Liang Private Limited (HLPL). Most of the original

members of the HLPL continue to trade in the marketplace. According to Lim the HLPL has undergone some changes in ownership: some sold their shares to other traders and others have sold and then repurchased. Marketplace traders have the capacity to organize within an economic setting. We shall see in due course that they are also involved in the social, political and religious life of Bukit Timah.

In 1972 the HLPL sought official approval to renovate the marketplace. The request was accepted on condition that a shopping centre be built; an emporium accommodating a supermarket and many shop units dealing in a wide range of goods such as textile, clothing, footwear and household requirements. Confronted with the Government proposal the traders claimed that they lacked the necessary capital for such a major undertaking. But more importantly they estimated that such a project would take three years to complete and during that period they would be deprived of their main, and to many, only livelihood. The Government action was in fact aimed at controlling the activities of traders operating at private marketplaces. It also illustrates its eagerness to promote economies of scale and to encourage the demise of the 'inefficient' small scale sector. The Government has lost sight of the fact that the commodities and services of small scale businessmen are distinctive, and there is a continuing demand for them especially from among the lower socio-economic strata of the population (see Yeh 1972: 47 - 48). For example, Yeh's survey of HDB households showed that the demand for hawkers is higher among households with lower income and the situation is reversed for households with higher income. As for raw commodities specialized in by the majority of marketplace traders, their rigorous work schedule provides fresh products demanded by consumers of all classes of society.

The ground rent for BWM charged by the HLPL has remained at \$120 a month for more than twenty years,¹⁵ though during the early 1970s the HLPL contemplated raising it. The present owner of the marketplace structure, one of Giam's widows, responded that she would have to double the rent of the marketplace stalls which had also remained unaltered at \$25.60 to cover increased costs. The result was that neither party increased their rentals. The rent charged by the HLPL is indeed nominal in contrast to that netted from stall rents by Mrs Giam: more than \$3,500 ($\25.60×144 stalls). After taking care of her major expenditure, some \$700 being wages of four labourers employed to clean the marketplace, the licence fee averaging \$60 a month, the water rates, power, and garbage disposal bill, she is still very comfortably off. In addition she collects rents from traders at Beauty World Town Market whose particulars are not known by the authorities, and we shall see towards the end of this discussion that she charges large sums for altering her records when new tenants take over stalls or shops. She has also invested in the Beauty World Town shops complex and a small hotel in the city. My impression is that she has cleverly pulled the wool over the eyes of the HLPL by exaggerating her expenditure and convinced them that her income from the marketplace is dismal.

BWM expanded rapidly, developing from a standard market structure to become a higher level intermediate market supplying lesser markets and itinerants. The Hawkers Department enumerated thirty-four stalls in 1950. In 1975 there were 145 stalls and in March 1976, there were 166 stalls listed on official records.¹⁶ These latest figures are somewhat confused and do not correspond with my personal enumeration of 144 stalls and shops (Figure 5). The expansion of BWM contributed directly to the loss in importance of the Old Market, both stallholders



and customers being attracted to the new locale. The ensuing economic rivalry this generated was even reflected in the religious arena. It began when business at the Old Market worsened. Yeo, one of the traders there (now deceased) proposed that, instead of stalls worshipping individually during the first day of the lunar Seventh Moon, they held a spectacular joint celebration to appeal to the Hungry Ghosts as well as Chinese deities for good business for the rest of the year. Contributions from marketplace traders as well as from their associates were collected. There were street theatricals, decorated arches, flags, buntings and lighted mobiles. Animals were sacrificed and there was an abundance of ritual offerings of raw, cooked and canned food. The lost souls and deities were richly bribed! Similarly BWM also organized its own Hungry Ghost celebrations and there was intense rivalry for the best show. Large amounts of money were mobilized; for example, in 1950, BWM spent \$24,000 and the Old Market \$11,000. Each marketplace competed to put up the best decorations, to engage the best street theatrical troupe and to stretch the performances for the most number of days. BWM had the advantage of more traders as well as the support of a jewellery dealer in the city who donated large sums and used the occasion to advertise his shop. The lack of wealthy patrons for the Old Market did not hinder it from putting up an equally spectacular display. Market traders from both still reminiscent nostalgically about the splendour of their respective Hungry Ghost celebrations in the 1950s which drew crowds and visitors from as far as Kuala Lumpur. Besides ritual activities, another occasion for the expression of the rivalry was during the Chinese New Year when each would compete to put up the longest string of fire-crackers. A twenty-cents collection from each stall was made daily and several thousands of dollars worth of fireworks were exploded. Each

marketplace was out to show that they could withstand competition from many quarters; whether economic, religious or traditional. Over time, the difficulties involved in organizing festivals on that scale proved beyond control. There were personality clashes and internal conflict. The authorities banning the firing of crackers under the Dangerous Fireworks Act of 1972 also had an effect (see Wong 1967: 92 - 99). What is of sociological significance is that the threat of inter-market competition gives rise to intra-market unity. Competition among stallholders, always keen, is relegated to the background. But in the event of economic and ritual competition among markets, all the marketplaces in the same neighbourhood are united and Bukit Timah has demonstrated for more than a decade that it predominates in Singapore as a whole.

The popularity of BWM coupled with the increasing unavailability of stalls because of the shift in the economic structure of Singapore has in recent years given rise to a complicated set of transactions before a tenancy can be secured. Large sums have to be offered to the previous occupier as well as to the marketplace owner. Although in theory all traders are tenants, in practice, each regards himself as 'owner' and tenancies are bought and sold freely. The sale of tenancies involves two payments: firstly there is the fee charged by Mrs Giam to the new tenant, and secondly 'tea money', the sum demanded by the previous occupier from the new tenant. Originally Mrs Giam did not charge for altering the names. She then began to demand a token fee; for example, in 1967, \$1.60. By 1975 it was \$150 and in April 1976, \$300 which escalated to \$500 in September 1976. In the case of shop premises the fee is as much as \$2,000. This practice is illegal since these amounts are not recorded and are not taxed.

The owner pays a tax only on the relatively low rental she receives according to contract. Similar irregularities have been observed by Galaska (1969: 192) in Thailand, Szanton (1972: 17) and Takahashi (1970: 79 - 81) in the Philippines, and Young (1971: 198 - 199) in the New Territories of Hong Kong. Such gifts serve to soften the sentiments of the two parties toward one another and to symbolize the reciprocity which is conceived as the foundation of their relationship (see Wolf 1966: 52). In Beauty World the gift also operates as a form of compensation for the absence of rent increases.

Tea money is the common term among marketplace traders used to specify the cash exchanged between the occupant of a business premise and a newcomer who wishes to buy it for similar or other business. Once the transactions are complete, the previous occupier does not retain any more rights to the stall or shop. The sum of money involved is often negotiable, and different stalls located at different parts of the marketplace fetch different prices. About ten years ago a stall on the common passageway to BWM and Beauty World Town Market fetched \$4,900. It was paid by a bean cake cum egg seller to the previous tenant who had changed his occupation. Eight years ago a greengrocer, who had no permanent site but squatted wherever he thought the crowd would be, paid \$400 in tea money for a small stall inside one end of BWM. In 1974 another greengrocer paid \$12,000 to the previous tenant for rights to his stall as the stall is the largest in the marketplace and it is located at one of the entrances. The butcher whose stall adjoins it cashed in on the high prices negotiable for that part of the market and soon after 'sold' the half of his stall that encroached on the passageway for \$9,000 to a cake seller. Towards the end of 1975 when the street market at Jurong Kechil Road was about to

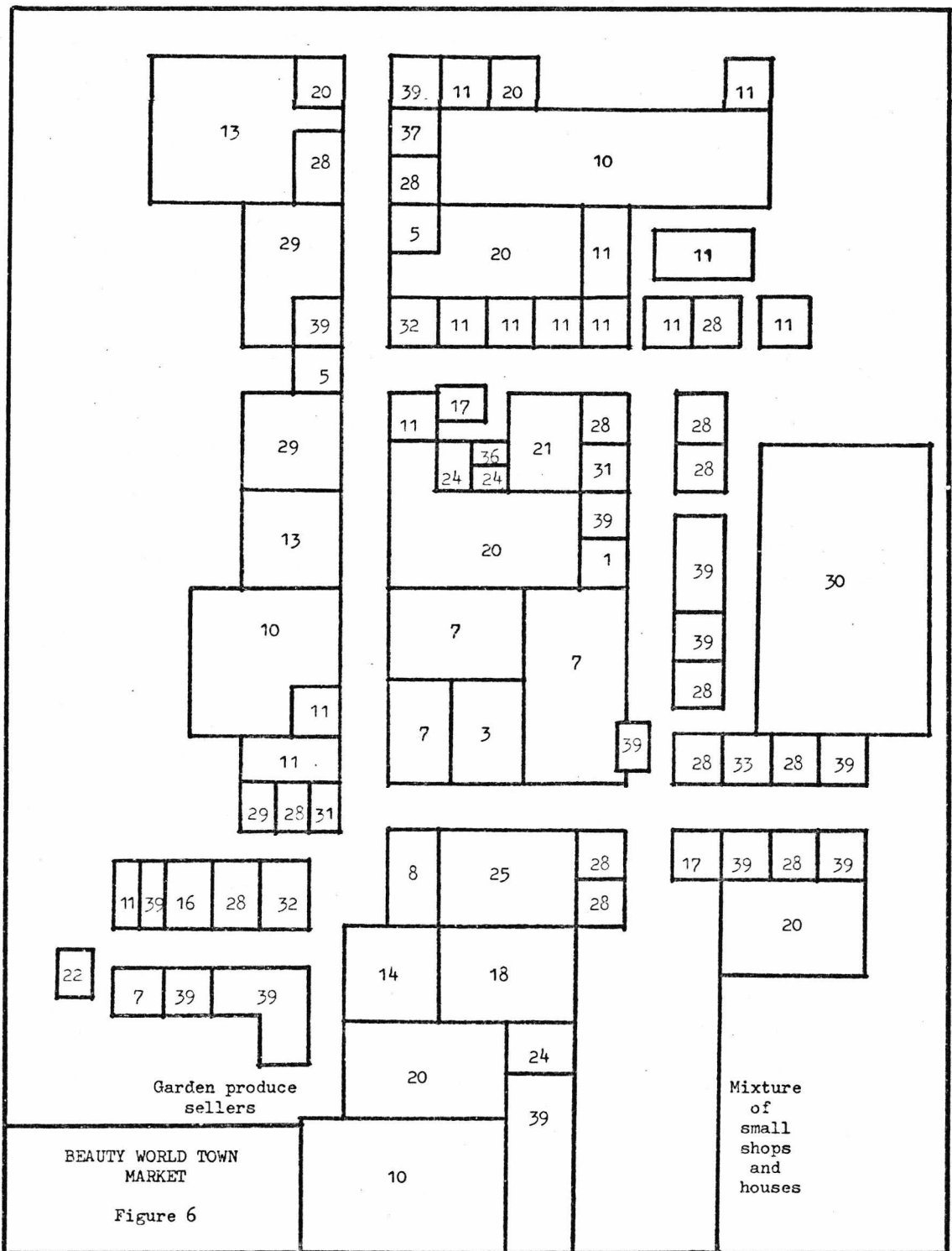
be resited to the New Market, a pork seller and a sauced duck seller each secured stalls at BWM at \$3,000 respectively. This was regarded as low as each stall was valued by other traders to be twice as much. However the previous tenant of the two stalls, a butcher, was under pressure of debt and had no choice but to accept the low offers. From the time tea money became instituted more than twenty years ago at the then average rate of a little more than \$100, the fee has escalated in great leaps and bounds. As fishmonger Yeo recalled, when he paid \$300 some twenty years ago his act was then regarded as stupid and the price ridiculous. The methods used to raise cash are discussed in chapter four. What I want to emphasize here is that marketplace traders can at short notice mobilize large amounts of capital even though engaged in small scale trade.

For market traders who are unable to 'buy' stalls, the only alternative is to be a sub-tenant. Stalls are sub-let at varying prices depending on locality. A greengrocer was able to sub-let her stall to a jade seller, at the turn of 1976, for a monthly fee of \$150 as her stall is located on one of the main passageways in the marketplace. Four months later the old sea-cucumber seller in the middle of the marketplace decided to retire and sub-let his stall to a roasted pork seller for \$90 a month. Similarly at the adjoining Beauty World Town Market, a cooked noodle seller rents her stall for \$280 as she is the fourth sub-tenant: the previous three tenants have taken it in turn to re-let the stall at a profit. Thus there are four tenants in the same stall but only the fourth is trading from it. The authorities have never taken any steps to rectify these irregularities. They are private arrangements widely accepted by traders in private marketplaces. As far as I am aware no trader has lodged any complaint

although some have expressed their disapproval of the system in private conversations. As far as the authorities are concerned when BWM is relocated into a public market in the near future, close supervision will eradicate these abuses.

Beauty World Town Market

BWTM began as an illegal market: traders set up pitches at the exits of BWM to cash in on the large number of customers entering or leaving the latter marketplace. In time the number of traders multiplied and there are now eighty-three stalls and shops dealing in commodities virtually replicating that of BWM (Figure 6). None of the traders here are equipped with proper stalls and make use of rough wooden tables. These traders pay fees to the same landlord as traders in BWM by virtue of the fact that they are operating on what used to be sidewalks of her marketplace. These traders have also encroached onto part of the land upon which the Beauty World Town shops complex is sited. The status of BWTM has consistently been marginal and in theory, it does not exist. However the traders here identify closely with BWM traders and align themselves with the latter in their confrontations with any external force such as the market owner or the authorities. Its present status is that of legal tenants of Beauty World Estate, a situation that emerged because of the Government plans to redevelop the whole of the Beauty World marketplace and shops complex. Ironically imminent government action has given BWTM a legal status it has never possessed. Finally, many of the things said about the religious activities and transactions of business premises in BWM is also found in BWTM.



BEAUTY WORLD TOWN MARKET
Figure 6

LEGEND

- | | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1 Bean cake | 13 Crockery | 22 Jade | 31 Roasted pork |
| 3 Books & stationery | 14 Drinks | 24 Mutton | 32 Salted fish |
| 5 Cigarettes | 16 Fish | 25 Noodle | 33 Salted vegetable |
| 7 Clothes | 17 Fishballs | 28 Pork | 36 Spices |
| 10 Coconut | 18 Flowers | 29 Poultry | 37 Sweets & toys |
| 10 Coffee shop | 20 Fruits | 30 Provision shop | 39 Vegetable |
| 11 Cooked food | 21 Haberdashery | | |

Beauty World Town

Shortly after the land deal for BWM was settled, the piece of land adjoining its northern boundary was offered for sale. This is the site of BWT and part of BWTM. Shopkeeper Lim together with business associates, friends and relatives met to discuss the possibility of buying the land. Shopkeeper Tan who is distantly related to Lim was sent as the representative of this group to negotiate with the landlord. The offer was unsuccessful but as Lim and his associates were seeking to re-negotiate, Tan and seven personal friends and relatives accomplished a coup on their own behalf. The malice borne by the marketplace traders towards Tan, particularly among the older generation, continued to be apparent during the period of field research. Tan and his partners called the new site Beauty World Town.

Shopkeeper Tan is the major shareholder of BWT. He possessed four out of the eight shares of BWT until 1975. Then one of the partners died and his surviving brother also decided to sell off his share. These were bought by Tan and Mrs Giam respectively. Two of Tan's five shares are in his own name, one in his eldest married daughter's name, one in his mother-in-law's name (the mother of his second wife) and one in the name of his second wife's brother. Mrs Giam described this arrangement as follows:

You know what Chinese businessmen are like, they put other people's name so as to avoid income tax.

She herself has two shares, one in her own name and the other in her sister's. The last share belongs to a distant relative of Tan who is also the proprietor of a shop at BWT dealing in cosmetics and children's clothing.

BWT was not developed until 1962. Four blocks of double-storey shophouses containing eighty-six units were built on the site which until then had been left undeveloped and used by petty traders who erected rough shelters and lean-to sheds. The new double-storey shops began trading in 1964 and business was described as extremely poor for the first three years which resulted in rapid turnover of ownership. The situation improved from 1968. This upturn in business activities coincided with the period of rapid economic growth at the national level (Singapore '76: 9). Roads serving the double-storey shops were encroached upon by coffee shops, provision shops, textile shops and numerous other shops and stalls. Each of these single-storey shops and stalls are of plank walls and zinc and canvas roofs. This resulted in rows of haphazardly arranged shops and stalls of varying sizes on the borders of the double-storey shops. Many of these shops and stalls have expanded to sizes larger than the floor area of the double-storey shops and in volume of trade, comparable to those of the latter.

The New Market

The New Market was developed as part of the national policy to accommodate street traders and in turn to control their activities. These considerations include traffic control, health and noise. In 1968/69 the Hawkers Department carried out a registration exercise of all bona fide petty traders (Koh 1975: 4). As a result traders operating on the street at the southern entrances to BWM were registered whereas those trading at the northern appendage were not as they operated on private property. Others trading along different parts of Jalan Jurong Kechil and at the entrance to the Old Market were also

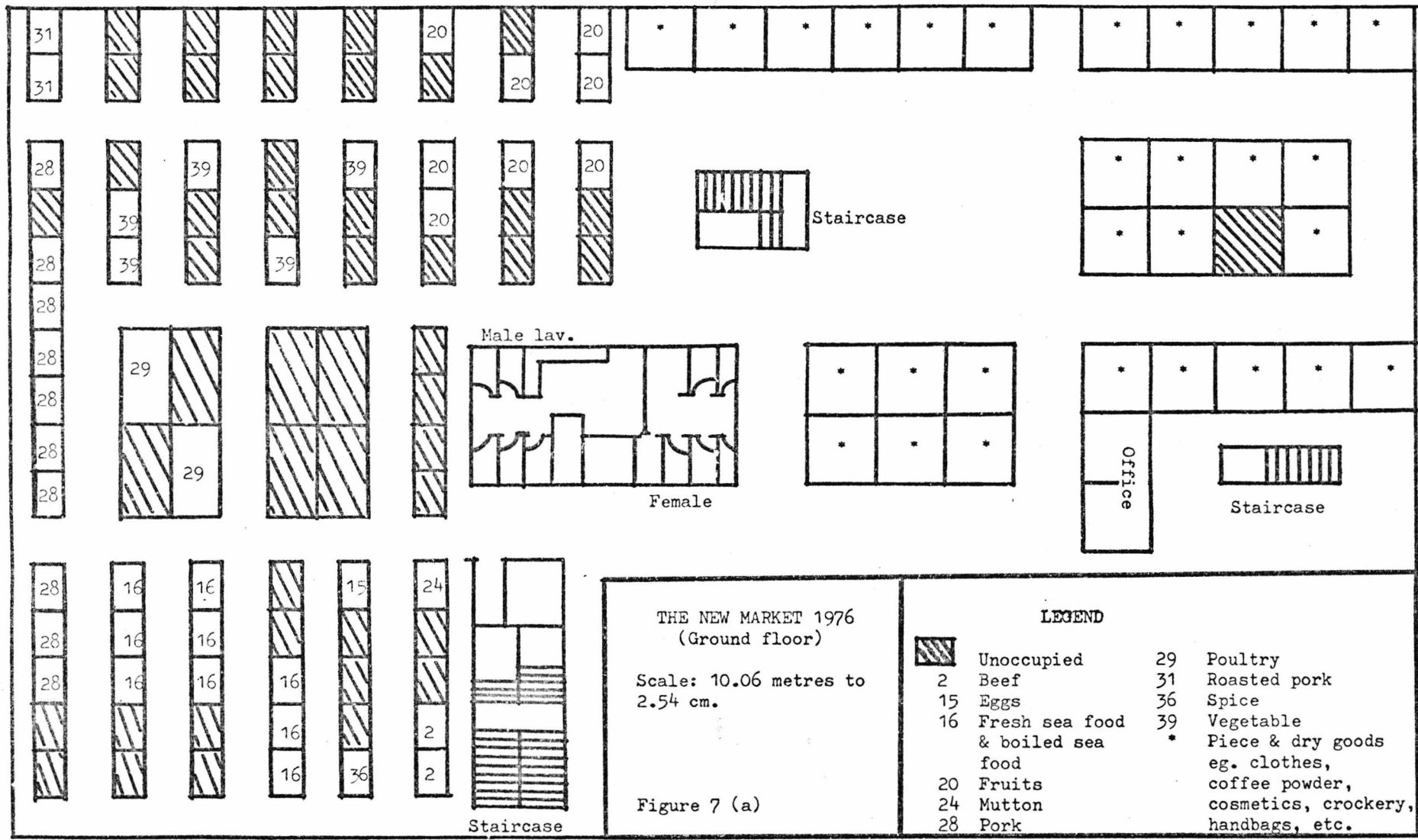
registered. In September 1975 all these traders, numbering some 140 moved into the New Market. In addition about a dozen formerly trading 2½ kilometres from the town were also relocated into the same marketplace. It will be seen in due course that the compulsory concentration of formerly different groups of long established traders at the New Market has implications for the structure and organization of that marketplace.

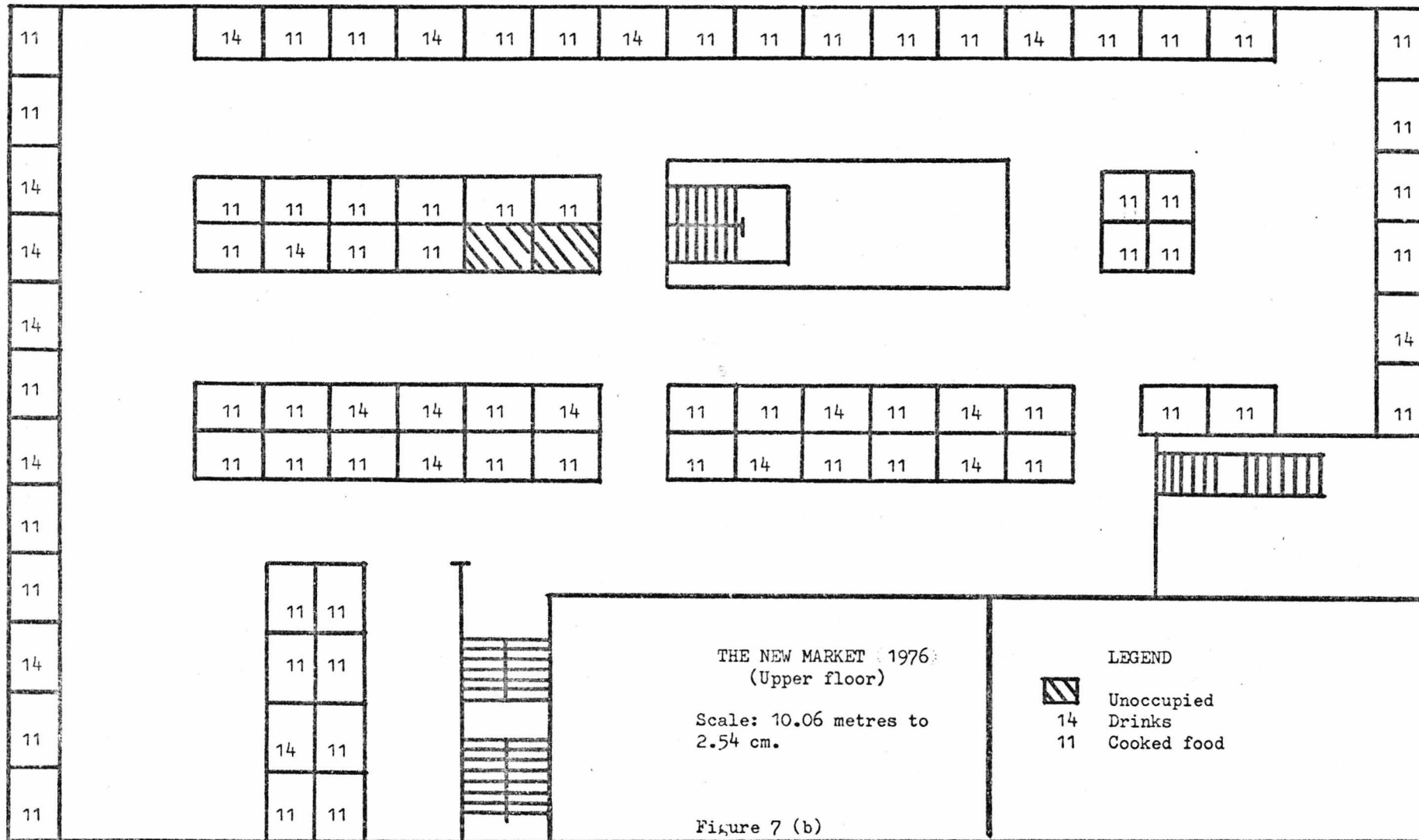
The period immediately prior to relocation raised different reactions from different sections of the local community. Those directly affected, the traders who would be resited, expressed anxiety about the future state of their business to local community leaders, to officials, to their friends and relatives at BWM, and to myself. Few were hopeful. Market traders at BWM were also divided in their opinions on whether the establishment of the New Market would draw trade away. The fears of the majority of the relocated traders proved to be well founded: business was bad. This was confirmed by the public officer in charge of the New Market: 24 per cent of the stalls (N=201) remain vacant. Only the cooked food traders claim to enjoy satisfactory business and only two out of eighty-four had closed down. These traders cater to a special clientele: breakfast for people on their way to work, lunch for office workers, and supper and late night snacks for many more people. As for the sellers of unprocessed and semi-processed commodities, many complain of hardships and a few have turned to other occupations. Some who have friends or relatives trading at BWM or BWTM capitalize upon these primary ties to increase their volume of trade. These new practices will be discussed in chapter four. The crucial issue here is that the problem may have been averted if the planning bureaucracy had had information about the

actual situation before implementing relocation. The total absence of consultation with the recipients of policy measures is common practice in Singapore; more especially among the poorer classes of society, including small scale traders (see See 1978). The bureaucrats are usually members of the upper echelons of society and so insensitive to the needs and aspirations of those socially removed from them. With regards to Bukit Timah, they were concerned with tidying up the town. The removal of the street traders to the New Market forced them into competition with long established marketplaces. These traders had contributed complementary roles to the main core of stallholders within BWM and BWTM. They had survived by capitalizing on the customers drawn to these latter markets. Separated from these, their survival is threatened while that of BWM and BWTM traders is enhanced. In addition the economic collapse of these traders is hastened because of the higher overheads they must pay in the accommodation provided compared to the nominal sum they paid when they were on the street. So redevelopment had caused higher rentals, higher costs of commodities and higher cost of living all round. For the New Market traders their only chance now is to await the permanent relocation of BWM and BWTM out of the neighbourhood. The significance of this Government policy for the economic and social organization of BWM and BWTM will be discussed in detail in later chapters. What is important here is that BWM and BWTM is unlikely to have their petitions met: to be temporarily resited in a nearby site and given priority to return. The Government will make what it has established a paying concern; the New Market had cost the Government \$1.4 million to build (The Straits Times, Singapore 29th March 1976).

A further illustration of the lack of sensitivity of bureaucrats to the needs of small scale traders was within the religious setting. Traders were instructed to move during the first week of September 1975 which coincided with the last few days of the lunar Seventh Moon. The whole of the Seventh Moon is regarded as inauspicious for moving a stall or starting business. As the timetable for the move was set by the authorities who overlooked traditional beliefs for practical reasons, the traders could not alter the date. They could, however, decide when to open for business. Confronted with such restriction, all chose to sacrifice more than a week's income and prepared for business to be resumed during the Eighth Moon. To achieve national objectives, the economic or ritual interests of parochial groups are invariably overlooked by the State.

The New Market is classified a Class A Market. Traders of raw foodstuffs, dry goods including clothing, footwear, toiletries, household goods and utensils are accommodated on the ground floor (Figure 7a). Cooked food and drinks traders are located on the first floor (Figure 7b). During the period before the traders resumed business they improved their stalls: shelves, cabinets, lighting and display signs were added exhibiting the stall name, and in the case of cooked food traders, the variety and prices of the food sold. Traders of raw foodstuff such as pork, fish and vegetable do not display sign boards as their goods are spread over tables. The prices of these commodities fluctuate from time to time depending on their sources of supply.





Conclusion

The last three decades have witnessed the rapid transformation of marketplaces at Bukit Timah town: the traditional marketplace has given way to a complex arrangement of markets that have their origins in both 'natural' processes and Government intrusion. This complexity of marketplaces are inter-connected economically, politically, morally, and ritually. The whole complex is in fact one whole because its traders are involved in a common web of live social relationships which arise from current, mutual interests within the Bukit Timah community and not within specific marketplaces. These narrow boundaries have given way to community boundaries and it is to a discussion of this market community and its significance for social and economic organization that we now turn.

Chapter Two

Footnotes

- 1 Figures supplied by the Singapore Hawkers Department; four other public markets had been completed but were not yet in operation.
- 2 Out of the total of sixty-eight markets listed in the Singapore Guide and Street Directory, fifty-three are named after the main streets on which they are located, fourteen are largely named after the housing estates on which they are located and one is named after the village that it serves.
- 3 The fees payable for a licence for a stall or pitch in a public market are as follows:

<u>Type of stall or pitch</u>	Fee per month	
	<u>Class A Market</u>	<u>Class B Market</u>
a) Stall or pitch selling locally-slaughtered meat	\$25	\$20
b) Stall or pitch selling imported meat	60	40
c) Roast pork and roast duck stall or pitch	25	20
d) Poultry pitch with cages	40	30
e) Poultry pitch without cages	30	20
f) Dressed poultry stall or pitch	25	15
g) Wholesale vegetable pitch	40	30
h) Retail vegetable stall or pitch	15	10
i) Egg stall or pitch	15	10
j) Fruit stall or pitch	25	15
k) Preserved and dried goods stall or pitch	40	20
l) Bean cake and noodle stall or pitch	10	10
m) Fresh fish stall or pitch	25	20
n) Boiled fish stall or pitch	10	10
o) Ground assorted spices stall or pitch	15	10
p) Piece and sundry goods stall or pitch	40	30
q) Cooked food eating stall (large)	50	35
r) Cooked food eating stall (small) - per session (day or night)	25	15
s) Cooked food pitch - per session (day or night)	20	15
t) Miscellaneous pitches - per pitch	20	15
u) Where tinned food is sold in any of the abovementioned stalls or pitches, the additional fee payable is	20	15
v) Where dairy products are sold in any of the abovementioned stalls or pitches the additional fee payable is	20	15

(Source: Singapore Hawkers Department)

Hawker licence fees were increased from January 1978, the increases ranging from \$5 to \$60 per month. The increases will be carried out in three phases in January 1978, 1979 and 1980. Retail vegetable licencees whose commodities are perishable and less profitable, will pay less than the cooked food, fruit and piece and sundry goods traders (Singapore Bulletin January 1978. 2)

- 4 The rest of the licensed hawkers are classified as follows: hawker centres 4 per cent, street pitches 39 per cent, pasar malam 5 per cent, pasar pagi less than 1 per cent, show cases less than 1 per cent, and itinerant 2 per cent.
- 5 Hawkers constitute 3.6 per cent (N=833,525) of the working population in Singapore in 1975.
- 6 Prior to 1933 Chinese immigrants were predominantly male. Female Chinese immigrants began to arrive in considerable numbers, 190,000 between the ages of 18 and 40 during the 1934 - 38 period, when the Aliens Ordinance of 1933 imposed a monthly quota on male migrants. Since the World War II, population growth arose from indigenous births (Singapore '76: 65 - 66).
- 7 Old Loh's present influence over the local community can be attributed to his previous trading pattern that brought him into close contact with the people.
- 8 The Hokchia are a minority Chinese dialect group in Singapore. Together with other minority Chinese dialects, they constitute 4.1 per cent of the total Chinese population of 1,579,866 (Singapore Census of Population 1970: Table 13.9, 256).
- 9 My informant recalled that the stage was the scene of an important meeting of certain Japanese officers when news that they had lost the war was known. Some of those officers were said to have returned to their respective posts at the 13½ kilometres Bukit Timah Road, the present site of the Ford Motors factory, and another at the 10 kilometres Bukit Timah Road, and shot themselves in their heads.
- 10 J. Crawford wrote in 1823:
- The passion for gaming prevades all ranks of the two principal classes of our population, the Chinese and the Malays, to a most unusual and extraordinary extent --- It is necessary, besides, to observe that the practice of gaming, especially in reference to the Chinese, is not a vice of the same character which Europeans are accustomed to contemplate it. It is in fact an amusement and recreation which the most industrious of them are accustomed to resort to (Buckley 1965: 149).
- A less sympathetic approach was taken by Onraet (1942?) who described gambling the besetting sin of all Chinese villages.
- 11 The chap ji kee lottery was the most popular form of lottery among the illiterate and the lower income group of the Chinese population in Singapore from the nineteen twenties until the late sixties when police action curtailed the activities of certain major syndicates with the arrest of key promoters. The chap ji kee lottery appealed to housewives, domestic servants, petty traders, labourers and trishaw-riders. The literal translation of chap ji kee (Hokkien), is twelve sticks. Bets are placed on the numbers 1 to 12. A person has to place a bet on two sets of identical numbers, one from each set, forming the top and bottom numbers like 2/10, 11/7 or 4/4. In

this way the maximum possible number of combinations is 144. This is the 'one way system'. The prize for the winning combination is one hundred times of the amount staked, that is, \$100 for every \$1 staked. A person may bet on one or more combinations at a time. Generally the bet on each combination ranges from \$10 to 10 cents. A variation of the 'one way system' is the parallel combination or the 'two way system' whereby a bet is placed on a combination of two numbers written in a line instead of one on top of the other such as 2:10 instead of 2/10. Such a bet entitles the person to a prize if the winning combination is either 2/10 or 10/2. Such a bet reduces the odds by half and the cash prize is also correspondingly halved. Chap ji kee lottery is a daily affair and the winning combination, said to be the combination that has the least bets, is declared once every twenty-four hours. The Singapore Annual Reports (1950: 122, 1951: 108) describe chap ji kee a colossal swindle. There is also a recognition of the dangers of such illegal lotteries attracting secret societies by the opportunities offered to give the promoters 'protection'.

- 12 It is of interest to note that the name Tai Tong Ah coincided with the first three names of a chap ji kee lottery syndicate that was established during the Japanese Occupation; it was known as the Tai Tong Ah Keong Eng Quan. As both the amusement park and the syndicate similarly organized the chap ji kee lottery, it is probable that the two organizations did liaise with one another (see Ying 1969: 3).
- 13 'Worlds' are a form of amusement park peculiar to westernized cities of the Far East, comprising a permanent fair ground, stalls, cafes, dance halls, and cinemas (Colony of Singapore Master Plan, Report of Survey 1955: 32).
- 14 T'ien (1953: 6) noted that towkay, in origin a Hokkien term is used throughout Malaya and Sarawak to denote the usually Chinese head of a firm or shop.
- 15 The money that has been collected over the years from the ground rent has been kept in a fixed deposit account in a neighbouring bank rather than distributed among the owners. The proportion of money due to each owner will be very little if distributed monthly. It was agreed among the owners that the money be saved for repairs to the marketplace or other unforeseen future expenditure. Shopkeeper Lim, one of two signatories to the savings, has resisted several requests from his partners to invest the accumulated sum in more lucrative institutions like finance companies as the interest rates are higher. He claims that no other institution is as secure as fixed deposit savings in a bank.

16 In March 1976 the following stalls were enumerated at BWM by the Hawkers Department:

<u>Type of product</u>	<u>Frequency of stall/shop</u>
a) Meat: pork	12
mutton	5
beef	2
b) Roast pork/duck	2
c) Poultry	2
d) Dressed poultry	1
e) Vegetable	32
f) Egg	3
g) Fruit	7
h) Dry and sundry goods	19
i) Preserved and dry goods	19
j) Bean cake and noodle	6
k) Fresh sea food	33
l) Boiled sea food	2
m) Ground assorted spice	1
n) Cooked food	11
o) Drinks	4

Chapter Three

Bukit Timah: The Economic Organization of Marketing

Introduction

Bukit Timah is a community; it is a locus of collective economic and social activities (Meadows & Mizruchi 1969: 4). Hillery (1955) demonstrated that despite the diversity of definitions, many sociologists agree that the territorial reference is central and the other important components are social interaction, and common ties such as bonds of kinship, friendship and neighbourhood. Bukit Timah is a local area which meets the full range of a person's physiological, psychological and social requirements. It is a basic unit with which people identify and within which people interact with one another. An informant said,

Our life is completely centered in Bukit Timah the whole year round; we live here, trade here, and only move around here. Here, everyone knows one another.

In brief Bukit Timah affords a kind of isolation: it is the place in which people maintain their homes, earn their livings, rear their children, and in general carry on most of their life activities (see Poplin 1972: 9).

In Bukit Timah people share face-to-face relationships, and everyone is open about their activities, whether economic, political, social, religious or even illegal. In Bukit Timah everyone plays the lottery game: operators are not only safe in the community but also flourish. A business venture, failure, success, or a family tragedy or

accomplishment is immediately known throughout the neighbourhood. In a neighbourhood where primary relationships predominate, the member does not experience that type of anonymity which leaves one feeling isolated and alone, but nor does one enjoy the freedom and privacy that is enjoyed by the city dweller.

Although Bukit Timah can claim all-inclusiveness as a needs-meeting community it is not a completely self sufficient unit. It is involved in a wider economic, social and political network that includes not only other towns but also villages and the city. In other words members of the community are involved in a network reaching out to other people beyond the boundary of Bukit Timah to the rest of the Republic. It is within this broader context that political decisions initiated by the State penetrate into the social organization of Bukit Timah.

Bukit Timah social organization is based on the position and manifold economic and political activities of its marketplace traders. Life in fact is regulated by the social and religious calendar of these traders. In their various roles they run, support and maintain a framework of institutions which ensures the integration of the community into one single social system. But such social cohesiveness is being threatened. Under the effects of rapid redevelopment sweeping all over Singapore, Bukit Timah will illustrate the social change that many well known sociologists have described in evolutionary terms; a change from a society based on community to association, from gemeinschaft to geselleschaft (see Cohen 1969: 2). Urban redevelopment in Bukit Timah will break up long established economic and social institutions. The breakup of the neighbourhood, the scattering of kinsmen, friends and

neighbours, and in turn the creation of social and psychological problems have been extensively studied (e.g. Fried 1967; Gans 1962, 1968). What I set out to examine in this chapter are the economic institutions of marketplaces that urban development may alter. I begin by describing the diversity of trading activities before going on to more general considerations.

The diversity of trading activities

Trade activities range from small scale enterprises that require minimum capital, operate from stalls about the size of writing desks, to provision shop enterprises that require more capital and whose volume of trade and turnover are far more than that of stall enterprises. The large variety of marketplace enterprises represents the different stages of development of marketplace organizations; they are not the end products of the change from periodic to continuous marketing as in some African or even Chinese markets (Hodder & Ukwu 1969; Skinner 1964, 1965). Generally larger enterprises whether among stalls or among shops are able to offer a wider variety of products and a wider range within a particular class of products in contrast to smaller enterprises. In addition larger enterprises are able to offer specialty goods that smaller enterprises are not able to supply being limited by space and of course capital investment. Due to the wide range of marketplace enterprises it is therefore theoretically and empirically useful to examine them as part of a continuum.

At one end of the continuum are enterprises operating from unmarked sites where traders squat with their produce spread out on the floor. At the other end are shop enterprises characteristically furnished with doors, have capacity for storage and display of goods,

display signs in front, operate full business days, display substantial inventories, have systematic book keeping-based planning and use electronic calculators. The main reason for the wide variation in types of enterprises in Beauty World marketplaces is because stalls and shops have been allowed to develop in an unsystematic manner. In fact all the shops originated as stalls and consequently they remain registered with the Hawkers Department even though they no longer resemble stall businesses. All shop proprietors are members of the town's established trading class who have in time organized their activities not only on a larger scale but with increased complexity (see Geertz 1963a: 29): their skills acquired in managing small businesses have equipped them with sufficient knowledge for the management of larger businesses. In the New Market enterprises are basically of three types: 'open' stalls for raw produce being the smallest, stalls for cooked food traders, and 'lock-up shops' being the largest. The sizes of these lock-up shops are not comparable to provision shops in Beauty World which are far larger.

In the marketplace one goes to the stalls for fresh pork, fish, vegetables and other foods common to local diets, and to the provision shops for rice, sugar, salt, cooking oil, canned food, bottled food and other manufactured commodities. Together the stalls and the provision shops complement one another and provide all the food requirements of the people. The large food inventory offered in marketplaces is associated with a high degree of specialization among traders as no individual trader will be able to offer the range of commodities found in a marketplace. Furthermore some of the commodities require the services of specialists before they appear for sale in the marketplace.

The pork traders

There are thirty-seven pork stalls at Bukit Timah. They are distributed as follows: one at the Old Market, twelve at BWM, fourteen at BWTM and ten at the New Market. Of these, thirty-five are individual enterprises, many of which are family based with sons, brothers or spouses assisting. The other two belong to a partnership of three persons forming the largest pork business among all these marketplaces. In this partnership two of the three people are brothers and the third is an inactive partner who took over her late husband's share.

Most pork traders only concern themselves with selling. Few are producer-sellers. In peasant societies where market town and rural areas are separated by wide geographical distances and not bridged by efficient transport systems, peasants find it unprofitable to sell their own produce at marketplaces. In contrast, because of the small size of Singapore and its modern transportation system, the few producer-sellers I have spoken to claim that the chance for profit is greater when all aspects from production to marketing are handled by themselves. The disadvantage is that they are unable to specialize and develop either the farm or marketing activities. As the State encourages economies of scale¹ and the land of small scale producers are acquired for industrial and housing projects, even the few producer-sellers are rapidly transformed into sellers only. State intervention in pig production may also be affected by two related considerations: supplies of animals from large farms are more regularly maintained throughout the year and more importantly, fosters price stability. In smaller enterprises pig population as well as prices follow a cyclical pattern and they are negatively correlated: when prices go up farmers concentrate on pig production which can in six months to a year lead to

a glut. This forces prices to drop to a very low level during which period some farmers will cease production which in turn reduces the pig population and causes higher prices (Agricultural Census of Singapore 1973: 30).

The pork trade is a 24-hours activity. This means that there are many opportunities for specialists to undertake the different kinds of jobs that are related to the trade. Apart from marketplace selling there are jobs for cleaners of viscera, cleaners of carcasses, transporters, brokers and pig blood collectors. Although each of these jobs can be undertaken by different specialists who are 'external' to the stall enterprise, some of these jobs are undertaken by the employees or the sons of stallholders. Hence within a stall enterprise there is small scale specialization whereby the stall proprietor concentrates upon selling while his lesser employees or sons participate as pig-buyers and cleaners of viscera and carcasses. So an important aspect of the pork trade is that it allows 'involution' (see Geertz 1963b: 82), which in this context is the multiplication of the production stages in which people can find a role for themselves.

Butcher assistants are responsible for fetching pigs from farm to abattoir in the morning, for work in the abattoir at night, and to keep watch over the meat in the marketplace until relieved by the butcher at dawn. The term used by butchers for work associated with the farm by their assistants is to 'catch pigs'. Pig-catching is usually done in the morning to avoid the hot afternoon sun which can cause pigs to become ill on the journey from farm to abattoir. Catching pigs require skill and speed even though they are reared in pens as any injury to pigs results in reduced profit for the trader.²

The method used is to provoke the pigs to rush blindly into elongated rattan trapping baskets. These butcher assistants are then responsible for checking that farmers are declaring fair weights on each pig purchased which are weighed employing the daching whose unit of measure is dann (担) or pikul.³ Experienced butcher assistants have some say in the sizes of pigs to buy as well as the number and farmers find it important to establish warm relations with them as they are in the position to recommend butchers which farms to patronize.

Butcher assistants are also employed in cleaning viscera and carcasses in the abattoir. Where assistants are not engaged the butcher sometimes undertakes the job himself but more frequently the job is contracted to others who are specialists. This is an area where people with no capital can operate. The cleaning of viscera may be contracted to either self-employed individuals or to small scale contractors. Such contractors are often middle-aged men who have graduated from cleaning viscera to become small scale contractors employing several youths. The fee for each set of viscera is 40 cents. While contract labourers are paid \$10 a night, the self-employed persons are reputed to earn twice as much or even more. Contract labourers are frequently on the alert to establish their own clientele and set up their own enterprises. Although cleaning viscera is a messy and smelly business and hands are turned permanently white from long hours of contact with water, the money is attractive compared with rates in the industrial sector. In 1971 the average weekly earnings of males in the industrial labour force were \$56.02 (Wong 1974: 131 - 132). In contrast the weekly wages of viscera cleaners range from \$60 to \$150 (1974) and hours of work are shorter. As participants are virtually all uneducated, they are excluded from industrial jobs which require at least some years

of formal education. Jobs at the abattoir also become more attractive because the government is restricting access to many other forms of small-scale trade.

Although pig carcasses are mechanically shaved the job has to be completed manually either at the abattoir or at the marketplace. At the abattoir many young men undertake this service and charge 60 cents for each carcass. In contrast to viscera cleaners there are virtually no small scale contractors and all are independent workers. For the pork traders the implication is that those with sons are able to exploit such manpower so as to reduce overheads and simultaneously increase the competitiveness of their merchandise.

For butchers who are unassisted, pig-catching may be delegated to lorry owners. Lorry owners provide an important contract service conveying the pigs from farm to abattoir and from abattoir to marketplace. This is a full-time job although pork traders sometimes undertake this job themselves if they have their own transport. The transporter charges \$1.50 for each pig for the journey from farm to abattoir and \$1.00 from abattoir to marketplace. Live pigs cost more to transport because of the additional labour involved: the lorry has to be cleaned after a trip and upon arrival at the abattoir the transporter has to drive the pigs into individual pens allotted to each butcher, hose them down to clean as well as cool them after the hot journey and then tattoo them with identification numbers. He then pays the fees at \$6.30 (from January 1976) per pig on behalf of the traders to the abattoir. With these essential services taken care of by the transporter the trader is able to concentrate on actual selling. In fact he does not even need to go to the farm at all as he will be

informed by his regular supplier what is in stock and he in turn instructs the transporter accordingly.

Services of brokers are not utilized by pork traders at Bukit Timah but local butchers are aware that they perform an invaluable service for butchers in the city area. They are responsible for getting potential buyers and sellers together and helping them negotiate a deal (Young 1971: 170). Apart from their marketing and merchandizing activities some writers have noted the broker's role in transmitting information about prices and products to farmers (Bell 1969: 40; Chuchart 1962: Report no. 8; Myint 1960: 93 - 132). Brokers receive a commission of \$1.00 for each pig from the buyer and 50 cents from the farmer. Brokers who have been entrusted with payment for the farmer may default or cheat the farmers. Cheating operates in two ways: firstly brokers can allege default by the trader and secondly, can claim that business is sluggish to induce farmers to quote lower prices after which the broker retains the difference between an ordered or market price in addition to his fee. Such behaviour is probably rare: certainly those I talked to were vague about specific instances and admitted that their information were obtained through hearsay about such misdemeanour 'somewhere in the city area'. As the information flow in the marketing community is swift, a broker will find his activities severely curtailed should word get around that he is dishonest. During field work I encountered two brokers who are frequent visitors to BWM, particularly its coffeeshop. In Young's study of interpersonal networks and economic behaviour in a Chinese market town he described how brokers usually spend their business hours in teahouses or other kinds of eating places working at maintaining good sentiment with numerous acquaintances (1971: 171). Similarly at Bukit Timah, through their frequent visits

to the coffeeshop the brokers maintain up to date information on the state of the pork trade, sources of supply, and state of demand.

Butchers who are aided sometimes complement their meat trade by selling pig blood. This is in fact usually a specialized activity, processed pig blood being the collector's principal commodity of trade. During the period the abattoir is open from 9.45 p.m. to 4.30 a.m. the blood traders take turns to press tins to slit throats of pigs. The blood is later coagulated with salt, boiled, cut into cubes and sold at 50 cents a packet. The collection of pig blood is technically illegal and blood collectors say they pay the labourers at the slaughter-house to bend the rules.⁴ The cooperation of these labourers is vital for they could let the blood drain away instead: hence the maintenance of good relations with the labourers is absolutely crucial for this trade. Pork traders who are not involved with these activities speak contemptuously of such trade and daub it 'capital free' business.

The Jurong abattoir served virtually all pork traders in Singapore until December 1975 when the Kim Chuan Road abattoir was established to serve traders in the eastern half of Singapore. The establishment of the latter was intended to complement the development of Ponggol in north-east Singapore as an intensive pig-farming area. Both abattoirs operate a six-day week and some 1,100 pigs are slaughtered each at Jurong and Kim Chuan Road abattoirs daily on weekdays and 1,500 pigs on Saturdays or the eve of Chinese festivals (The Sunday Times Singapore 11th January 1976; Personal communication, Jurong abattoir). Before December 1975, Jurong abattoir was the main focus for interaction for the Republic's pork traders. More specifically it was the canteen providing food and drink and a place where social and economic relations can be initiated, maintained and

enhanced while traders wait for their pigs to be slaughtered.⁵ The canteen has an altar to Shen (神), the general term for a god or gods in the Chinese pantheon of gods (Elliott 1955) set up by traders; it also serves as the focus for the annual Hungry Ghost festival. The canteen had also in the past provided a place where cleaners and butcher assistants formed themselves into a pressure group and campaigned for a weekly day off. Before June 1971 the abattoir closed only on Chinese New Year's day but after that date it has shut on Sundays so that fresh pork is theoretically unavailable on Mondays.

Pork is sold in two ways. The first is 'wholesaling' where large quantities are sold to a set of buyers who are themselves traders in pork or processed pork. For example, the largest pork enterprise supplies traders operating in both the primary service area and also others trading in the city and in a cooked food centre some five kilometres away. This particular enterprise wholesales two-thirds of its turnover. Many traders attempt to combine both wholesaling and retailing activities to maximize volume of turnover and profit but the majority of sellers actually engage exclusively in retailing in small quantities to housewives for household consumption. Wholesale and retail activities fall into two time periods: from about 3 a.m. to 6 a.m. all transactions are wholesale and after 6 a.m. most are retail. The peak retail hours are 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. In wholesale trade buyers usually pay at the end of the day or the following morning when they call for their day's supply.

Traders who obtain their stocks directly from farms are in a more favourable position to compete in the marketplace than traders who obtain their supplies from other butchers. These latter operate on

narrower profit margins. These traders therefore have to go to the market in the early hours so that they have priority in selecting choice meat. One such trader earns a comfortable income in this activity and has managed to build up a reputation for selling choice lean meat. In addition, as liver is popular among the Chinese, he makes it conditional that customers buy some pork too when they ask for liver. Although competition is keen in Bukit Timah it is interesting to note that there are certain marketplaces where competition is unheard of; for example in Rabaul market studied by Epstein (1968: 134 - 164). Epstein attributed the lack of competition to the fact that the marketplace participants are not professional sellers and that trading is not their most important source of income.

To summarize, the pork trade is a round the clock business; so there is considerable division of labour. Also because of its scale there are ample opportunities for specialist activities. In some cases these activities are managed by entrepreneurs with no capital. So overall we have a very efficient business operation which is noted for its bending of official rules, the extent of trust, and significances of networks and long established contractual ties.

The fish traders

There are thirty-eight fish stalls at Bukit Timah distributed as follows: none at the Old Market, twenty-eight at BWM, one at BWTM and nine at the New Market. The New Market stalls include enterprises dealing in processed sea food whereas the stalls in the other marketplaces deal in fresh fish only. The stalls at BWM are organized as

follows: fifteen are individual enterprises, six are father and son/s enterprises, four are partnerships among different sets of brothers and three are husband and wife enterprises. Of the husband and wife enterprises the first is where the wife divides her attention between selling towels, pins and needles, toothpaste and other odds and ends and the fish stall sited next to her own. In the second enterprise the wife oscillates between child minding and business, and in the third the wife divides her time between housework and business. The stall at BWTM is operated by an individual and at the New Market all but one are individual enterprises: the exception is a husband and wife partnership. Even among the individual enterprises many have family members assisting particularly during weekends, and there are two who engage wage labour. The total number of persons working regularly at a fish enterprise ranges from one to four. These numbers correlate positively with the volume of transaction, the cash invested in the business and the variety of fish dealt in.

Fish traders specialize in different varieties as follows: firstly there are those who deal in a wide variety of cheap fish and a limited range of medium priced fish, secondly traders who deal in a variety of medium priced fish only, and thirdly sellers who deal in one to two cheap varieties but concentrate more on the medium and expensive range. Profit margins are calculated on wholesale prices. The profits from very cheap fish range from 100 to 150 per cent (for example bought at 15 cents a kati and sold at 30 cents a kati) while medium and expensive varieties provide proportionately lower profits ranging from 10 to 25 per cent (for example bought at \$2.40 a kati and sold at \$2.80 a kati) although in cash terms the returns are more. As traders operate from tables measuring approximately 150 x 75cm. they are selective in their display.

The major disadvantage of the fish trade is the long hours involved: purchasing from the Central Fish Market in Jurong begins at 2 a.m. and selling from marketplace stalls begin at 6 a.m. until all stocks are disposed of or until 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. Heavy loads of fish have to be lifted and female traders are handicapped: this difficulty can be overcome if good relationships with their male counterparts have been developed who will then help. Furthermore fish and related marine products have to be sorted by size and quality and very frequently fingers are badly pricked. However there are advantages in this trade as well: it provides what an informant has described as a 'comfortable' source of income whereby earnings average \$400 to \$500 a month compared to jobs in the industrial sector, where initial investment is low, overheads are low, and there are no complicated processing activities as in the pork trade.

Stocks are purchased at the Central Fish Market in Jurong, the focal point of the fishing industry in Singapore serving as a wholesaling, auctioning and processing base for marine products (Singapore '76: 136).⁶ There are eighty-three fish agents in Jurong and more than 3,000 buyers meet there daily from about 2 a.m. to 5 a.m. Numerous varieties of fish both chilled and frozen are heaped on the floor while others are arranged in baskets and crates. Marketplace traders have numerous choices as from whom supplies can be obtained but in practice tend to patronize long established sources.⁷ They go to others only when their regular suppliers do not have the variety required. Regularity in transacting with a set of suppliers often means that traders can secure a day's credit, a crucial element in small scale trade.

There are two methods of purchase: by auction or by weight. Auctioning is less popular among Bukit Timah traders: only one fishmonger regularly relies upon this method. Fish for auction come in shallow cases measuring approximately 75 x 45 x 10cm. They are without covers and buyers are able to see what they are bidding for. Bids are shouted out, communicated by hand signs or frequently whispered into the ear of the auctioneer. The auctioneers sit on high stools equipped with notebook and pen while their assistants, wearing cloth bags, are responsible for on the spot collection of money after each sale. Each case takes a few seconds to sell. The advantage in this method of purchasing is that there may be real bargains. However there is always the chance that there is more ice and poor quality fish packed into the case than meets the eye.

More fish is sold by unit weight than through auctions. Not all wholesalers allow fishmongers to buy selectively and those who do charge a higher price. Most of the Bukit Timah fish traders prefer to pay more for selective buying: their experience has shown that bargain prices seem to have a higher than average proportion of less fresh fish which presents them with selling difficulties. As suppliers usually specialize in one to two varieties of fish, marketplace traders have to visit several wholesalers in order to buy enough stocks to offer the variety required by their own customers. Marketplace traders demonstrate role reversals when they are buying fish: they select by sight, touch and smell, criticize the quality of fish and attempt to haggle, displaying a pattern of behaviour identical to their own customers which they sometimes speak with annoyance about. Haggling is practised by marketplace traders when they purchase because of the lack of price standardization. This may be attributed

to the fact that the wholesalers themselves do not obtain their supplies from the same fish merchants. During the early part of the morning haggling is minimum but later in the morning the buyer is able to purchase at more competitive prices as wholesalers are eager to dispose of their stocks. The disadvantage of buying stocks later in the morning is that usually the best quality has gone.

When purchases are complete traders have an early breakfast in the crowded canteen of the Central Fish Market. Like the canteen at the abattoir this place provides a focus for fishmongers to exchange greetings, information about offers made and deals concluded and who among the suppliers offer fairer prices. These exchanges are brief as traders do not experience delays unlike the abattoir and neither is the canteen the focus for any religious activity.

The fish trade also provides some opportunities for specialist activities with jobs for porters, ice sellers, attendants, transporters and assistant traders. The porters help to convey fish purchases to the car park where traders' vehicles are located with the aid of trolleys or carrying poles. These porters are self-employed and charge 30 cents for each trip. Each has built up a set of regular clients over the years among the marketplace traders. The car park itself provides the focus for two other activities. Firstly there are ice-chips sellers who enjoy regular patronage from traders concerned about maintaining the quality of their purchases. Secondly there are self-employed women attendants who keep watch over the purchases made by traders for a fee of 30 cents. These women have over the years also developed a regular set of clients. Unaccompanied traders find these services particularly useful to avert theft as they make repeated trips into

the Central Marketplace. Traders who own lorries or vans supplement their income by providing transport to others operating at the same market. One fishmonger at BWM provides transport to five other fishmongers at the rate of \$2 for each return trip. This source alone provides him with \$300 a month. Finally fish traders whose turnover is considerable employ full-time assistants: apart from getting the stall ready while the trader is purchasing stocks these assistants also help to sell unlike butcher assistants. For other traders who trade with son/s, brother or spouse the usual arrangement is for one to make purchases while the other gets the stall ready for the day's business.

Sales transacted during the first half-hour at the marketplaces are wholesaled to fishmongers operating at lesser markets in rural areas and to cooked food traders operating in the neighbourhood, factory canteens and school tuckshops. Fishmongers describe these buyers their best customers who do not haggle over prices and buy in large quantities. They are also charged more favourable prices than household consumers.

There is a close relationship between the quality of fish traded in and the socio-economic status of customers served. Traders in largely cheap fish ranging from 30 cents a kati to those around \$3 a kati (July 1975) tend to attract customers generally lower in the socio-economic strata. This division also correlates with ethnic differences: there are proportionally more Malays and Indians in the lower socio-economic strata than the Chinese. Traders in medium and expensive varieties of fish ranging from less than \$1 a kati to \$9 a kati (July 1975) tend to attract the generally well dressed and educated who frequently communicate in Mandarin and English. The time

of day when customers visit stalls also tend to divide along socio-economic and ethnic lines: those who buy during peak hours are largely middle class Chinese whereas towards mid-day, buyers are bargain hunters who are proportionally more Malays.

The vegetable traders

The forty-two vegetable stalls at Bukit Timah are distributed as follows: one at the Old Market, twenty-three at BWM, thirteen at BWTM and five at the New Market. The stall at the Old Market is managed by a trader who inherited the business from his parents. The old folks assist for an hour from 6 a.m. when their son is settling in after his purchasing trip and then go across the road to their furniture shop business. This family continues to maintain a strong foothold in marketplace enterprise even when it has established a shop and furniture factory. Of the twenty-three enterprises at BWM, fifteen are individual enterprises, four are father and son/s businesses, two are managed by husband and wife teams, one is organized by husband, wife and daughter, and the last is an enterprise shared by two brothers. At BWTM ten stalls are individual enterprises and three are organized by husband and wife. At the New Market all five stalls are operated by individual traders.

The disadvantage of vegetable trade is that commodities are highly perishable, profits are low (this is also reflected in the fees charged by the Hawkers Department) and long hours of trade are required to build up sufficient turnover. The main advantage is low investment (in contrast to pork and fish) and the nature of its organization which opens up opportunities for female participation. Whereas there are some ten female vegetable traders trading independently at Bukit Timah (there are a few more who do not own permanent pitches but spread their

commodities in recesses of passageways) there are no female counterparts in the pork trade and only one female fish trader. There is a close relationship between sex of trader and size of operation: men operate larger businesses while women operate small businesses dealing in limited varieties of products.

Supplies are obtained from among traders operating at local marketplaces or from the city area and farm. Supplies bought at local marketplaces are usually transacted between 5 a.m. and 6 a.m. or late in the afternoon depending on when supplies are conveyed from supply sources. Supplies from the city area come from two main places: Upper Circular Road and Clyde Terrace Market. Upper Circular Road is the focus for many firms of importers and distributors of a wide range of commodities. Between 2 a.m. to 5 a.m. the Road is transformed into a street market with merchants wholesaling only vegetables. These merchants have in turn bought their vegetables from the firms during the day. Merchants display their products laid out on canvas sheets on the road or in rattan baskets. Behind their temporary pitches are their lorries serving as stores. Although most merchants sell the quantities and quality required by marketplace traders a few deal only in bulk; for example in units of 100 katis only. Like the fishmarket, selective purchasing costs more and the early morning hours are more favourable for quality purchases than later. Specialization is practised among merchants and like the fish traders, vegetable traders visit many stalls to obtain a variety of vegetables. Virtually all transactions are in cash unless close relations have been established. The prominence of cash transactions can be attributed to the fact that Upper Circular Road is not the only source of supply; the other is Clyde Terrace Market. Although vegetables cost more at the latter one

major advantage is that traders are better able to examine what they are buying because of better lighting. In addition the trader can buy the range of vegetables he requires from one particular merchant instead of visiting many merchants as in Upper Circular Road. The merchants at Clyde Terrace Market in all appearance resemble stallholders at Bukit Timah except that the scale of their businesses is many times larger. Some traders at Bukit Timah buy all their supplies here while others buy from Upper Circular Road only and there are others who buy from both sources.

Supplies from the local farms are confined to leafy vegetables such as heng chai, chye sim, kailan and eng chai (Hokkien).⁸ Traders gather them from the fields (sometimes this is undertaken by the farmer), sort and clean them. Sorting and cleaning are undertaken at homes mobilizing the labour of spouse, children, mother and unmarried sisters. Some farmers provide a delivery service of produce but this is usually extended to traders operating in the city area only. Like the livestock farmers, vegetable farmers also provide short term credit for traders with whom close relations have been established.

Vegetables (like pork and fish) are also sold wholesale or retail. The profits derived from wholesaling is marginal, a standard 5 cents for every kati. The best profits are sales made to consumers where these profits range from 10 to 20 cents a kati. Although wholesaling activities fetch less profit in contrast to retailing it is an important source of income which becomes substantial when large quantities are involved. The business base is also widened. In wholesaling activities the length of time credit facilities are extended to the buyer can vary with where the buyers are trading in addition to

trust relations: a day or two if outside the marketplaces and as long as three weeks to proven customers trading in local marketplaces.

Retailing to consumers follows the same daily or weekly pattern as pork or fish traders. Mondays are regarded as particularly bad business days for vegetables as much of the attraction for customers to go to market is lost because of the absence of fresh pork supplies. On Mondays medium scale vegetable traders do not find it profitable to go to the city for supplies: they buy minimum stocks from the two to three traders dealing in larger businesses. The purpose is to meet the needs of the customers they usually retail small quantities to to maintain patronage. This arrangement means that the traders they usually wholesale to have to buy from larger enterprises one day in a week. Clearly traders find it more important to meet the demands of the large number of customers who buy in small quantities than those they wholesale to and prevent their turning to other sellers which can have long term effects upon their trade.

The provisions traders

Among the shops in Bukit Timah marketplaces, the most numerous are provision shops. Yeung and Yeh's study of shops on public housing estates in Singapore described the retail of household provisions a business group that is the most 'ubiquitous' (1971: 78 - 79). These writers categorized shops into twenty-one business types. In descending order of frequency they are as follows: provision stores, barber and hairdressing, restaurants, other services, tailoring, textiles, piece goods, drugstores, clinics, personal furnishings,

books and stationery, household appliances, garments and clothing, household goods, household furnishings, food and drinks, vehicular lines, coffee shops, commercial offices, department stores and miscellaneous retailing. These different businesses in turn provided the basis for an index of commercial patterns: first-order functions provide convenience type goods and second- and third-order functions are termed shopping and specialty types respectively and purchases of these goods and services are usually less frequent. I am here concerned with shops engaged in first-order functions and the most numerous; more specifically the provision shops.

The provision shops are distributed as follows: one at the Old Market, five at BWM, one at BWTM and one among the BWT shops complex. (The majority of the shops in this complex are dealing in specialty goods and purchases are less frequent compared to provision shops: they will not be discussed). There is none at the New Market, all twenty-nine lock-up shops are small stores let to former street traders who sell among other things crockery, coffee powder, footwear, clothing and household utensils. All the provision shops are mainly family based enterprises with the proprietor and his family members such as son/s, daughter/s, brother or even affinal relatives helping. For purposes of illustration I describe the physical features of one medium sized provision shop.

Tan's spacious provision shop (雜貨店 - literally, mixed goods shop), faces the stalls of BWM. Half the pedestrian walkway between the stalls and the entrance of the shop is encroached upon by his display of fresh coconuts, salted fish, several preserved vegetables, salted eggs, fresh eggs, lotus roots, onions, garlic, ginger, potatoes, spices and other seasonal foodstuffs. An inner raised platform displays dried foodstuffs

such as transparent noodles, egg noodles, dried bean sticks, green peas, red beans, black beans, and so on. In the middle of the shop is a large platform raised slightly above the ground to prevent dampness to the several sacks of rice of different qualities; wheat flour, tapioca flour, salt and sugar are also displayed on the same platform. Price tags⁹ are attached to each sack of rice and the sacks are folded over exposing the contents for examination. To the left of the shop nearest the door is a table for fish-paste, prawn-paste and tamarind, ingredients frequently used in local cooking. Further in is a large refrigerator where dairy products and margarine are stored. Ice-blocks are also manufactured for sale but on a small scale. To the rear of the refrigerator is a large glass cupboard where a wide assortment of religious paraphernalia are kept: candles, 'gold' and 'silver' paper, 'hell money', paper clothing, paper cloth, decorations for altars, and different brands of joss-sticks. Close to this cupboard is a desk frequently used by Tan and his wives for business and receiving visitors. Across the shop to the right is another desk where the telephone is. This desk is used by his employees. In front of it are displayed soap products, toiletries and detergents and behind it on wall shelves are canned food, biscuits, squashes, paper products, tea, beverage and household necessities. All around the shop wall shelves reach the ceiling: on the left open shelves are filled with locally manufactured and imported soya sauce, chilli sauce, vinegar, food dressings, cooking oil and a large variety of canned food and fruits. Behind Tan's desk the shelves are fitted with glass doors and here the more costly bottled and packaged foodstuffs together with cigarettes are stored. To the right the shelves are also fitted with glass doors and display liquor. At the rear of the shop is the living area for Tan and his family (Figure 8): this has been partitioned into a living room, a dining room, a bedroom for the household cook, and store rooms. A flight of stairs lead to the attic where there are bedrooms for family members as well as employees.

Shops are mainly owned by individuals, the exception is the largest enterprise in Bukit Timah which is jointly owned by four persons. In this enterprise each partner had previously operated separate stalls: their business ties have remained intact for three decades. One of the partners is inactive as he is occupied in

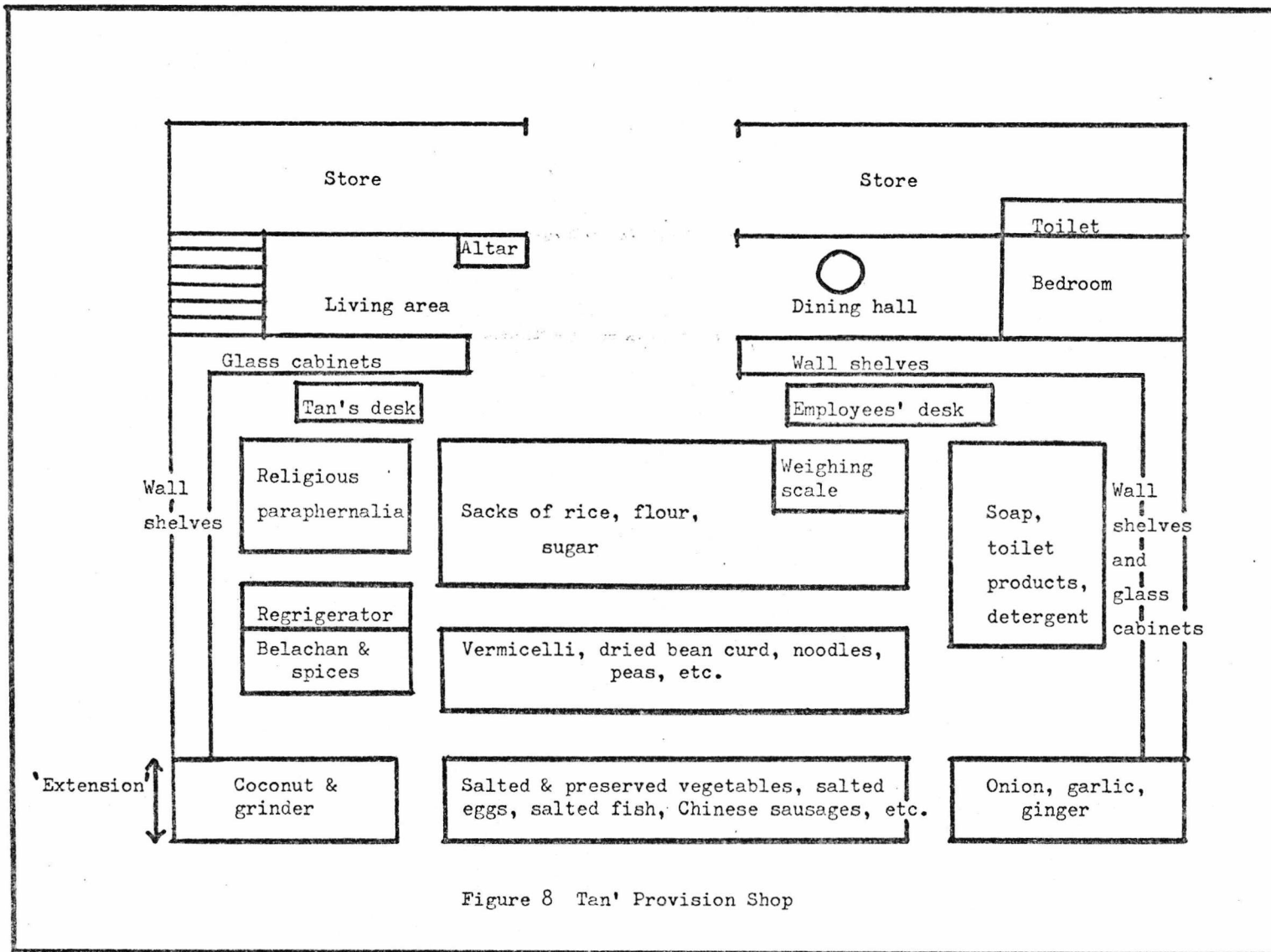


Figure 8 Tan' Provision Shop

retailing crabs and cockles at BWM, another has retired and his eldest son has taken over his job, the third has died and his only son has taken over his place, and only the fourth partner is left to manage the whole enterprise. As for the individual enterprises, shopkeeper Tan's began with four owners but disagreement within the partnership led to its disintegration with the partners selling their respective shares to him.¹⁰ In marketplace business, the larger the enterprise the higher the probability that the enterprise is jointly shared, and conversely as smaller enterprises require little investment, so entrepreneurs are able to operate alone.

Workers in provision shops are either family members or coolies. Family workers can be divided into those who receive wages and those who do not. I shall discuss the extent family members are associated with marketplace trade in greater detail in the following chapter but the point I wish to emphasize here is that only sons of proprietors who work full-time receive wages. These sons serve customers, are responsible for maintaining systematic records and account books, maintaining large inventories, credit relationships, and attending to visiting sales representatives. Family members who do not receive wages are spouses, mothers, mothers-in-law, and unmarried sons and daughters who are elsewhere employed or studying: their labour is mobilized for tasks like waiting on customers and sorting produce. Their services are also valuable during peak hours and in the afternoon slack periods when the coolies are delivering goods.

The duties of coolies vary considerably with whether they are related to the proprietor, which is of primary importance, and the



length of service. Proprietors tend to perpetuate the traditional attitude that only relatives can be trusted (Lang 1946: 22 - 23). Kinsmen are delegated heavier responsibilities and have the authority to handle cash in contrast to unrelated coolies. In the provision trade one of the most important tasks is buying stocks: in all the shops studied this task is either undertaken by the proprietor or his relative. Related coolies are also responsible for the day to day organization of grocery distribution and many of the duties that are assumed by sons of proprietors including receiving supplies, making and receiving payment, preparing invoices, cheques, and price tags. All these responsibilities are linked with higher wages.

The duties of coolies unrelated to the proprietor are primarily confined to serving customers, loading and unloading goods, sorting and cleaning onions, and dusting and cleaning. Shop apprenticeships are not advertized and opportunities are made known by word of mouth through one's social network. Recruitment can be based upon special skills such as the ability to drive heavy vehicles or some degree of literacy so as to assist in the preparation of delivery orders and the taking of orders over the telephone. Sometimes certain other skills that had not served as a basis for recruitment can be utilized fully to increase business turnover; for example, there is one shop assistant who has a good spoken command of Japanese and the shop he is working for can count many Japanese households among its regular clientele.

All the shop proprietors I spoke to maintain that shop apprenticeship is unpopular because of the long hours, general nature of the work and unattractive wages. Wages range from \$100 to \$300

plus full board and lodging. Proprietors encounter difficulty in recruiting Singapore labourers who for the same wages and shorter working hours prefer the industrial sector. To solve this labour shortage shop proprietors engage Malaysian labourers illegally. As the salaries of shop assistants are all less than \$750 a month, proprietors must first secure work permits for them. Work permits are given to non-citizens where there are no citizens to fill the job (see Chan 1976: 56). But many proprietors in Bukit Timah claim that they have failed in many attempts to secure work permits for their unskilled labourers. So what has emerged in shop apprenticeship because of official regulation favouring skilled personnel is an increasing trend for impersonalism in recruitment: instead of restricting employees to persons related by kinship ties as had been the practice, the net is thrown wider afield and 'friends of friends' are being recruited. Nonetheless friends of friends tend to belong to similar dialect and ethnic groups. The implication is that if this form of recruitment is continued over time, it may lead to increasing isolation of the trading population from the rest of Singapore society whereby such ascribed characteristics are not important considerations for job recruitment. As for the relationship between proprietor and employee, the former are flexible when dealing with their subordinates and in one shop they are even allowed time off for part-time activities like the collection of lottery numbers. Proprietors also participate in the same meal as their employees which helps to improve the relationship not only between employer and employees but among the employees themselves. The staff eat the meal while they continue to watch over the shop.

Stocks for provision shops come from three major sources: import-export firms, distributors and retailers, and local manufacturers. Supplies are bought once a week. Most of them transport smaller purchases themselves while bulky goods like sacks of rice are transported by the suppliers. The import of grocery goods generally remains a Teochew specialty although dialect specialization is less significant among the traders they supply. For example although all provision shop proprietors at Bukit Timah marketplaces are Teochew, those in other parts of Bukit Timah are mainly Hokkien. T'ien has provided important insight into commodity specialization along dialect lines: he attributed the Teochew position to the fact that the Chinese groceries they deal in come from the vicinity of Swatow in Southern China where Teochews predominate (1953: 67 - 68). He argued that with regard to the rice trade the Teochew again have particular advantage as most of the rice comes from Thailand where the Chinese population dealing in rice is largely Teochew. The identification of all these commodities with a specific dialect group operates to the advantage of Teochew shop proprietors: suppliers are more personal in their relations with them and willing to offer valuable tips about general market conditions. Shop proprietors in turn are able to adjust purchases depending on anticipated glut or temporary scarcity. We will see in due course that the personalization of these relations have important implications for credit, crucial in provisions trade where half the operating capital is provided by suppliers in the form of goods for a week to a month.

In the purchase of provisions shop proprietors frequently require the services of self employed porters. These porters sit or squat on pavements at strategic road junctions in the supply area

where they can see empty lorries passing through that may seem to require labour. They are paid usually from \$2 to \$5 for each job depending upon the generosity of the proprietor and the amount of goods carried. Old coolies who can no longer work often resort to begging and according to an informant, few of these coolies are known to save for old age: they gamble on pavements when there is no work and also gamble heavily in lotteries hoping to strike it rich.

All the shops in Bukit Timah open between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. except on Sundays when they close at 11 a.m. Customers who buy in large quantities for trade do not concentrate their buying period as at stalls because the goods transacted are non-perishables and available at any time of day around the whole year. The only exception is the largest shop at Bukit Timah which opens at 5 a.m. for early shoppers who patronize the stalls as well. For all the shops the peak hours are from 7 a.m. to 10 a.m. and half an hour longer during weekends. At 5 p.m. there is also a slight increase in activity as homeward bound workers stop for provisions. During the late morning hours customers' orders are sorted for delivery in the afternoon between 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. Informants claim that before rapid urban renewal resited many of their regular clientele out of the service area (see Choe 1975: 99) all the shops at Bukit Timah opened at 5 a.m. and any delay caused impatient customers to knock.

The way goods are sold in the shop is to memorize inventory and prices. Prices paid for new consignments of goods are made known to shop employees who then figure out the standard profit margin, a closely guarded secret, and sell accordingly. All new consignments of perishables like potatoes, tomatoes, cabbages, coconut, onions, ginger

and garlic will initially be sold at higher prices to cover cost as towards the end of the week their quality rapidly deteriorate. If new consignments have increased in price the remaining old stock will be sold at the new price and if new consignments are cheaper, the remaining stock will also be reduced. Similar to stall trade, selective buying costs more. Like stall traders sellers are also more honest with regular customers advising them on the quality and variety of specific products and I also overheard an employee telling a regular customer not to buy a particular product because he knew it was not what the customer really wanted. In one shop tea is served to all regular customers and their children are offered sweets or biscuits. In contrast to the stalls shop customers do not require to be flattered or cajoled into buying as they visit knowing what they want because many of the goods are advertized through the mass media. Prices of tinned and other household requisites also tend to have standard prices fixed by importers and manufacturers and instead of assuring the customer's patronage by the offer of specially favourable prices, the shops offer quality goods at reasonably competitive prices.

To summarize, one of the most prominent features of marketplace trade is the large number of people selling identical commodities and yet succeed in making a living out of their enterprise. Ward's study of shopkeepers in Sarawak and Hong Kong (1960) has provided some insight into how marketplace traders can survive under these circumstances: the traders whose own resources are limited necessarily has a restricted number of customers and this in turn encourages the large numbers of marketplace enterprises. Secondly the wide variety of enterprises ranging from those requiring little and even no capital to those requiring considerably more investment means that

there is somewhere on this continuum a business that can be participated by people with different resources. Generally people with little resources operate as small scale stallholders and those with more operate as shop proprietors. Thirdly all enterprises characteristically combine both wholesaling and retailing activities to survive in a competitive market (see also Firth 1966: 114 - 140). This absence of differentiation of economic roles arises because of the need to spread sources of income as profit from each transaction is often marginal and multiple transactions through simultaneous retailing and wholesaling is the only way to realize higher income; hence the meshing of retail and wholesale activities. While retailing activities are concentrated during the 'seller's market' (Stanner 1969: 125 - 138) wholesaling takes place outside this short peak period. Finally another feature in the organization of marketplace trading activities is the range of organization forms which has two aspects. Firstly operators who have provided all the capital themselves in contrast to enterprises where two or more people have provided the capital for the business. Multiple partnership is infrequent among stalls but more common among shops because stall enterprises require minimum capital and overheads are low so that a single trader is able to mobilize the capital required. As for shops considerably more capital is required if the entrepreneurs wish to go into business in a big way. The second organizational form is where traders undertake all aspects of trade by themselves whether purchasing, processing or selling in contrast to enterprises mobilizing family members to contribute their services. This form of cooperation is pervasive among stalls as well as shops but it will be discussed in detail in the next chapter after I have considered some general characteristics of marketplace economic organization.

Mutual economic benefit

Marketplace stallholders, hindered by limited resources, characteristically arrange for mutual assistance, sharing in certain costs arising from their economic activities such as bulk buying arrangements and joint chartering of transport. In contrast shop proprietors operate enterprises independently of their counterparts. As the ability to expand from stall trade into grocery shop business is indicative of success, the shop proprietor has the necessary resources to undertake his enterprise alone. But for the large numbers of stallholders trading in pork, fish, vegetables and other foodstuffs common to local diets, sharing costs in different groups reduce overheads, increase profits, and promotes efficiency. In the pork trade for example, bulk purchase reduces risks. Supplies are obtained from sizeable farms whereby the supplier is prepared to meet part of the loss with the butcher in the event of carcasses and/or viscera certified as unfit for consumption by the authorities. This arrangement is not upheld by small scale producers; the loss is solely borne by the butcher. In the fish trade the characteristic organizational feature is the sharing of transportation costs for commuting between local marketplace and the Central Fish Market in Jurong. The vehicle usually belongs to one of the fishmongers and as we have previously seen, the extension of his service assures him of an additional source of income. As for the vegetable trade it is the only commodity among the prime commodities of marketplace trade where women have made considerable inroads. While men concentrate on larger scale businesses and engage in the wholesale and retail of a wide variety of imported vegetables, women operate complementary small scale businesses dealing in a limited variety of locally produced

vegetables supplied by their male counterparts and engage in retail only. In other words women predominate at the bottom of the vegetable distribution chain, pay the lowest rent, and follow a trade schedule that gives them time to be with their families. The redevelopment of the Beauty World complex in this context will cause two major changes. Firstly as mutual assistance occurs not only among traders in the same marketplace, but more important among traders in the different marketplaces in Bukit Timah, the State inspired relocation programme will cause the fragmentation of groups that have been organized for economic advantage. Secondly when the women vegetable traders are allocated standard stalls identical to that of their male counterparts, they will find the maintenance of their previous pattern and scale of trade uneconomic. Profit margins will be considerably narrowed with rising overheads: rents being higher in public than private marketplaces, and there may be transportation costs when BWM and BWTM are relocated out of Bukit Timah. So, mutually beneficial arrangements that have been operating for some three decades among Bukit Timah's marketplace traders will be forced to change or even be wrecked. On the other hand there may be an efficient response to changes and one might expect new social networks to be established quite quickly in a new location simply because they are economically useful.

Behaviour in economic situation

A different sort of mutually beneficial arrangement that has taken many years to establish is the marketplace code of conduct. It is a moral mechanism restraining competition and averting conflict among large numbers of traders dealing in similar commodities in keen

competition with one another. Any customer who pauses at the marketplace stall is addressed even when the trader is busy transacting another sale. If the customer moves on to the next stall he is similarly addressed or served, and the first trader has no right to call the customer back, having left the stall's service area. This pattern of behaviour is strictly adhered to and informants recall few instances when it had been violated. All the traders in the same market site share the same cultural norm and this rule is understood, respected and upheld by the people concerned because they share the same marketplace tradition. However this norm was broken when the street traders moved into the New Market. Forced into a strange milieu comprising traders originally from three different long established sites, all respectively existing steadfast norms of behaviour gave way to chaos as each trader became caught in the scramble to establish a new set of clientele. Experience has shown that an inability to establish a regular clientele from the outset causes certain business failure. Noisy squabbles erupted frequently and animosity remained apparent between certain stallholders many months after relocation. Much of the problem may be attributed to the clustering of traders selling identical goods in close proximity to one another. This arrangement will be elaborated in chapter six. What I want to emphasize here is that the justification for the zoning of marketplace by product is orderliness. But the consequences of the Ordinance, together with the fact that many traders are packed into a small marketplace, increases competition, uncertainty over volume of business, and the breakdown of an economically viable behaviour arrangement. Although newly established public markets display high standards of hygiene, the very same sites are arenas for economic conflict.

Credit relationships

In the commodity distribution chain, sale is nearly always on credit. Credit refers to the lending of goods and services without immediate return against the promise of future repayment (Firth cited in Davis 1973: 174). So, credit involves both the debtor's obligation to repay and the expectation that the repayment will be forthcoming. But as we shall see, these assumptions operate only in situations where primary ties have been established, within a community context where shared mores keep it going.

Bukit Timah marketplace trade is conducted within the framework of Chinese traditional arrangements and involves no systematic resort to such modern institutions as insurance, or the exchange of documents. The supplier provides in part or in whole the operating capital of sellers in the form of goods on credit. These transactions are by word of mouth although very large amounts of money are employed. Credit is extended from half a day to four weeks. The arrangement in fact varies with the type of commodity: credit on perishable commodities is shorter than that on durable items because the rate at which the former commodities move is faster which in turn contributes to the speedy recovery of cash. In addition the period of credit varies with the size of the buyer's business; the smaller his business the shorter his period of credit and conversely, the bigger his business the longer his period of credit. The lack of contracts or legal documents such as could be made the basis of court action is not an indication of ignorance on the part of people conducting trade. The marketplace trader is fully aware of the existence of the solicitor and the court and he is not less rational in his economic activity than the

European businessman. Indeed like the West African long-distance trader (Cohen 1969: 7), it is specifically because he is rational in the conduct of his business that the Singapore marketplace trader continues in the old traditional ways.

The persistence of business processes that seem to invite default is off-set by the knowledge that a reputation for honesty ensures the continual supply of goods on the one hand and the survival of the business on the other. Hu (1944) wrote that much of the activity of Chinese life is operated on the basis of trust. He argued that as the confidence of society is essential to the functioning of the ego, the loss of lien (face) has come to constitute a real dread affecting the nervous system of ego more strongly than physical fear. Lien is also a prime consideration in the business world. Once the community has acknowledged that a person is honest in his dealings and lives up to his obligations, he has credit far beyond his perhaps very modest possessions; for his creditors know that concern for keeping the respect of the community will force him to the utmost effort in satisfying their claims. This is the reason why Chinese businessmen, among the most prudent in the world, very often concluded deals without written contract. Hu concluded that a person with a feeling for lien can be trusted implicitly, for lien is worth more than a fortune to those who value it. So, the stallholder or shop proprietor who violates the trust will fail, and his whole livelihood and that of his dependents will be jeopardized. To keep supplies flowing and to earn savings, traders must live up to promises and fulfil expectations.

However practical measures are also taken by suppliers from the moment trade relationships are initiated to deter default, despite the viability of moral sanctions. The seller is well acquainted with the buyer, the necessary knowledge acquired only through long experience in the business. The seller has to know not only where a buyer has his market stall or shop, but also where he lives, who are his relatives and associates, what is the size of his business, and how honest and trustworthy he has proved himself to be in his dealings in the past. In this way every marketplace trader is informally graded by the suppliers (who may be marketplace traders themselves) on a scale of credit-worthiness from no-credit and cash only transactions, to full credit, a situation in which the debtor operates entirely on the capital of his supplier. Although a precise assessment of the buyer's social background and his past business conduct is essential, there are exceptions to this rule. Suppliers will extend credit to an unknown trader when some third party, whom they know and trust, will stand as guarantor vouching for the trader's integrity, and that the money will eventually be paid. Should the buyer default the guarantor will pay the full amount from his own money (see Cohen 1965: 8 - 19; 1969: 81 - 86).

Another area where credit is widely employed is between provision shopkeepers and consumers. This arrangement contrasts with mostly cash only transactions between stallholders and consumers. The extended period of credit received by the shop proprietor enables him to extend the same service to his own clientele. Household consumers usually buy a month's supply of rice, cooking oil, sugar, detergents, soap, among other things whereby a month's credit is facilitated. In the same way, credit is extended when the creditor has personal

knowledge of the character and circumstances of his debtor. Such knowledge is available because the creditor and debtor share common residential area and people long resident in a locality know one another which makes it unnecessary to offer security against a debt or to produce any other guarantee of repayment. Residential bonds also tend to soften the harshness of the economic situation for both seller and buyer and business deals are initiated and maintained frequently on a personal basis. In addition place of residence usually serves as a vital indicator for credit worthiness indicating high or low risk. Shopkeepers are eager to extend credit facilities to customers who are professionals and all others with stable, regular income. When such clients are encountered shopkeepers are even prepared to forgo the usual process of initial regular patronage and prompt cash payment. What is of sociological significance is that irrespective of social class, credit risk is not built into the price of merchandise, unlike for example the operations of ghetto merchants in American cities where the poor pay more (Huber 1968). Both rich and poor are offered similar prices, and delivery services at no extra charges, the argument being that as business is competitive another shop will eagerly extend these services if withdrawn by one.

Credit operates in trusted, well tried, personalized relationships. A trader, and similarly a consumer, who has promised delivery of a certain amount of cash on a particular date makes every effort to fulfil his commitment. In a closely knit market town deviant business behaviour incurs powerful social and economic sanctions: for the trader ostracism causes business failure, and for the consumer the termination of the supply of subsistence requirements on credit terms. The absence of default in credit relationships is

not unique to Singapore marketplaces. Dewey (1962: 46 - 49) has observed Chinese business ethics in Java and how all commitments, usually only verbal, are kept. Similarly Cohen (1969) has observed the same credit and trust relations among the Hausa of West Africa. What is unique in all cases is that credit relationships occur only in a community context. Credit relationships and the extension of trust operate among persons sharing traditions which grow out of bonds of common locality, blood, or mind. Only within this context will the system work and will traders honour their business obligations, and defer to the pressures of moral values and moral relationships of all sorts.

The mechanisms that I have thus far considered utilized for the organization and maintenance of credit relationships are social and moral. There are also economic mechanisms, political (legal) mechanisms, and religious mechanisms. All these operate in all credit systems. However credit systems vary in the degree to which the different mechanisms are exploited and in the manner in which they are combined. Cohen argued that in the industrially advanced and highly differentiated societies, emphasis is placed on formal and political mechanisms (1969: 84). In these societies extensive use is made of formal, standardized arrangements by which the solvency of debtors is closely assessed, securities against possible default are provided, and the conditions of the contractual agreements are upheld by legislated rules and sanctions which are administered by centralized rules and highly bureaucratized courts and police. He demonstrated that these formal economic and legal arrangements are nonetheless supplemented by the informal organization of a variety of ritual and moral mechanisms. Nevertheless the greater emphasis in the organization of credit in western industrial society is on formal political

and economic mechanisms. In contrast in developing societies like Nigeria, greater emphasis is placed on moral and ritual mechanisms, because of the relatively little developed means of communication, centralization and bureaucratization of economic and political functions. In these societies, at those points in the credit system where economic and political mechanisms are not effective, moral mechanisms are strongly mobilized; primary relationships which are not ordinarily exploited are exploited, others are consolidated, and new ones generated. As Singapore's own industrialization is very recent the Bukit Timah traders operate in a sophisticated, highly industrialized city-state on the one hand and on the other hand operate in a situation in which moral and ritual (sanctions by Hungry Ghosts) mechanisms remain a vital part of credit relationships while formal economic and legal arrangements have never been employed. These moral and social mechanisms have never failed and as they still work, they have survived from traditional times. More importantly most transactions are not sizeable enough to warrant legal procedures, and small scale businessmen not only have little understanding of the working of the legal system but are appalled at the thought of involving political mechanisms in their economic activities. From them their given word is equivalent to or perhaps even more binding than a signed contract. However the imminent disintegration of the community for redevelopment purposes may signal the beginning of more formalized credit relationships. This is because the framework within which credit and trust relationships operate will be dismantled. Furthermore, as we shall see in chapter six, the control on hawker numbers will give the declining numbers of participants a larger share of the economic pie. With the increase in volume of trade, traders will find it more and more to their advantage to formalize credit

arrangements and employ formal sanctions which may conversely contribute to the decline of informal arrangements, such as moral and ritual sanctions. The State may be directly instrumental to the emergence of credit relationships that seem more consistent with an industrial society.

The personalization of economic relationships

As noted, credit is widely used as a means of facilitating commercial exchange. More importantly, credit flows along lines of communication established by highly personal relationships in which people interrelate in terms of more than purely economic role dimensions. Personalistic relationships involve subjective values and extralegal sanctions which encourage individuals to meet obligations to others in the absence of the employment of contractual, legalistic mechanisms to secure debt relations. In credit relations close friends and kin often facilitate the extension of such arrangements between producers, wholesalers and retailers. The intertwining of the obligations among close friends and kin and the enterprises of marketplace traders raises an issue that has been widely discussed among scholars: whether economic obligations to a large number of relatives constitute a major restriction on capital accumulation and growth. The literature on entrepreneurship in Africa in many respects has been a debate on the relation between kinship obligations and the relative success of entrepreneurs (see Handwerker 1973). From the early 1950s to the early 1960s a consensus of sorts was reached holding that kinship obligations were either drains on the capital of entrepreneurs or hindered capital accumulation (eg. Bauer 1963: 7 - 8; Dorjahn 1962; Hunter 1962: 140). At worst such obligations

were regarded as the primary cause of business failure among African entrepreneurs. At best they were considered to be the main reason for the lack of growth in enterprises run by African entrepreneurs. Data gathered since the mid-1960s however have run counter to these earlier assessments. Rather than suggesting that kinship obligations were threats to entrepreneurs, these studies made the point that such obligations had little to do with business failure, and especially in the early stages of growth were often critical to the success achieved by an entrepreneur (Benedict 1968; Handwerker 1973; Isaac 1969, 1971; Jones 1969; Nafziger 1969). These recent studies illustrate procedures through which entrepreneurs achieve the balance between demands and assistance determining the role (beneficial or detrimental) kinship and equivalent obligations play in their businesses. So where kin ties can be said to have restricted growth, traders have chosen to accept those restrictions. Conversely where traders have chosen to expand their businesses, kinship and close friendship obligations may be critical in a number of ways: channelling capital and market intelligence to the firm, and providing labour which is trustworthy and cheap for the additional tasks entailed by the expansion.

Kinship obligations are not impediments to the commercial success of Singapore marketplace traders. The situation is best summarized in an over-simplified expression common among traders: to survive, even a father and his son must make profits from one another. So, it is not considered avaricious to take profit from relatives as long as the profit is modest. Secondly the number of mutually-supporting relatives is small. The rules of social organization governing ascribed and achieved kinship (see chapter four) provide individual traders with a potentially enormous network of kinship

relations. However not all these relationships are actually validated by reciprocally supporting actions. Individuals tend to pick and choose and in turn are chosen on the basis of such criteria as spatial proximity, relative wealth and influence, and personal attractiveness (see Davis 1973: 213). The result is that the effective action set of kinsmen which is taken from the kinship network is much smaller than the entire kindred. Thirdly though one is expected to assist his relatives, it is not anticipated that he will divide his wealth equally with them. Rather, one's kin is expected to respond in accordance with one's own resources which may in fact be satisfied with low levels of performance. For example, publicizing by word of mouth the recent establishment of a relative's stall. Fourthly although indebtedness among relatives may never be eliminated entirely, it is carefully limited. Except in certain cases traders may impose an absolute limitation on the amount of credit which they will extend to anyone, including relatives, and refuse to go beyond these limits. As his own resources are limited he has to balance demand and assistance. So traders are frequently candid with relatives on the amount of credit that they can extend and their kin accept and understand such limits, the justification being the hard necessities imposed by the ways in which traders make their livelihood. Finally, although bonds of sentiment facilitate credit, the debtor who systematically fails to meet his commitments threatens his supply. So the successful trader is one who among other things has learned to keep outstanding obligations to relatives at a minimum, and who knows how to manipulate these and other relationships to his advantage.

Though relations of kinship are of considerable significance in the local economy, the principle of kinship is not adequately

inclusive to organize a market economy. In fact in the marketplace economy the greater number of relationships are not among kin but among regular clients.

Traders in Bukit Timah attempt to reduce risks by building up steady clientele. Obtaining regular customers involves the provision of quality merchandise, no attempt at optimizing profit returns from each transaction, and the extension of credit to them. Yet lending risks are high unless the credit relationship also involves the sanctions which accompany personalized multiplex relations. In the marketplace this security is most commonly provided by the formation of social relations referred to as kow-kwan. These kow-kwan bonds are essentially dyadic relations which though economic in orientation are nevertheless rich in subjective social content.

In the marketplace economy the majority of all transactions take place between persons who habitually trade with one another, and who are said to be one another's kow-kwan. Each trader then pursues strategies aimed at acquiring as many kow-kwan as he can manage through people with whom he has primary ties, and via the many voluntary associations in Bukit Timah (see chapter five). Kow-kwan is probably a corruption of the Malay word kawan for a friend, and sometimes the term lau (Hokkien) old or long established is prefixed. The word may be applied to any person or role relationship in the trade network, and does not designate any specific economic function. Nearly every trader has 'supplier kow-kwan' from whom he buys and 'customer kow-kwan' to whom he sells. The usage of the term is reciprocal, each partner referring to the other as 'my kow-kwan'. It may be used in direct address: the seller addresses his regular customers as lau kow-kwan while the buyer frequently applies the term to himself as a

method of initiating more favourable deals. This relationship in many ways parallels the suki relationship in Philippine marketplaces (Davis 1973: 216 - 239; Szanton 1972: 97 - 116) and the pratik institution in the Haitian marketplaces (Mintz 1961).

Because credit is at the heart of the kow-kwan relation, such relations take time to build as trust and confidence are established between two potential partners, and goodwill replaces the tendency towards sharp bargaining. Before committing operating capital to such a relationship the seller must be assured that the buyer is a trustworthy person and that his clientage will involve enough sales to make him worth the investment. There are of course some kow-kwan relations that develop from mutual attraction on a friendly basis between buyer and seller. Once established the element of lien (face) enters the kow-kwan relationship. Partners in a long standing kow-kwan relationship are careful to meet their obligations in order to avoid loss of face, a common tension producing feature of social relations among the Chinese in Singapore.

The test of the strength of the kow-kwan relationship is during cyclical shortages of certain merchandize. For example during the monsoons from November to February, fish is scarce. Traders claim to experience intense anxiety attempting to fulfil their obligations to their customers. The problem is accentuated if processed fish is their customer's only commodity of trade. Sometimes they are forced to pay above average prices which are not passed on to customers. There is an obligation to maintain uniform prices in order to maintain the goodwill in their relationship. During periods when goods are scarce and high prices deter rapid turnover, suppliers may apply moral and social

pressure on their customer kow-kwan to ying chou yi dian (应酬一矢), a term meaning responsiveness or social intercourse (Young 1971: 57), which within this context means to extend patronage. Within the kow-kwan framework the supplier may even persuade the buyer to buy more than his requirements. While long-established customers stabilize business by creating a steady and calculable turnover for the trader's commodity, the relationship is also satisfactory to the customer: he has a reliable supply source, assured of fair prices, enjoys price stability, and supplied quality goods.

As previously noted, credit relations may be established through the intervention of some third party even though the would-be debtor is unknown to the creditor. Similarly kow-kwan relations may be established in ways in which the bonds grow more rapidly. A common way of obtaining new kow-kwan is through the intermediation of older ones. If a trusted kow-kwan, or a relative, or some well-known person in the community will recommend a customer to a seller, the customer may become an immediate kow-kwan. Some kow-kwan may also be passed along in exchanges of market stalls through the good offices of the old operator, or they may be inherited from a relative or friend who is retiring from business. Because they desire credit, buyers may themselves initiate the relationship by singling out some seller with whom they proceed to deal exclusively with the intent of becoming his kow-kwan.

In the community professional and administrative persons are especially prized as kow-kwan buyers and there is considerable competition for their trade. These people from higher household incomes buy once weekly making quantity and quality purchases.

Nonetheless traders are also dependent on people who purchase daily or near-daily. Frequent purchasing is time consuming but the main causes are firstly, low family incomes and the absence of refrigerators¹¹ among people regularly attending the marketplace, and secondly, the daily buyers are housewives, or others who do not work in the mornings. Another section of the community trade that traders compete for is among the food caterers. These traders operate in cooked food centres, local restaurants, factory canteens and educational institutions. Marketplace traders describe them as some of their best customers because they buy in large quantities and more importantly, do not haggle over prices. Because of the scale of their purchases, these persons are likely to find kow-kwan relations easy to establish.

Although the economic feature of kow-kwan relations is the most significant, there is much more to kow-kwan dyads than credit. The relationship between trader and buyer is somehow more intimate and more demanding of special privilege. The seller is expected to provide his kow-kwan price concessions and good quality merchandize. He is honest about the quality of item his kow-kwan is purchasing even though the customer may not be skilled or knowledgeable enough to make the assessment himself (see Young 1971: 159). Conversely casual customers with whom kow-kwan relations have not been established are never sold the best quality items, and every attempt is made to optimize profit returns from every transaction.

The sentiment which exists between kow-kwan reduces the common practice of haggling over prices. If haggling does occur it is done in a much more subdued manner than when randomly associated buyers and sellers negotiate. In a developed kow-kwan relationship the buyer assumes that his kow-kwan is trustworthy and that he will offer the

best possible prices and that there is no cheating on the weight of goods. Nadel argued that in Nupe, Nigeria, there is no haggling because of common knowledge of the price of commodities (1961: 317). Nadel has oversimplified a complex issue. Using the Singapore case the most up to date information on prices of commodities are broadcast daily through the mass media in the four official languages, Mandarin, English, Malay and Tamil. But despite such common knowledge, haggling remains prevalent, sometimes among kow-kwan and always between buyer and seller where kow-kwan relations have not been established. In the West Indies (eg. Katzin 1960), in Africa (eg. Uchendu 1967), in South-east Asia (eg. Firth 1946: 189 - 204), in the Philippines (eg. Davis 1973: 224) and in Singapore, haggling is a characteristic feature of marketplace relationships.

In Bukit Timah traders claim that female buyers haggle more than male buyers. Whether haggling effectively reduces price is often determined by two conditions: the time of day, and whether it is a weekday or weekend. Haggling is unfavourable during peak hours but from about 9.30 a.m. the chances of success increases. The downward flexibility of market prices during off-peak hours is because of declining customers, and tropical conditions do not help keep raw produce fresh. During weekends the large numbers of buyers make haggling virtually impossible. The reduced price may still contain a considerable profit margin. Many traders use a technique that usually leaves customers satisfied, which in turn contributes to the building up of kow-kwan relationships. Usually between five to twenty cents is added on to the price. If customers haggle the trader nets the profit margin he previously intended. If customers do not bargain the trader quotes the inflated price, and then declares the more favourable price.

As a steady clientele determines business success the more kow-kwan the more successful the business. Conversely the more random selling and buying, the less successful the trader, and for the buyer the more uncertain the quality of his purchases and the less fair the prices.

The process of haggling between kow-kwan in the marketplace usually operates as follows: buyers feign shock when first told of the price, insist that the trader is mistaken, claim that the trader cites the most unrealistic prices in the whole marketplace, insist that the item is not worth the price cited, or pretend to leave the stall. These tactics may be used singly or in different combinations. Sometimes customers also try to underpay: they get away with it if the trader's attention has been diverted but the loss will be skillfully recovered in the next transaction with the same customer. With unfamiliar customers haggling is impersonal and even aggressive at times.

Although prices are clearly important in the kow-kwan relationship, these relations also provide mutual satisfaction. For the seller he is able to obtain greater control over the amount of capital to be committed to inventory: he has a clear picture of the minimal size of the demand for his goods. For the buyer he receives credit necessary to carry him from one income event to the next. In addition we have noted he receives more favourable prices and a number of peripheral services than he could obtain as a non-aligned buyer. The kow-kwan relations also provide assurances of a continuous flow of supplies. This arrangement is convenient if the buyer is but a consumer; but if he is a trader, such a flow may be absolutely critical to his capacity to service his own customers. So, kow-kwan relationships

persist. But some of this persistence is the result of non-economic satisfactions and not merely material self-interest. Each seller may count some of his kow-kwan people who are invited to share the seller's important occasions: weddings, annual banquets of mutual benefit associations, Hungry Ghost celebrations, and so on. Indeed Bukit Timah social organization is centered upon marketplace traders. The relocation of marketplace traders from Bukit Timah will cause the disintegration of the community.

To conclude, the kow-kwan relationship encompasses both self-interest and a generous measure of subjective content. It serves to illustrate that in market economies a simple qualitative distinction of relationships into personal and impersonal is incorrect. Polanyi (1957: VIII - IX) and Geertz (1963a: 46) for example, have emphasized the strictly economic considerations in business operations where commercial ties are said to be insulated from general social ties. Geertz for example wrote,

Friendship, neighbourliness, even kinship are one thing, trade is another; and the impersonal, calculating, rationalistic approach to economic activity which has sometimes been held to characterize only advanced economies is present in the Modjokuto pasar to a marked degree (1963a: 46).

However he also acknowledged that particularistic relationships are often used both to enforce obligations and to gain assistance in any economy (1963: 47). Other writers like Davis (1973: 211 - 239), Firth (1964: 16), Mintz (1964: 261), Szanton (1972: 100), have emphasized that marketplace exchanges are part of an overall system of social relationships. So, relationships are not operating in purely economic or non-economic spheres: all relationships have an economic aspect and a social and cultural aspect. In the marketplace most relationships

are affected by particularistic considerations and are not normally universalistic in the Parsonian sense. As Belshaw (1965) has aptly demonstrated, instead of dichotomizing relationships into these two patterns of behaviour it is more significant to understand at what point particularistic considerations are more important than impersonal considerations and also at what point advantages outweigh personal considerations.

Conclusion

The economic organization of marketing in Bukit Timah is wedged into strategies that work. These strategies are the most rational, the most economic and hence the most profitable. New traders are recruited by kinsmen and friends as assistants and who in turn graduate into independent business either in sole proprietorships or in partnerships. New recruits into small scale trade who are hindered by inadequate capital become processors or retailers of goods specialized in by kinsmen and so participate in complementary functions or serve as additional retail outlets, respectively. For those who have built up sufficient resources, family specialization in the same line of trade is not the usual practice (see chapter four); the tendency is towards diversification. In addition marketplace relationships are generally particularistic instead of universalistic, personalistic instead of contractual, unlike the economic organization of the large scale economic sector. In the small scale sector primary relationships are absolutely essential to ensure stabilization of business, and economic success. So people are inextricably enmeshed in shared economic and social traditions. These traditions have been established over many decades within the community through individual entrepreneurial skill

but are now in danger of being undermined because of the government's urban redevelopment programme. As Bukit Timah is a closely knit community, relocation threatens its unity and exclusiveness which in fact is not compatible with national unity, independence, and equality of citizenship. Within the national context the confinement and segregation of different communities is an obstacle to national integration and national political aims. Urban redevelopment will cause the regrouping of people into new localities which in turn breaks down community boundaries. But as the relocation of street traders into the New Market has demonstrated, relocation causes loss of livelihood too, for traders as well as their employees which altogether represent real hardships especially during the first few months before individual traders gradually adapt to new conditions. Relocation of the Beauty World traders will force them into new strange neighbourhoods. They will lose their neighbourhood, their homes, and more important, their long established economic institutions. Bukit Timah is to be replaced with middle and high income shopping centres and the small scale businessmen who will be dispossessed in the process can hardly if ever afford to move into these new establishments. The Bukit Timah community will no longer be viable when the core of its marketing community is cut out. Its loss will be another of the many social, economic and political institutions that the State is undermining because of its policy of rapid redevelopment aided by its effective control over its population.

What is of sociological significance that has emerged is that marketplace traders constitute a distinctive occupational class economically (we shall see in due course also socially and politically) isolated from the main body of Singapore workers. We have observed

that people who are recruited into marketing activities are those with little or no education which in turn means that they are dialect speaking, are middle-aged and above, are prepared to work long and strenuous hours albeit compensated with higher income, and are people who set a high premium on independent work. Furthermore I showed in an earlier study that the small scale sector is characteristically dominated by Singaporeans, is mainly first generation immigrants or largely foreign born, is dominated by Chinese particularly Teochews, and whereby if it has had some education is in Chinese, Malay or Tamil (Wong 1974: 51). As for Singapore's labour force in general, it comprises a large proportion of non-citizens especially in sectors where there is a shortage of local labour, is characteristically of more local born people than foreign born, is young, where ethnicity and dialect are proportional to that of the total population, where the mean years of education achieved is five years, and whereby education had been achieved in English and/or Chinese streams (Wong 1974: 51). In other words the main body of Singapore labour is skilled, educated, recruited upon achievement and other universalistic criteria, but whose wages are often a far cry from that of the entrepreneurs. The trading class will become even more isolated from the rest of the working population as Singapore relentlessly pursues higher levels of industrial development instead of tertiary development, emphasizes the large scale sector instead of the small scale sector of the economy, and capital intensive industries instead of labour intensive industries and small scale commodity distribution.

Chapter Three

Footnotes

- 1 The Primary Production Department has ear-marked 1,036 hectares of land at Ponggol for relocation of the bigger pig farms from the Kranji catchment area and areas affected by public projects. The Ponggol area, to be developed in several phases, will eventually have a pig population of 750,000 (The Sunday Times, Singapore 18th July 1976).
- 2 Pigs are reared in pens. The penning of even-sized pigs allows them to reach slaughter-weight simultaneously reducing the number of pens holding only a few pigs. The number of pigs per pen in the finishing stages (that is, of slaughter weight) is normally 10 - 20, with 12 - 16 being the most usual range (Singapore Primary Production Bulletin October 1975: 7).
- 3 Among the trading classes Chinese steel-yards (called daching) of various sizes are generally used for weighing purposes. The following are the principal local measures used with their metric equivalents:
- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------|
| the tahl equals | 38 grammes |
| the kati (16 tahils) equals | 589 grammes |
| the pikul (100 katis) equals | 60.38 kilogrammes |
| the koyan (40 pikuls) equals | 2424 kilogrammes |
- Since the beginning of 1976 marketplace traders began switching to metric measures in line with government policy to go metric.
- 4 The management of the abattoir maintains an ambivalent attitude to pig blood collection. At one time such collections were banned when the health authorities discovered that blood was collected irrespective of the health of the slaughtered pigs. The food inspectors can have certified certain pigs unfit for consumption but their blood has been collected earlier on. There are plans to re-cycle blood together with hair, condemned carcasses and viscera into fertilizer but it is unlikely to halt these activities as the Chinese enjoy such food.
- 5 Butchers were originally issued with serial numbers on a first-come-first-served basis when fees are paid during the day. Those at the beginning of the queue had their pigs slaughtered earlier in the night. The traders found it more convenient to organize themselves into permanent queues and know fairly accurately when their pigs are slaughtered. If this arrangement is not followed the traders can find themselves going to the abattoir at 10 p.m. the first night, 3 a.m. the second, 11.30 p.m. the third and so on.

- 6 In 1975 66,974 tonnes of fish were auctioned at the wholesale fish market at Jurong and two lesser markets at Kangkar and Bedok. Local fishermen caught 17,560 tonnes of fish and the rest were mainly imported from West Malaysia. Other sources of supply are Indonesia, Thailand and Taiwan. From the month of November fish is expensive because of the high risk of monsoon fishing; prices are lower from May to August (Singapore '76: 136; Singapore Primary Production Department Annual Report 1974: 15; The Sunday Times, Singapore 18th July 1976; Television Singapura Documentary 9th April 1976).
- 7 All but four fishmongers at Bukit Timah obtain their supplies from Jurong. Of the four three are supplied by owners of kelong (large marine fish trap located close to the coast) and the supplier of the fourth is in a market at 11½ kilometres Upper Serangoon Road.
- 8 Only 17 per cent (N=15,741) of the farms specialize in horticulture, poultry, livestock or fishery; the rest practise mixed farming. The popularity of the latter is due to the fact that waste produced by the livestock is used either wholly or partially to fertilize the soil to raise vegetables, fruit trees and ornamental plants (Report on the Agricultural Census of Singapore 1973: 20 - 21). Mixed farming apparently can also help to distribute risks involved in specialization.
- 9 Price tagging is not practised among sellers of raw commodities but among cooked food traders and shopkeepers only.
- 10 The provision shop continues to bear its original name 四和, Harmonious Four.
- 11 While I have no data on ownership of refrigerators among households in Bukit Timah my national survey of hawkers in Singapore and Dr. Peter D. Weldon's study of the Central Area in Singapore both provide some indications on the state of such ownership. Among hawkers 47 per cent of households possess refrigerators and among Central Area residents 30 per cent of households possess refrigerators (Weldon 1969: 26 - 30; Wong 1974: 107).

Chapter Four

The Social Organization of Marketing:
Kinship and FriendshipIntroduction

As businessmen do in many other societies, traders in Bukit Timah exploit the strong sentiments, emotions and moral obligations that are associated with primary relationships between members of the family and friends, to support their economic activities. Members from one's family and circle of friends are mobilized to provide manpower, capital, credit, trading skills, and general support. These forms of cooperation are persistent and usual practice in all societies, rather than sporadic and situational.

The term 'family' has variable meanings within the context of the societies in which it is used and the Chinese meaning is not to be simply translated into the English equivalent. Myron Cohen has argued that family, or more specifically chia (家) is ambiguous as it can mean a group, an estate (of property), or an economy (a set of economic activities) (1970: 21 - 36). A chia group with a chia estate may participate in economic activities. However the group may not all live in one place, it may not all derive benefit from the estate, and it may not all be involved in one set of economic activities. So a group associated with an estate may occupy one building or complex of buildings and at the opposite end, members may be residentially dispersed and its members may operate independently of one another in their economic life. In the Singapore situation the variables estate

and economy are meaningless as chia members are not associated with an estate, and economic cooperation of large chia units has declined because of rapid growth in the numbers of wage earners in industry and commerce. However co-residence has taken on new significance which is best illustrated by traders who left sons behind in China and no longer include them when enumerating their chia, only considering those in Singapore who live with them, or separately after marriage, as chia members. The traders often identify two chia for each person: firstly the elementary unit of spouses and children who share a common budget, usually have their meals together and sleep in the same house (see Kaye 1960: 18 - 20). This chia group is best translated into household, a residential unit that carries out domestic functions (see Bender 1967: 493). Virtually all trader households are also family units as few are well to do enough to afford non-kinsmen like servants. Secondly there is the wider unit where at some stage in the developmental process residence had been shared such as that among married siblings. This division is in keeping with local usage and ideology.

The Chinese household has been examined in many contexts, from its place in the economy to its role in ancestor worship. Only in passing has it been considered in terms of change and the processes effecting such change (see Willmott 1960: 260 - 302). Using the material on traders in Bukit Timah I examine two major kinds of this flow of change. The first is the developmental changes in the household. I choose somewhat arbitrarily to begin with a household of a couple and their unmarried children. If sons marry and together with their own spouses and children reside with their parents as one unit, we have what is conventionally called joint household. If there is only one married son, we have what is usually referred to as a stem

household. If the senior generation in a joint household dies so that the family unit consists of two or more married brothers with their wives and children, we have what is called a fraternal joint household. This last type does not exist in Bukit Timah and the joint household is rare. Households with extended structures are common but most are of the elementary type. While extended households have traditionally been enlarged through sons except for the odd cases of son-in-law adoption, in Bukit Timah extension through daughters has become commonplace. Equally common are households whereby married brothers and sisters share their parents' house (who may be alive or dead) and cooperate economically in some way as well as religiously, but each maintains a discrete household budget and prepares its own food. All these different household forms have significance for economic activities.

But the process of change in the kinship system in Singapore has been going on together with wider structural changes. The Chinese population came from parts of China in which the tradition of the patriarchal extended family was especially strong. At present certain aspects of that tradition have been abandoned, others have been seriously challenged, and still others remain substantially intact. Apart from changes that have been brought about by immigrants adjusting in an overseas situation, these changes have also been precipitated by the State national development policies and family planning schemes. Using the material on Bukit Timah I describe and analyse the processes of these changes and their effect on marketing.

Whereas kinship bonds are ascribed, friendship is achieved. Friendship relations are developed by a person in the course of

informal interaction with other men in the course of business transaction, religious worship and leisure seeking. In other words friendship is a reciprocal relationship where each member of the dyad maintains ties not only for emotional fulfilment but also for economic, religious and practical purposes. Wolf distinguishes two kinds of friendship: expressive or emotional friendship, and instrumental friendship (1966: 10). Emotional friendship involves a relation between an ego and an alter in which each satisfies some emotional need in his opposite number. The relationship is psychological, and the two persons are drawn together because of certain social characteristics. Emotional friendships are primarily found in social situations where the individual is strongly embedded in solidary groupings like communities and lineages, and where the set of social structure inhibits social and geographical mobility such as among the Indians in Middle America. In such situations, ego's access to natural and social resources is largely provided by the solidary units, and friendship can at best provide emotional release and catharsis from the strains and pressures of role-playing. While expressive friendship of the type described by Wolf does not exist among the Chinese, instrumental friendship is prevalent. These latter kinds are usually goal oriented, whether for natural or social resources, although the relationship may not have started with such aims in mind. In instrumental friendship each member of the dyad acts as a potential connecting link to other persons outside the dyad, in contrast to expressive friendship which is associated with closure of the social circle. So instrumental friendship reaches beyond the boundaries of existing dyads. Under these circumstances a person is free to mobilize friends to advance himself economically, socially, and politically, both inside and outside the community.

In the rest of the discussion I attempt to show the areas where kinsmen and friends are mobilized to contribute to economic activities. More specifically I am concerned with the relationship of aspects of the family developmental process to marketing operations, and friendship and kinship obligations in the area of money, goods and services. In these considerations the State exerts its influence.

The household developmental process and marketing activities

An elementary household in which all the filial generation are pre-adolescent as compared with one with some or all the children at marriageable ages are at different stages of development, and so is one comprising only two successive generations as compared to one made up of three generations. These different stages of household development also display different patterns of economic activities. I examine each stage in turn starting with the most important and smallest unit within the Chinese kinship system.

The elementary household

While the household head is engaged in trade activities, his wife is concerned with household work and child caring. The wife together with children are supported by a common budget provided by the trader although technically they do not contribute to it. The arrangement is altered when children are older: the wife frequently oscillates between housework and business, and children are mobilized to contribute to the enterprise, each contribution taking into consideration age, sex and experience. This arrangement is particularly

prevalent in shop enterprises where the unit provides in one place the required facilities for work and dwelling (see Neville 1969: 64 - 65), and in cooked food enterprises where production is highly labour intensive. In some cases aid is so necessary that children of primary school going age contribute to the enterprise from 4 a.m. to 7 a.m. before they dash off to school while others contribute after school hours.

Marketing is dependent on free or cheap labour frequently provided by large numbers of adolescent sons and daughters. Although such labour is short-lived because after a few years children become adults and independent workers, what is of greater significance is that the State is depriving small scale businessmen of this important source of labour. Since 1965 the policy has been the promotion of smaller families. The Republic's family planning programme is supported by several incentives and disincentives such as legalized abortion, sterilization, tax relief up to the third child, increases in hospital charges for every consecutive child, government housing priority to families with two or less children, and priority for enrolment in schools of the parents' choice, among other things. With such stringent measures, succeeding generations of traders will be deprived of a vital source of labour from among their own children. With few children and better education, occupational mobility is also increased and few will go into the family business. But children contributing to family labour in fact give parents some respite from the business. The economic value of children is also enhanced when their labour can replace that which would have to be hired for wages (see Barnett 1969). The engagement of hired labour in the general labour market is not likely to force traders to narrow their profit

margins; instead, increasing overheads will be passed on to the consumers and inevitably contribute to a rising cost of living. Hence national family planning schemes have important repercussions for the social organization of traders and simultaneously wide implications for the nation's population.

All traders place a high premium on education and make sacrifices to ensure that their children receive proper schooling. Many are motivated to use their resources to give their children the 'best' education that income from the enterprise can buy. Virtually all who have themselves followed in the footsteps of their fathers hope that their own children will establish themselves in occupations of more prestige such as being teachers, officials or professional workers. They regard education an important path to upward mobility out of small scale trade. More important education is associated with the techniques and products of modern technology with which the accepted goals of progress and development of the nation are associated. But these ambitions are often unrealistic because the vast majority of traders are unable to free their children from tasks involved in the enterprise and allow them to concentrate on their studies with a single mind. Those who are not confronted with such a dilemma and who are more likely to realize such ambitions for their children are the few currently operating businesses sufficiently sizeable to provide for outside labour. For the successful trader, the implication is that when he retires or dies his place will not be filled by his son but by some other person. For the less successful trader, self recruiting mechanisms operate within his household; sons are trained for their inheritance or the experience acquired is utilized to set up on their own.

Unmarried sons mobilized into business are not their father's partners; rather they are in their father's employment. However instead of receiving full wages like any other marketplace employee in the region between \$150 to \$300 a month, they are paid allowances not commensurate with their responsibilities. This arrangement persists so long as the father remains in control, but more importantly, so long as the son is not married. However the son is compensated when he marries: his father pays for the marriage costs that range from a few hundred to several thousand dollars. Marriage signals adulthood and a change in status: the previous subordinate status gradually diminishes and eventually disappears as the son asserts his independence and acquires new prominence even as the older man is aging and losing his authority. The small allowances extended to unmarried sons are not indicators of business turnover; other considerations are involved. In marketing activities the influence of Confucian ideology remains intact: the filial son is required to undergo life long subordination and subject himself to the old pattern of paternal authority. Sons continue to fear their fathers and for their part fathers remain aloof and formal in their relationship with their sons (see Wolf 1970: 37 - 62). Fathers regularly remind their sons that it is alright to suffer when young so as to be able to enjoy the fruits of their labour when old. The rigorous training sons receive equip them for intensive competition in a highly competitive vocation.

Daughters are not trained for marketplace business. Those who are economically active find employment in some other service sector, in industry and commerce. The few exceptions are in businesses operated by females such as vegetable trade and cooked food operations where teenage girls help their mothers. For practical reasons most of

the other kinds of marketing activities are not suitable for women. The pork trade for example requires physical exertion, and is also virtually a 24-hours activity: in addition to selling, supplies are purchased in the afternoon and in the night there is more work to be done at the abattoir. Similarly with the fish trade the working hours are long: supplies are obtained from 2 a.m., and selling may be a whole day activity. Besides the physical handicap of women, equally important are the wider structural considerations. In the Chinese patrilineal society, traditionally sons and not daughters have autonomy to property rights and economic resources. Daughters receive a small share of the estate in the form of dowries while the main portion is divided equally among the sons and to which the senior grandson has a right to some share of the estate (see Wolf 1970: 196). Translated into the Singapore context, sons, and not daughters, inherit the father's business. The traditional practice of male inheritance has persisted.

Wives are mobilized into business in the following circumstances: when children are all grown up, when children are away at school, or a combination of both these conditions. Obviously wives with infants to care for are unable to trade although there are a few exceptions: a fishmonger's wife minds both her seven year old son and infant grandson at the stall while assisting her husband, and of course in shop business, wives attend to customers while keeping an eye on their children who use the premises as their playground. Virtually all wives in partnership with their husbands work for the common pool and take from it as and when the need arises. In enterprises solely established by wives whose husbands are elsewhere employed, she alone, like her counterparts in Lagos (Baker 1974), has

exclusive rights to all the profits. In two cases the wives have made such successes of their processed food enterprises that they have persuaded their husbands to quit their jobs and work in their enterprises instead. In both cases the wives remain in full control of the finances and their husbands have to 'take' from them. In three cases husbands and wives deal in different commodities and the strategy ensures that at least one of them receives an income if the other encounters poor business.

The higher the economic independence of women, the higher their social status. Although this is universal, qualifications have to be made for women in the trading community. The status of Chinese women has traditionally been low. When they were children their brothers were given preferential treatment, when they were adolescents they were kept secluded in the home, after marriage they were subordinate to their husbands and dominated by their mothers-in-law, and they had no part in public life outside the home. The changes began at the end of the nineteenth century when women were able to emigrate: prior to that period married women were forbidden to emigrate by family lineage councils which were afraid of losing the family entirely (Skinner 1957: 161). Informants confirmed that even in the 1920s and early 1930s married women were largely confined to their homes, and more so teenage girls. When the informants first arrived at Bukit Timah there were only three Chinese maidens whose every public appearance, few and far between and always chaperoned, became the talk of the town. The rising status of Chinese women is also part of a world wide phenomenon precipitated by increasing educational achievement. New fields of employment are open to them and women are given new social prestige. In Bukit Timah the population we are examining

is largely illiterate, that is few have had formal schooling although many have taught themselves to read and write Chinese, and certain traditional characteristics are still apparent. On the one hand wives are still under the traditional domination of men who remain the dictators in the household and in which the relationship between the husbands and wives are that of fear, domination, lack of sympathy and understanding. This may be illustrated with the unusual case of the wife who embarked upon a cooked food enterprise on her own but gave it up after a few days because she was forced to give all her earnings to her husband. On the other hand the average men are receptive to Western influences and their relationship with their spouses are characterized by modern patterns of mutuality and equalitarianism. This change may be attributed to the achievement of independent incomes which strengthen the position of women in the family. Further the greater solidarity between husband and wife is directly attributed to courtship patterns and free marital choice in contrast to the parentally arranged 'blind' marriage of older days. As for business, some women display abilities that even win the open admiration of their male counterparts but in the public affairs of the town, none of them play any important role. In these areas men describe them as 'ignorant', 'out of place', and 'primarily interested in the home'. The women themselves reinforce these prejudices by withdrawing from public life. In the numerous voluntary associations that women subscribe to, they are never elected to leadership positions. And even when they are divined 'leaders' in religious associations the women carry out simple tasks while all decisions are made by the men. Women have increased their domestic authority and also in the marketplace but in the wider fields of social activities they have yet to make a start. Political authority remains primarily the concern of men. Even in an urban setting like Banbury in

highly industrialized Britain, Stacey showed that the management of the home is woman's work and outside interest and management of public affairs is men's (1960: 79). This differentiation contrasts sharply with their West African counterparts who not only trade in their own right but have political control. Among the Gonja, women are accorded high status (Goody 1973: 161 - 163). This is especially the case where they have brothers holding major chiefships thus sharing in their glory. Similarly among elderly women their status approaches that of a male elder as she possesses the wisdom and ritual knowledge associated with age and is accorded commensurate respect. But as we shall see in due course, politics is the only game left in Bukit Timah for the men and they jealously guard it from the females.

When sons and daughters of elementary households reach marriageable age, parents traditionally marry out daughters and bring in wives for sons. Household extension was characteristically through male agnatic lines and patrilocal residence was the norm. Matrilocal residence was rare and when it occurred it amounted to the adoption of the husband by the wife's kinship group and involved a break from traditional Chinese ideals and prejudices because such an adoption may mean a change of name and ancestors (see Freedman 1970: 180; Wolf 1970: 204). In the overseas situation matrilocal residence is fairly commonplace (see Willmott 1960: 265 - 266) and Bukit Timah is no exception. Its practice no longer conjures up traditional prejudices. When men emigrated from China they left their lineages behind. So when women marry they are no longer transferred from their agnates into the control of their husbands' kin. In South and Southeast China lineages are characteristically localized but in highly urbanized Singapore, the distinctiveness of matrilocal and patrilocal residences is in many ways

lost. This means that women are able to maintain close ties with their own as well as their husbands' kinship group. With the rising status of women their desires to place of residence and kin relations have to be taken into consideration. Wives are also glad not to live with their mothers-in-law for fear of traditional domination and other domestic conflict. Simultaneously her own parents want her and her family to reside with them because of personal attachment, companionship, and more importantly when accommodation is available. This arrangement is particularly prevalent when the daughter is the only daughter, the youngest daughter, or if her husband has business relationships with one or more of her brothers. So, Chinese households in Bukit Timah are observed to have changed from the traditional patrilineal, patrilocal system to a bilateral, bilocal or neolocal pattern, that is to a system in which the wife's kin are as important to the household as the husband's kin, and in which married couples live with either the husband's or the wife's kin group or more usually with neither.¹

The trend in Singapore is increasingly towards residence separate from either husband's or wife's natal home. However, many young couples initially have to live in either parents' house for the first few years after marriage until they are allocated public housing flats, the most common form of residence, presently accommodating 51 per cent of Singapore's population (Singapore '76: 195). Households with more than one married couple have been termed 'suppressed' households by Yeh (1975: 44) because of the high probability in each additional unit to separate from the parent unit if alternative accommodation is available; granted that suppressed arrangements may also be completely voluntary. From a practical point of view the

Bukit Timah trader is able to accommodate his children's spouses and in time his children's children because he usually lives in rural housing structures of attap- and zinc-roof and wood and brick structures which have provision for expansion in contrast to high-rise public flats. These forms of housing are rapidly being demolished since the launching of the Urban Renewal Programme in 1966 (Choe 1975: 99). The examination of trader households then is also an examination of household patterns before Government inspired redevelopment programmes were implemented.

The extended household

In Bukit Timah household extensions consist of four types: through a married son, through a married daughter, through two or more married sons, and through both married sons and married daughters. I take each type in turn and examine them in the context of marketplace economic organization.

Using the cases of households of traders in Bukit Timah, the stem household (see Lang 1946) has been transformed and may be reclassified into four types as follows:

1. Parents, married son, other sons if any having left the house.
2. Parents, married son, unmarried sons and/or daughters.
3. Parents, married daughter, other sons or daughters having left the house.
4. Parents, married daughter, unmarried sons and/or daughters.

While the first two kinds are customary, the last two are more recent phenomena. These four kinds of stem households do not assume that it is always the newly married couple who joins the household of their

parents and contribute to trade activities. Equally important are those stem households that emerge from one or both of the man's or woman's parents joining the household and contributing their labour to their son's or daughter's household trade. Under these circumstances the younger man and woman have full autonomy over household matters, the man is the head of household, and members of the senior generation are theoretically in a subordinate position. The two cases I have come across among Bukit Timah traders are confined to widowed mothers joining their daughters who are in the position to provide for them.

Households of traders are usually extended by the eldest son. He has been trained to inherit the business while the rest of the sons are frequently not, as marketplace enterprises cannot provide adequately for more than one married son unless the business has expanded considerably. The eldest son in turn is responsible for the care of his parents in their old age. When the father is still in his prime he remains very much in control of the business while his married son continues to work for him with regulated wages. The father's economic power provides him with much power and authority even over his adult son and the older man is often the recognized head of household. In fact any son who lives with his father will find it hard to establish autonomy even within his own household for the first few years after marriage. Only with time will he secure domestic authority over his own conjugal unit. As age gradually erodes the father's power and authority and the son gradually takes over management of the business, the younger man achieves a partnership with his father on an equal footing where profits are shared equally. In time the balance swings in favour of the son and in one extreme case the married son has virtually taken over the business established by his father and pays

the elderly man a daily wage of \$10 for his assistance at the stall.

In households extended by the daughter, she and her spouse contribute to the household budget. If she is elsewhere employed her mother takes charge of household duties and cares for her children. In stall enterprises none of the married daughters assist in their parents' businesses but their spouses do. In two cases that I am aware of these husbands work at their fathers-in-laws' enterprises during busy hours between 6 a.m. and 8 a.m. before they set off to their respective jobs, one in a private firm and the other in a post office. Sons-in-law are mobilized because in the first case the elderly couple do not have any sons and in the second case sons are not in the economically active age group. So common residence with sons-in-law replaces or augments the help from sons. Like the spinners in Lancashire in the nineteenth century, those who had no children (or suitable children) to employ as assistants employed younger siblings, brothers-in-law, or other kin, and where non-relatives were employed they were sometimes brought into the spinner's household in some kind of quasi-familial relationship (Anderson 1971: 116). I have only come across one case of a married daughter working for her father for wages and she maintains separate living arrangements: she assists in a jewellery shop her provision shop proprietor father has established. Because of the high investments involved this trader engages his own sons and daughters; of the five permanent staff members, apart from the craftsman, the rest are his eldest son, his eldest son's wife, his married daughter and one unmarried daughter. Not only is the trader able to entrust the whole enterprise to his son and daughters, they are also more willing to give of their best for less wages, below what

may have been retained from a free market relationship. What is of sociological interest is that in this arrangement the parent is able to extend control and authority over not only his married son but also his married daughter, and train them to trade under his own eyes. The arrangement is advantageous to the children too as the parent is a more sympathetic master. In fact the relationship is reciprocal: on the one hand the parent is dependent on the children's labour, and on the other hand in the short run the children are provided with employment and in the long run will inherit the business. With regards to kinship bonds on a wider level, the interrelationship between family roles and economic system influence family cohesion.

In stem households where unmarried sons and daughters remain together with their parents and married sibling, all who are working contribute to the common budget and those not yet economically active take from this common pool. The contributions are usually given to the mother who takes care of household requirements such as food and bills. The pooling of resources in these households often contributes to a higher standard of living that income from trade alone will not be able to provide. This arrangement is a source of satisfaction to the group and contrasts sharply with for example the Lancashire families in the nineteenth century where children in their late teens and early twenties who have achieved positions of economic strength would break away from the family instead of contributing to the family purse (Anderson 1971: 129).

As for joint households I have only come across two cases; in both the senior generation survives. In one case the butcher remains very much in control of the enterprise assisted by two married

sons and the third unmarried son. After some three decades in the trade this trader has established three stalls, one for each of his sons when he retires or dies. When each of these sons operate their own independent business, it seems inevitable that they will also operate separate household budgets. The fourth son is in wage employment and is not interested in marketing. In the second case the senior generation trader who pioneered the soya bean curd trade had retired. The business was transferred to the eldest son's wife who in the past peddled the commodity while the two sons were elsewhere employed. The younger son's wife was absorbed into household work instead of trade. Over the past decade the eldest son's wife transformed the enterprise into a success that currently provides her husband, her three economically active sons, her husband's brother's wife and a coolie with employment. The enterprise is the main source of income for members of three generations comprising a total of eighteen persons. The sisters-in-law maintain reciprocal relations: the older trades and buys all the household food, the younger cooks and takes care of housework and is glad of the private source of income from production activities in the older woman's enterprise. While the sisters-in-law maintain cordial relationships seams of stress are evident between the brothers, the younger of whom is an incorrigible gambler. Both women seem to think that if there is a split in the household it will come from external sources - Government development and resettlement schemes.

In the literature available on Chinese society, much has been written about the fragile bonds between adult brothers which in part is attributed to sisters-in-law affecting such relationships. The evidence also shows that brothers are rivals for scarce resources when

they are members of one household unit as in traditional rural households (see Freedman 1958: 21 - 27, 1970: 1 - 2; Cohen 1970: 21 - 36). On the other hand Margery Wolf has shown that while brothers indeed compete for the parental wealth or property, this is a minor factor in their conflict since the equality of their shares is clearly prescribed by the culture (1970: 53). More important the foundation of the rivalry is the experience in child training practices. She wrote that as children the elder is required to yield to his younger brother's demands in all things, some of which are outrageous when the younger is still small. But when they are adults the expectation is exactly the reverse; the younger is expected to yield to his older brother's decisions and guidance, a situation for which he has been poorly prepared. So the failure of the relationship originates in the inconsistent preparation of the brothers for their adult roles. Although I did not undertake a detailed study of this subject my observations are that marked changes have taken place in the relationship between adult brothers. Modern or Western ideas have been learnt from television, the movies, from newspapers and from observation of English educated households which emphasize just treatment and equality. The result is that adult brothers tend to display more of the warmth idealized in Confucian ideology. This new warmth is more evident between brothers who do not share the same residence. With the tendency for adult brothers to live away from one another upon marriage inspired by both the desire to exert their independence in separate households and the State encouraging these forms of living through the establishment of high-rise living, the brittle relationship between brothers found in traditional Chinese society is less evident. Furthermore as they are engaged in different occupations, some in trade and others in wage labour, brothers do not compete with one

another for parental wealth or property, which do not exist in the first place. So modified child training practices, separate accommodation, and no squabbles over household resources because of different economic pursuits all contribute to a realignment of brotherly affection.

Any analysis of the models of Chinese kinship must take into account the actual pattern as well as the ideal type. The sociological significance that has emerged from the above is that the Chinese attach importance to two models of kinship structure which are in fact contradictory. At the behavioural level the fraternal relationship is inconsistent concerning proper behaviour towards each other: during adulthood the big brother dominates and the little brother yields while the opposite is correct behaviour during childhood. The relationship is fraught with obedience, dominance and submissiveness and there is none of the ethics and morals idealized in Confucian ideology. The idealized model, the classical Confucian philosophy of love, respect and mutuality between fraternal kin is only beginning to emerge because of social, economic and cultural changes. While within the sibling group respect is due from junior to senior, the general character of sibling relations is shifting to egalitarian companionship, solidarity in time of trouble, and economic, jural and ritual support in time of need. The new emphasis on equality will have implications for the development of kinship structure.

In contrast to joint households, families consisting of several married brothers and sisters sharing accommodation are more common. If parents are still living and if there are still unmarried brothers or sisters, these people become part of the household unit of the eldest son or more usually, the son in the strongest financial

position. In these families many things are often shared: common compound, fruit trees, household deity, and certain facilities like telephone and television set. But within the family each of the elementary units of husband and children prepares its own food and each unit is financially separate from one another. This form of co-residence with kinsmen have practical considerations: apart from cheap housing, co-residence widens the economic base beyond that of the elementary household from which kinsmen's support can be mobilized. For example fishmonger Yeo's youngest unmarried brother assisted in the business until 1974. When the eldest of these three brothers urgently required help in his building-contracting business, the youngest brother worked for him. Yeo then employed a friend but the latter resigned in 1976. As Yeo's own son was only seven he requested the help of the teenage son of his eldest brother. Familiarity with his brother's son through shared residence made Yeo aware of the capability of the lad for trade without having to look beyond his family. So unmarried siblings and sons of married siblings sharing the same residence are easily mobilized for marketplace trade.

Residential clustering can also result because of business partnerships. Pig Tail's late father lived among his wife's kin because he and his wife's eldest brother worked as a team: while the former concentrated in selling pork the latter was an important intermediary for the flow of stocks between farm and stall. When the trader and his wife died, business and residential links were maintained between the mother's brother and the sister's sons.

Among families where residence is shared by married brothers and sisters, usually no more than two siblings are dealing in the same

commodities. The tendency is towards diversification. In one family the eldest brother sells vegetables, the second sells pork, the third transports and the fourth sells fish. In another the siblings engaged in marketplace trade include a brother selling fish and a sister's husband selling imported frozen meat. This is the same family where the brother's son has been mobilized into the fish trade. In the third case Pig Tail's mother's eldest brother is in the pork trade, the latter's wife sells processed fish meat, and two younger brothers sell vegetables. Diversification is a deliberate strategy: it provides for goods exchange between elementary household units. It also avoids direct competition among close kinsmen. More important it is an in-built mechanism ensuring the survival of trading in the family: in the event of one particular commodity not selling well other siblings not similarly affected can be turned to for help until the difficulty tides over. These factors help to explain the lack of attempt by any kin group to monopolize specific commodities. In other words rather than organize an efficient, profit-generating, collective enterprise, kinsmen engage in discrete, non-competing operations. Like the shoe artisans of Mexico studied by Eckstein (1975: 130, 133) relatives pool their efforts in ways which on the one hand give them greater control over the market situation and on the other hand maximize autonomy within their immediate work situation.

Large families consisting of married siblings sharing accommodation are in the process of being scattered by Government redevelopment programmes. An informant from one of the families mentioned above summed up the impact of the State on these families as follows:

We have been together for forty years but the Government is splitting up my family.

Government inspired development programmes are thus disrupting family and household structures that have existed since Singapore's earlier days. This process will inevitably effect changes to previously existing economic arrangements like those mentioned above.

Friendship and marketing activities

With the narrowing of kinship ties because of the emphasis on bilateral relationships, non-kin ties have acquired new emphasis. Instead of kinsmen and relatives the important relationships for many traders are with fellow traders, with friends and with business associates. Among non-kin it is common to extend kinship terms and kinship behavioural patterns into a non-kin context. So men are addressed by kinship terms such as 'uncle', 'brother', depending upon the age and social status of the person and their relationship to the speaker (see Schildkrout 1978). There is a change of emphasis from kin to non-kin relations but the non-kin relations tend to be based on kinship models.

Friendship develops from informal interaction with other men in the course of conducting business, in the social life of the town, in leisure seeking, and religious worship. The traders approve the development of a wide circle of friends and visualize them in contractual terms, as means to an end. However the relationship is reciprocal, the emphasis is on mutual assistance, and friends are to be stored up as a contingency measure. The traders distinguish between ordinary and good friends. Within 'good' relations, further distinctions are made: very good friends express their intimacy by entering into a sworn kin relationship termed kiet-pai (Hokkien). Under the influence of the

norms of sworn brotherhood or sisterhood, two adults of the same sex enter into this kind of fictive kinship usually solemnized in front of the household shrine. The children of each of the sworn brothers or sisters then become the fictive children of the other until the death of one of the sworn brothers or sisters severs the relationship (see Freedman 1957: 68; Young 1971: 130 - 134). In this relationship incest taboos are not extended to the children. Although friendship bonds do not have to be developed to this level of intimacy for the extension of economic support, very often support is more easily forthcoming and trading secrets imparted within the framework of this institution. Fictive kinsmen who are in trade can make important contributions to the establishment of marketplace enterprises or serve as vital links to their own associates in trade.

The traders favouring a wide circle of friends can be interpreted as keeping many business options open because in the relationship reciprocal services are exchanged not just between the parties involved but can be extended. Favours are extended beyond the dyad in two situations. Firstly where the relationship between parties is a symmetrical one. In this situation one friend appeals to another in the dyad to provide assistance and these requests are often characterized by appeals to 'face' if the favour is a substantial one. Secondly where one partner in the relationship has taken more from the relationship than given, his position of weakness can be exploited to achieve a favour for his partner's friend. So, through two persons in a friendship dyad, links with friends of friends can be established and groupings of this type can be stable and effective in achieving a multitude of aims - economic, social, religious, and political. However favours are only asked if the person making the request has

some knowledge that there is a probability of the request being fulfilled. Requests are usually made and given selectively and this in itself is an internalized mechanism contributing to the enhancement of friendship which in time develops intense sentiments of affection, co-operation, mutual help and loyalty that is manifested in kinship terms.

Sources of capital

Kinsmen and friends ease the way into marketing activities by providing assistance in the following forms: cash loans, advancing goods on credit, and other services. Friends and kin also inspire goal-oriented savings that have implications for marketing activities. Cash loans to members of one's household are not charged any interest, and the same with close friends. For loans made outside the context of primary relations, the rate of interest ranges from three to five per cent per month. A butcher who borrowed from his father's sister's son, a fishmonger operating in the same marketplace, was mildly annoyed when the latter charged him an interest. The former had thought that their kinship ties should have made contracts unnecessary. What the butcher had failed to recognize was that from a practical viewpoint he was a financial risk as his business was in a bad state. Furthermore warm relationships had not been established between the two men bound together in ascribed relationships. The wider implication is that as traders become increasingly bilateral in their kinship ties, their range of economically, politically or morally significant kinship relationships have become very narrow. Links are confined to what Goody has described as 'ego-oriented kindred'; that is, relatives reckoned with respect to a central actor where besides the ties of

conjugalinity and affinity that flow from marriage, the more important ties are of filiation to mother and father and to sons and daughters (1973: 214 - 215). In addition there are ties to one's own siblings as well as to the siblings of one's parents and to the parents of parents, and to the children of siblings and of parents' siblings. What has emerged from the study of Bukit Timah traders is that there is no longer moral pressure to fulfil obligations to distant agnatic kinsmen, and more important, even among ego-oriented kindred support is selectively made and granted.

For traders with close friends and kin established in trading, the provision of stocks on credit is vital to entrepreneurial activity particularly where traders operate with limited capital. Under these arrangements stocks are paid for only when part or all goods supplied have been sold. In September 1975 a young trader raised the envy of numerous stallholders because he was transformed from stall assistant to stall proprietor almost overnight. He succeeded in persuading his father's brother to supply unlimited stocks of dried foodstuffs. The older man was convinced that the younger was not a financial risk and not likely to exploit the trust which had been placed in him. In this case primary relations in the context of kinship operated as an effective moral mechanism ensuring creditworthiness.

Friends and kin often exert pressure on one another to save. The reason given is generally for unforeseen expenditure but equally common are goal-oriented reasons. The two main kinds of 'public' savings are firstly through the 'piggy banks' system, and secondly through rotating credit associations. In the piggy bank method groups of some three persons entrust from \$1 to \$7 daily to a 'banker' in the

group. The banker in fact places all the money with a local bank and all savings are returned to respective owners after twelve months minus the interest which goes to the banker for services rendered. The principle of this savings system is similar to that of the piggy bank but here the piggy bank is not left in the house to tempt one to withdraw with ease; putting away a few dollars a day especially in the care of another person makes it easier to resist spending it. Savings groups of this nature are dependent on the honesty, reputation and trustworthiness of the banker. The more honest his reputation, the more likely he will attract other traders to save their 'small change' with him. And within the context of the marketplace, the more he displays a reputation for honesty, the more likely he will be elected to leadership positions (see chapter five).

As for credit associations, these consist of groups of ten to thirty people who pay regular, monthly or fortnightly, sums into a pool which is placed at the disposal of the individual members in turn. Many writers have discussed these associations and shown that they assume a remarkably similar form over a wide geographical area (see eg. Ardener 1964: 201 - 229; Firth & Yamey 1964: 32, 171 - 172; Freedman 1959: 64 - 65; Geertz 1962: 241 - 263; Hayes 1965: 119 - 122; Young 1971: 201 - 221). Geertz wrote that these institutions are found stretching from Japan through Southeast Asia and India to Africa (1962: 242). Ardener's investigations showed that they also exist in the West Indies and South America, and in Scotland and the north of England there are similar savings clubs called 'menages' (1964: 208). These associations are an important means of raising funds among the middle and lower classes. Although there are various methods of allocating the fund, the piao-hui or auction society in which the fund

goes to the person who is willing to offer the highest interest rates is the most prevalent in Bukit Timah.²

The nucleus of a credit association is a set of close friends and kinsmen. As these associations function on personal trust, trust for the organizer and the members, personalized ties act to prevent fraud and evasion. There is no legal redress and in the event of default kinsmen and friends bring moral pressure to bear upon the culprit to return funds and make restitution over a period of time. A recent example was a fishmonger who absconded with the total funds of three groups he was heading. A member of one of the groups, a fishmonger in the same marketplace, was responsible for locating him in the State of Johor and persuading him to return and gradually work off his debts.

Credit associations are usually founded by individuals who require a lump sum of cash for some particular purpose; for example to provide initial business capital or to increase the inventory of an existing business (see Little 1957: 583 - 584). They provide two ways of raising funds; the first is to head one or more groups (depending upon how much capital is required) and receive payment for the services rendered. If he wishes, the organizer may also save. When stallholder Yong required \$400 to set up her food enterprise she got together three groups of friends and relatives. Each group has twelve members and the members of the first group contribute \$50 a month each while members of the second and third groups contribute \$100 a month each. Yong receives a payment of one-half of one individual contribution from each of the individual drawers of the total pool in turn. Her commission totals \$125 (\$25 + \$50 + \$50) a month. After four months she had more than

enough from her commissions to invest into her enterprise.

The second way of raising funds through credit associations dispenses with commissions. The person requiring cash heads the association which gives him priority to the first pool. Successive drawers on the pool do not pay any fee to the head although he is responsible for collecting the money together. When stallholder Tan urgently required money to increase his inventory of quality fish having established new market outlets, he got together thirty people, mainly traders in the different marketplaces in Bukit Timah with whom he has associated for more than ten years and certain of his kinsmen. Each share costs \$100 and participants claim that their members are recruited in such a fashion as to inspire confidence: one kinsman or friend confirms the honesty of another. Members of Tan's group make their bids at his stall at noon on the second day of each month. This is carried out swiftly as credit associations are banned. This occurred in the early seventies after the large scale misappropriation of public money by commercially organized, registered organizations that capitalized on the widespread popularity of rotating credit associations.

The State has thus made illegal an institution described by Ardener as an insurance society to which members apply for funds in time of financial need. Despite Government sanctions, there exists a proliferation of credit associations. The reasons are varied and motivated by the following considerations singly or in different combinations: a device for self-discipline over money matters, an economic device to raise capital that fits into community patterns, a device to raise funds for religious activities, and a device for small

scale businessmen to carve a niche in the town's leadership structure. For these reasons the traditional forms of credit associations have survived whereas those operating under legislated rules and sanctions administered by centralized rules and highly bureaucratized courts and police are short-lived. In credit associations social and moral mechanisms which are officially exterior to the formal bureaucratic organization are in fact integral parts of the institution without which it will not operate. These social and moral mechanisms include the all important motivation to share in helping a man in need achieve his goal. The obligations toward credit associations are in fact extensions of kinship and friendship obligations. So it is specifically because traders are rational in the conduct of their business, in meeting obligations with people they have primary ties, that they continue in the old, traditional and well tried out way of raising capital.

Although banks provide security not evident in credit associations I have not come across any stallholder or shop proprietor who raised capital through banks or other commercial bodies. As a savings body they are disliked for fear that incomes be made known to tax or other Government departments. Banks provide impersonal services and traders claim that because of interest charges, their earnings from trade will be unable to cover these charges let alone repay the loan. In addition borrowers must offer collateral and few traders have property of consequence. Furthermore their requirements are for small sums in which banks are not normally interested. So, traders raise capital through any one or more of the above conventional and personal methods that they are accustomed to.

Kinship, friendship and relocation

Marketplace traders are most sensitive to locational factors. McGee wrote that most customers purchasing marketplace goods come from within ten minutes walking distance only (1975: Chp. VII, 3); this implies that the majority of customers are drawn from the immediate neighbourhood. Because marketplace traders are often in competition with a similar concentration who draw their customers from the next neighbourhood, relocation even if it is only a short distance can greatly affect the success of business. The New Market, barely a stone's throw away from the Beauty World marketplaces is a living example of insensitive relocation by the authorities that culminated in adverse business for the traders concerned. While the State is insensitive to the economic variable, it has ironically accentuated the kinship variable and given it added significance. The bonds of friendship and kinship are put to valuable use by traders affected by relocation policies. Traders who have established primary relationships with traders in BWM and BWTM capitalize on the full range of these ties. The following cases illustrate the movement from the New Market to Beauty World marketplaces.

Case 1

Mrs Chua retails fish balls, fish cake, and related Teochew specialities. She managed a roaring trade at the street site and during weekends required the assistance of her teenage daughters. When she was resited to the New Market her volume of turnover was drastically reduced. To achieve a wider distribution she leaves a portion of her produce with her sister who sells vegetables at BWTM. The sisters do not split the profits and at the end of the day the turnover and remaining produce if any is returned to Mrs Chua. Her sister is accommodating because they do not compete for the same

clientele. Needless to add Mrs Chua is not happy with the arrangement because she has allowed herself to fall into a position of weakness and permanent obligation to her younger sister.

Case 2

After 1 p.m. when butcher Peh closes for the day at BWM, his father's sister's son's sons trading at the New Market utilize his stall to sell the rest of their pork that have been left over from the morning's activities. Peh does not level any charges on his kinsmen but they are mobilized to form the core of his supporters in his Hungry Ghost festival organization. Even as kinship ties may be the basis of economic support, they are also the basis of recruitment for the performance of religious ceremonies. So economic support by kinsmen may be balanced with support in religious activities by the kinsman who is in debt.

Case 3

Butcher Tan from the New Market transfers his operations to BWTM in the afternoons. In his case he and his butcher friend split their profits, and also provide respite for one another. The arrangement was short-lived as the friend found that there was more pork to sell while the demand remained the same and that he had to put in more hours of work. Tan made alternative arrangements with another butcher friend at BWM. The latter was observed to trade until well past 6 p.m. daily because of the increased supply and their close friendship may similarly be threatened.

All these arrangements are unsatisfactory. Traders in BWM and BWTM who do not have close relations with traders from the New Market are unhappy with the extra competition from these intruders. The New Market traders are sensitive to the hostility. They also fear that they may overstay their welcome with people with whom they have primary ties. What is of sociological significance is that what probably started out as a symmetrical relationship rapidly changes

into an asymmetrical one with one of the partners in a moral debt that can be exploited by the other. The relation becomes precarious because if a favour is not forthcoming from the person in the weaker position the favour extended by the person in the stronger position may be terminated. Such action will endanger the livelihood of the trader involved unless a realignment is made with the same partner or ties established with another. Government action has intensified previously existing primary ties but even as these bonds are revalidated they are equally likely to be severed from over-utilization.

Kinship, friendship and clandestine activities

Cooperation among kin and friends is important in the operation of lotteries and book-making activities. These activities are wide-spread in Bukit Timah and one trader even termed them 'open-secrets'; but all the indications are that they are only open to the people in the community. In lotteries, traders participate firstly as shareholders of various syndicates, secondly as collectors of betting slips, and thirdly as bettors in these syndicates. The majority of participants fall into the third category. Bonds of kinship and close sentiment between friends form the basis for participation particularly among shareholders and collectors and even among the bettors; strangers are unable to place a bet with collectors unless they have been mediated through someone known to the collector. While the organization of lotteries is more complex involving scores of people in any single syndicate, that of book-makers for horse betting is simple involving from three to four operators. Recruitment into these syndicates are similarly based upon particularistic allegiances. In chapter five I try to show the implications these activities have for the social life of the community.

Conclusion

Kinsmen and friends contribute to the emergence of entrepreneurs and the support of entrepreneurial activity. Through the web of social relations which bind men in moral values and obligations, it becomes possible to overcome technical problems of trade and create manpower, capital, and credit, all essential for the flow of trade. In Bukit Timah there is every indication that primary relations contribute to success in business in the early stages of growth and in the later stages, to the expansion of business.

Marketplace operations are almost exclusively reliant on household labour recruited from among people with conjugal ties, and among brothers and sisters and their sons. This characteristic avoids high wages and overtime problems. With the Government emphasis on few births supported by housing controls, what is of sociological significance is that Government measures destroy the continuity of the trade from father to son. It is also fair to observe that with increasing opportunities outside marketplace trading, more and more of the educated young men have refused to continue in their father's footsteps.

Hoselitz (1960) argued that the process of economic development involves not merely a reshaping of the 'economic order' but also a restructuring of social relations in general, or at least of those social relations which are relevant to the performance of the productive and distributive tasks of the society. Within this context the Chinese kinship system has undergone considerable change. Firstly the patriarchal extended family system is changing towards a conjugal family system. This pattern is consistent with Goode's (1963) extensive study showing a movement towards the conjugal system in virtually all societies beginning at different points and at different rates of speed.

The process of modernization carries with it a movement of family structure in the direction towards fewer kinship ties with distant relatives and a greater emphasis on the elementary family of couple and children. So the family developmental cycle is a dynamic process operating in two ways: even as people live out their life cycles, another process is operating to break up the traditional patrilineal system and in its place is the bilateral system.

Theorists like Wirth (1938), Parsons (1959), and Goode (1963) have argued that the more extended types of family systems are incompatible with a modern industrial society and that the process of industrialization does tend in many societies to be accompanied by a move to a more nucleated type of family system. On the other hand Barnett (1969) argued that the extended family system in Chinese society has shown remarkable survival strength among the Chinese immigrants to the United States, contrary to what might have been expected of migration, the impact of city life upon family organization, and economic change. Other writers like Cohen (1969) and Watson (1977) have also demonstrated that emigration does not necessarily have a 'modernizing' effect on the migrant communities; instead people may become more enthusiastic about traditional values. In similar vein Anderson showed how the industrial revolution in Lancashire strengthened kin ties in some instances; as they formed a reliable and low cost source of aid, family and kinship relationships tended to have strong short-run instrumental overtones of a calculative kind (1971: 171). The issue therefore is not modernization at all but adaptation to new conditions, and if kinship links can help the process they tend to be used. So what is probably more important is the national political structure that can bring about change; a vivid example is the Chinese

in Thailand (Skinner 1957). Hence in Singapore although people change because of adjustments made in an urban and highly industrialized environment, what is equally or perhaps more important is that national policies precipitate and direct social change.

Macro level social and economic change impinges on the kinship structure. With the Government pursuit of urban redevelopment Murdock's argument takes on added significance. He showed that residence rules are the basis for the formation of kinship groups and change in social organization frequently occurs because of changes in residence patterns. He wrote,

[Rules of residence reflect general economic, social, political] and cultural conditions. When underlying conditions change, rules of residence tend to be modified accordingly. The local alignment of kinsmen is thereby altered, with the result that a series of adaptive changes is initiated which may ultimately produce a reorganization of the entire social structure (1949: 17).

This is of particular relevance in Singapore where Government action has been responsible for accelerating change in kinship structure. The scattering of extended families undermines the residential contiguity which is one of the bases of the Chinese extended family. As for the marketplace traders of Bukit Timah redevelopment weakens kin and non-kin ties that have formed the basis of marketing relationships and its appendage institutions.

In summary the Singapore kinship structure is affected by three sources of change: firstly Western values and models that are imported with an industrial economy, secondly 'internal' or 'natural' pressures arising from adjustments made in an urban and highly industrialized environment, and thirdly external pressures in the form

of Government inspired policy. Hence a combination of economic factors, non-economic factors, and more important political manoeuvre, all combine to predetermine the reorganization of the elements in the kinship structure of marketplace traders.

Chapter Four

Footnotes

- 1 On the increasing importance of bilateral kinship among established migrant communities see Enid Schildkrout 1978, People of the Zongo (Cambridge).
- 2 The lun-hui or the rotating association in which the order of rotation is fixed by agreement during the initial organization meeting, or the yao-hui or dice-shaking association in which the person to use the fund is decided by lot or by the casting of dice at each meeting, found in different parts of China, do not exist in Bukit Timah.

The Role of Voluntary Associations in Bukit Timah

The background

In Singapore there are some 1,900 registered voluntary associations embracing a wide range of commercial, benevolent, professional, recreational, and religious objectives. Of these more than half are Chinese associations and are classified into different types as shown in Table 1. In 1975 only one in three of the

Table 1 Chinese Associations Registered in Singapore (Government Gazette, 4th July 1975)

Type of association	Number	Per cent
Clan and surname	185	19
Locality and dialect	152	15
Trading and commercial	133	14
Guild and professional	51	5
Cultural and recreational	253	26
Mutual help	16	2
Religious	122	12
Others	73	7
Total	985	100

associations recruited members on some ascribed characteristic such as surname, dialect, and locality in Southeastern China. This contrasts sharply with the period prior to World War II where more than half the associations registered were surname and dialect based, and before 1900 virtually all the associations shared this characteristic (Registrar of Societies 1975). These are units which express real or assumed kinship

and the solidarity of homeland ties. Such associations emphasize their separateness, are not instruments of integration of the different ethnic groups in Singapore and serve instead to strengthen Chinese identity. The trend is the declining importance of such ethnic organizations as the main agents of protection and provision for their communities. Since organizations based upon narrow community lines contradict with the national policy of integration of the multi-ethnic population, leaders of communal organizations are regularly spanning their activities and concerns beyond the narrow community. In Bukit Timah the Yik Clan and the Kar Yeng Five Districts General Association are the two associations that continue to recruit membership on particularistic principles; the former recruits along surname identity and the latter on place of origin in China. On the other hand there are many mutual aid, educational, recreational, religious, and clandestine associations in Bukit Timah which are open to all Singaporeans. These are associations which comprise a common institutional and organizational framework for people of different dialect groups (in some instances even different ethnic groups) and where a large proportion of those low on socio-economic status are drawn together in social interaction. These are the associations which have increased in number at the expense of particularistic groups which are rapidly losing their viability in Bukit Timah and in the rest of the Republic.¹

Many writers have emphasized that voluntary associations have developed within immigrant communities as adaptive mechanisms for the guidance and protection of migrant populations in the process of adjusting to a new social environment. In the pursuit of economic opportunity in urban centres by both overseas and rural migrants, the shock of adaptation in a strange environment, often of a different culture, different language and different history, are cushioned by

the establishment of large numbers of voluntary associations. These voluntary associations provide meaningful substitutes for family and lineage groupings left behind when they emigrated, continuations of traditional identities and patterns of living, and act as socializing agents for the adoption of new roles more in harmony with the urban environment. Lacking satisfying and reliable moral ties with the indigenous local community, the immigrant population created its own institutions for social control, worship, recreation, and the management of external relations. The Chinese in Southeast Asia, in Madagascar and in the United States (see Fallers 1967; Freedman 1965; Lyman 1974), the Lebanese in West Africa, the Ibo in Calabar, the Yoruba in Ibadan (see Bogdan 1969; Cohen 1969; Fallers 1967; Little 1957) and the highland migrant groups in Lima, Peru (Doughty 1970) all organized a host of political, religious, recreational, occupational, mutual aid groups and secret societies in the urban areas to meet psychological and practical requirements. For the same reasons Europeans in America formed Landsmannschaften and other ethnic orders in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Meadows & Mizruchi 1969: 3). For many of these communities such as those of West African towns, the *raison d'être* forwarded by social anthropologists for the establishment of voluntary associations remain viable as large numbers of rural migrants continue to be drawn by the centripetal force of the city which cause people to form alignments with others from similar ethnic groups in order to slow down the stressful pace of social and cultural changes which make demands on the individual new to the city. Even so some doubt has been cast on the significance of these ethnic associations. Cohen argued that in West Africa, most ethnic associations are highly segmental, involving only one or a few roles of the individual members and at any one time they include within their membership only a small fraction of the men from the same ethnic group in town, in addition to

the fact that they meet irregularly (1969: 195). Similarly Jongkind (1974) demonstrated that membership in a regional association is an effect rather than a cause of adaptation to city life. He argued that the regional club is essentially elitist, composed of well-adjusted and successful migrants, and that they have united in regional associations not as a result of feelings with the homeland but more a result of prestige motivations. As for Singapore, immigration has been negligible since World War II and population growth rates are virtually all due to natural increase. In a situation where immigration has almost ceased we find voluntary associations continuing to flourish and increase in number. Using the voluntary associations in Bukit Timah, I attempt to show that they have lost their significance as bridging or modernizing apparatus and have been transformed into arenas for the individual enhancement of status, prestige, and power. Although I am emphasizing voluntary bodies as instruments for status seeking, I am also aware that many members are motivated to join because of the solidarity and assistance offered by these associations. Nonetheless voluntary associations are the props to prestige for the ambitious.

While I emphasize the individualistic model, of equal importance is the State model. In Singapore the English-educated leadership faces the problem of achieving mass support from a population many of whom are Chinese educated. This problem emerged in 1961 when the dissident wing of the PAP, mainly Chinese educated, broke off to form the Barisan Sosialis. The launching of the Barisan Sosialis presented the PAP with a major contender for popular support and power in the political arena because the pro-communist faction that walked away from the PAP brought to the Barisan Sosialis the major ancillary organizations and secondary associations of the PAP that formed its

main supportive network. Chan showed that in 1961, of the fifty-one PAP branches, thirty-five branch committees (including Bukit Timah) resigned en bloc accompanied by a mass exodus of members in support of the rebel assemblymen (1976: 195). The virtually crippled PAP organization was confronted with an opposition organization whose leaders were in control of the PAP mass organizations. Without the party machine the PAP leaders switched to the Government bureaucracy and through this powerful alternative instrument, a complete network of community centres was built virtually overnight to counteract the expanding influence of the new left wing party, particularly in the rural areas where the PAP organizational structure was most weak. Community centres projected Government and PAP viewpoints and counteracted Barisan influence. Simultaneously Citizens' Consultative Committees (CCCs) were set up in every electoral constituency in the Republic. In setting up these bodies the PAP Government was motivated by two major considerations; the need to fight its 'communist' opponents effectively, and the need to establish a linkage between the people and the Government. What is of sociological significance is that the main sources of leadership of both the community centre Management Committees (MC) and the CCCs are the medium and small businessmen, the merchants, shop-keepers and marketplace traders. These men achieve prominence through their activities in local community voluntary associations. Their influence is observed by the Member of Parliament of the particular constituency who in turn nominates them to the two Government sponsored bodies of each constituency. In this manner the more influential among the local leadership is co-opted into the Government machinery. The outlook by the PAP leaders towards all community organizations is coloured by a reflexive assessment of their probable political potential: the 'colonization' of the local leadership enables a vigilant watch kept on voluntary associations. In

addition these are the people who can bring in block votes, and help to soften any harsh policy measures. As for the local leaders, they are confirmed in their authority status because of Government patronage. The total result is the close tightening of the political structure in the Republic. So voluntary associations in Singapore no longer function as buffers lessening the emotional shock of arrival in the city but have been transformed into political instruments for population control, and in which the humble marketplace trader may achieve glamorous and prestigious duties on the CCC and MC.

The types of associations I set out to examine are all low level associations and none are integrated with higher level associations like the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce. I have reclassified the different types at Bukit Timah according to their manifest functions and are unlike the classification in Table 1 which is according to the self-description of applicants to the Registrar of Societies. Their names are as follows:

<u>Type of association</u>	<u>Name of association</u>
i) Clan and locality	a) Yik Clan b) Kar Yeng Five Districts General Association
ii) Mutual aid	a) Hwa Liang Association (HLA) b) Sin Chew Yat Meng Association (YMA) c) Beauty World Town Shopkeepers Association (BWTSA) d) Li Cheng Society
iii) Educational	a) Seh Chuan High School
iv) Recreational	a) Singapore Pak Hock Pai Athletic Association (SPHPAA) b) Nam Hwa Amateur Musical and Dramatic Association (NHAM & DA)
v) Religious	a) Ta Pai Kung Temple (TPK) b) Seu Teck Sean Tong (STST) c) Hungry Ghost Festival Organizations
vi) Clandestine	a) Sio Koon Tong b) The bookmakers

Although each voluntary association has its own history, its own social organization, and its own pattern of politics, there are many similar characteristics which enable generalizations. In the following I examine the characteristics of associations and cite cases for illustrative purposes. I then discuss the rise and fall of associations, the leadership structure, and finally the Bukit Timah leaders.

Characteristics of voluntary associations

Size of membership

The six types of voluntary associations differ considerably in the size of their memberships. As there are no systematic differences among the associations I provide the range of membership rather than average membership. The membership of clan and locality associations range from 20 to some 80 persons, in the mutual aid associations the range is from some 90 to 400, there are 136 in the educational association, 30 to 100 in the recreational associations, 11 to 550 among the numerous religious associations, and four to 100 or so among the clandestine associations. There is some tendency for registered associations to have a larger membership, the minimum size being thirty. Furthermore the larger the membership, the more wealthy the association.

Membership fee

Payment of dues is mandatory in all voluntary associations and these are minimal, reflecting the socio-economic status of marketplace traders. Both frequency and cost of membership fees vary

according to type of association and membership status. Virtually all registered associations charge \$2 a month while members of the executive committee pay \$5 a month. These associations usually impose a registration fee of \$3 too. In contrast, the TPK temple association charges members \$5 a year while Hungry Ghost organizations levy a fee of ten cents or twenty cents a day which may be collected daily, weekly, monthly or yearly. The daily collection is preferred because the amount set aside is a fraction of daily profits from trade.

Socio economic status of membership

The main sources of membership are the medium and small businessmen, the stallholders, shopkeepers and contractors. Others include factory workers and labourers, and only one of the voluntary associations is able to claim a professional, a teacher, among its members. The majority of association members are either uneducated or have had a few years of primary education in the Chinese medium. In marketplace trade it is largely unnecessary for attention to be paid to education except in a rudimentary form. Instead social differentiation in the trading community is geared very closely to the distribution of wealth. Once a person has amassed some he can go ahead without fear that his lack of education will prevent him either from exploiting his economic position fully or from reaping the social benefits of economic success. Even the PAP leadership is unconcerned about the educational attainment of its local community committees; members recruited are those active in guilds and associations, or widely recognized to be in pre-eminent positions on account of their personal qualities and high economic status in the area. Freedman argued that the power and

prestige of the illiterate or half-literate rich man was not challenged by Chinese bearing the stamp of the cultivated gentry (1967: 21). So among the marketplace traders although educational attainment is low, this is not commensurate with income: incomes range from some \$150 to more than \$1,000 a month among all members in the different kinds of associations. As for Bukit Timah as a whole a hierarchy of associations based upon the three socio-economic dimensions of occupation, education and income is not found, in contrast to the associations studied by Jongkind in Lima, Peru (1974). To summarize, since Bukit Timah associations are based firstly on the membership of the poorly educated and self-employed, and secondly the support of the government which sees them as useful channels of communication and sources of legitimacy for itself, the implication is that with the membership getting older, coupled with the expansion of education and associated occupational change, the membership of these associations will decline. There are indications that in their place will be an increasing number of Residents Committees, government sponsored organizations looking after the general welfare of residents in respective blocks of low income public housing flats.

Sex of members

All the voluntary associations in Bukit Timah share one major characteristic: membership is overwhelmingly male and all office holders are male. Females are confined to the home or the marketplace and have no business in public affairs. Although the womenfolk of Bukit Timah are influential in family matters and business, they have made little headway in community activities. (The only exception is

the Women's Representative of the Government sponsored MC who is a teacher). In the marketplace men frequently play up the ignorance of women about public matters and perpetuate the stereotype that their place is at home. As for the women they accept their dictated status in community affairs and are content to wield their influence in the family and in business. Although some women do become members of voluntary associations in their own right, they do not achieve any position of prominence. They do not threaten the monopoly men have over community organizations. The exclusive male control of voluntary associations is widespread throughout the Republic and is also a reflection of the internal organization of the PAP leadership at the national level.

Possession of association locale

All voluntary associations, other than Hungry Ghost and clandestine associations, have possession of or a permanent lease on an association locale. The types of locale vary considerably. The HLA for example rents a room over a coffee shop at \$80 a month whereas the YMA owns the double-storey modern terrace house: forty-one of its members had contributed varying sums of \$300 and above to purchase the \$28,000 building. The possession of a permanent meeting place has important social and economic implications for association life: it facilitates arrangements for such activities as banquets and meetings, and what is even more important for marketplace traders is that it is a place where business is initiated, the 'market' expanded, and where the flow of valuable trade information whether regarding goods or dishonest behaviour is exchanged. Moreover the association locale is in itself a social centre even in the absence of formally organized

activities: newspapers and tea are available, and there are always a few people about for a game of mahjong. Through social interaction occasioned by leisurely and recreational activities, traders develop intense sentiments of loyalty, affection, co-operation and mutual help.

Hungry Ghost organizations do not have permanent meeting places as the festival is held only once a year. The grounds of the TPK temple are borrowed, and marketplaces and streets are used. As for secret societies the usual hangouts are coffee shops, TPK temple, the local cinemas, food stalls and certain private dwellings. Similarly bookmakers regularly change their locale to avoid detection. However all the indications are that a permanent locale is a basic condition as well as an important consequence of a lasting associational life.

The rise and fall of associations

Apart from the association for educational objectives, the TPK temple association and the secret societies, all other voluntary associations in Bukit Timah were established after World War II. Taken as a whole the emergence of voluntary associations may be attributed to the following reasons: mutual aid, conflict situations, educational purposes, recreation, religious, and clandestine. I examine each of these in turn.

i) Mutual aid

While the Yik Clan and Kar Yeng Association recruits membership based upon surname and province respectively, the YMA originally recruited only small scale traders. Since 1966 it had been reorganized

and recruitment is motivated by universalistic principles, membership being extended beyond the narrow confines of occupational identity to all interested citizens. The change was in fact politically motivated: certain informants suggested that it became a collectivity for political agitation under the control of the Barisan and had fought for lower market and licensing fees. When hawkers' unions were banned in October 1963, leading members of the then Yong Suan Petty Traders Association salvaged the crippled organization and reorganized it. Since then it has been concerned with providing mutual assistance for its members like the Yik Clan and Kar Yeng Association.

The provision of mutual aid and death benefits are important parts of the constitution of the above three associations as well as for the HLA, BWTSA and Li Cheng Society. Death benefits consist of four things: the payment of a sum, for example \$100 in the case of the HLA, to help the bereaved cover extraordinary expenses, night visiting by fellow members to the house of the bereaved, the presence of members at the funeral, and the loan of a colourful cast iron wreath bearing the name of the association. Larger associations may have additional provisions: for a fee members of the YMA and Li Cheng Society are entitled to the loan of funeral paraphernalia depicting all the well known stories of filial piety in Chinese culture, a drape for the coffin bearing the name of the association, and the provision of a forty-strong funeral band. As for the STST, members of this temple association are provided with the services of priests, and paupers may be buried at the temple's expenses. As funerals are expensive, the membership of mutual benefit associations is an insurance policy for a decent funeral, and perhaps a noisy and grand ritual send-off.

ii) Conflict situation

The HLA and BWTSa were established in 1953 and 1967 respectively to 'preserve the rice-bowl' of traders from the perceived excesses of landlords which threatened their livelihood. In contrast the Li Cheng Society was founded in the unsettled post World War II months when gangs of youths approached all the shop proprietors for contributions. These associations were organized under crisis situations and serve as classic cases of the model of out-group menace and in-group cohesion developed by Simmel (1955: 96 - 107) and extended by Coser (1956: 87 - 95).

The HLA emerged when there was considerable uncertainty about the future marketplace ownership which might affect marketplace operations (see chapter two). At that time it had some 290 members which declined to one-third of that number in the early seventies. In the following two decades after its establishment the association faded into obscurity providing its members only with marriage gifts and a nominal contribution to funeral expenditure. At the end of this period the HLA was revived when the operations of traders were threatened by public health officers stepping up their campaign to force traders to adhere closely to marketplace regulations (see chapter six). It then receded again: in 1976 it was revived, this time in the face of Government plans to resite the entire Beauty World estate. The indications are that the HLA could have perished naturally. Ironically the State has served to maintain its unity beyond the period of initial struggle and major changes were instituted in 1976 to transform it into a more 'meaningful' organization, and the more ambitious among the petty traders have found it worthwhile to seek election to its offices. Positions in organizations that have captured public attention are more

keenly fought for than those that have not.

While BWTSA originated in conflict and for the purposes of conflict in 1967, it has maintained itself beyond the period of struggle by establishing additional interests and associative forces which no longer have any relation to its initial militant purpose. In addition to the provision of death benefits it organizes its own religious celebrations, it has attracted some of the most prominent townsmen into its patronage, and it is the only association in Bukit Timah which utilizes a national newspaper (Chinese) to publicize the names and faces of members of the executive committee elected each year. Currently the association champions the interests of traders and residents in Beauty World estate threatened by Government inspired development programmes (see chapter six). To confront the Government the BWTSA has joined forces with the HLA and the special Fire Committee of eleven traders, victims of a fire at one end of BWTM in 1975. All these different associations presently operate under the Ad Hoc Beauty World Residents' Resettlement Working Committee organized in 1976. Although this collectivity is ad hoc the collectivizing effect of conflict could transcend the moment and the immediate purpose of this group. The chairman of the new body was vague about its future and said that it is up to the members to decide after achieving or failing to achieve its immediate objective. But even as a collectivity it is unlikely that they will achieve a power and influence far beyond their objective because of the close watch kept on organizations, and the system of co-optation whereby the Government harnesses the support of their able leaders. I will return to this latter point again. With regards to the new organization my own impressions are that this unit will let its parts go back to their former separate existence because there is no

amalgamation and each part retains its own hierarchy of office holders. If there is only one overarching body, the channels for office by small scale traders are reduced because business accomplishment and social influence are closely linked and the shopkeepers are in a more advantageous position as they are economically in a stronger position than petty traders. The more associations there are, the more the opportunities for status enhancement even by the most humble stallholder. But the consequences are the more fragmented are the small scale traders, the less able are they to create national unions such as those which emerged before they were banned in 1963, and the less likely are they to become effective pressure groups.

As for the Li Cheng Society it was the instrument used by shopkeepers to resist extortion racketeers. Under the guise of the Gi Yong Koon, a voluntary organization operating as an ancillary service to the heavily taxed defence and police force during the post World War II period offering home guard duties and patrolling streets to deter crimes on property and lives, members of the secret society Sio Koon Tong 18 Group were in fact planning to extend their influence over shop proprietors from Bukit Timah to Jurong in the west of the Republic. Under the leadership of shopkeeper Goh the shopkeepers in Bukit Timah organized themselves and successfully resisted protection racketeering. Since then there have only been isolated attempts to extort from individual shop proprietors and the gangsters have been told to approach the Li Cheng Society but the suggestion has yet to be taken up. To the traders the Li Cheng Society is another symbol of the proverbial 'unity is strength'. The organization has increased in strength and prestige recruiting into its membership established

businessmen and contractors. Virtually all the stallholders I have spoken to are not members of the Li Cheng Society. It is not a matter of the fees which are no more prohibitive than those of the other voluntary associations. Rather it is the public image of the exclusiveness of the organization that keeps petty traders at arm's length. The stallholders have internalized a system of grades among voluntary associations and classify the Li Cheng Society a rich men's club, only for towkays.

iii) Educational function

Singapore schools are classified into three major types; Government schools (263), Government-aided schools (218) and private schools (60), making a total of 541 schools in 1975 and a total school population of 504,625 (Singapore '76: 154). Since August 1965, education is available in four official languages: Malay, Chinese (Mandarin), Tamil and English. All schools, whether Government, aided, or private come under the supervision and control of the Ministry of Education. Aided schools receive grants of up to 50 per cent for development costs and a per capita grant for recurrent costs based on pupil enrolment. These capitation grants are 50 cents for each primary pupil, 75 cents for each secondary pupil and \$1 for each pre-university pupil (The Straits Times 3rd April 1976).² Such payments are used to cover contingent expenditure for reference books, apparatus, stationery, repairs to furniture, minor repairs to buildings, domestic science materials, miscellaneous utility charges, telephone rates, auditing fees and other similar expenses. Because of the inadequacy of the capitation grant, aided schools depend upon the school management committees to meet recurrent expenses.

There are four schools in Bukit Timah. The Seh Chuan High School represents the greatest cooperative endeavour undertaken by the Chinese community in Bukit Timah. It was pioneered by members of the town and currently has the support and service of the town's most influential leaders as well as wide support among small scale traders. The enthusiasm for Seh Chuan is in sharp contrast to that for three other schools in the town and is a direct attribute of differences in their internal organization. The Pei Hwa School was established by Christian missionaries with a governing committee of nine persons, only three of whom are residents in the town. It is mainly on religious grounds though that the school is described by local leaders as alien to the community. Nonetheless this social distance is increasingly bridged by the principal, a local man, who has in his own right built up a complex network of social relationships with all the voluntary associations in the town. Toh Tuck Primary and Toh Tuck Secondary are Government schools located on the outskirts of the town. Their two principals have little to do with the town although they have recruited some of its leading members into their respective management committees. These management committees exercise little effective control in contrast to those of Government aided schools. While the governing bodies of Government schools are mainly prestige mechanisms serving as sources of additional funds, the governing bodies of aided schools are responsible for fund raising, financial supervision, appointment of staff and decisions on overall policy.

Seh Chuan's history is not unique. One of the first activities of a Chinese settlement overseas is almost always the establishment of some sort of Chinese elementary school. The location of the school and the appointment of teaching staff were entirely in the hands of the

financial leaders of the local community. The enthusiasm for education among the Chinese can be traced to the Confucian ideology where high prestige is accorded the man of letters in contrast to the West African situation where school consciousness was brought about by the early missionaries (Morrill 1967: 181). Like the Ibo, the Chinese treat education as a means to an end and literacy is the single most important aspect of education (Morrill 1967: 182 - 183). So for Ibo and Chinese alike, great effort is made to see all children through elementary school at the very least. To achieve this, most of the schools established in the early decades in Singapore are maintained by committees of management whose members themselves give monthly subscriptions and undertake to collect the necessary funds for upkeep. As education always involves heavy expenditure, the governing bodies of schools are inevitably the wealthy shopkeepers and businessmen of the community.

Seh Chuan was established in 1925, originally known as Tuan Cheng School (端正学校). The world economic crisis of the 1930s deeply affected the finances of the school governing body leading to its total neglect. The fact that the colonial Government hardly exercised any control on Chinese medium education, caused Seh Chuan, like many other Chinese medium schools, to become scenes of political agitation. An official report of the period indicated that Chinese schools were instruments for the inculcation and transmission of Chinese nationalism and culture, and that Chinese students were deeply influenced by the political upheavals and events in China; Manchu officials, Chinese nationalists and later, the Kuomintang and the Communists all sought to 'manipulate the hearts and minds of Chinese school students' (Singapore '76: 151). Eventually Tuan Cheng School

was forced to close when the principal was also implicated in communist activities. In 1933, under the leadership of the same shopkeeper Goh, the leading businessmen of the town reestablished the school. It was renamed Seh Chuan and had sixty pupils. In 1951 ten classrooms were added, and in 1957 another ten. In 1976 a six-storey extension, with modern science laboratories, a multi-purpose hall and library facilities, was completed. It became a 'full' school in 1968 when secondary grades were taught for the first time and in 1971, its first batch of "O"-level students graduated. The growth of the school has consistently mobilized the support of shopkeepers and marketplace stallholders in the community. But the growing demise of Chinese medium schools for reasons that are both inherent and caused by Government action will contribute to the demise of long established educational associations.

Chinese medium schools especially in the rural areas recruit fewer students every year. For example Wei Sin located one kilometre from the town in Bukit Batok is in the process of being phased out and ultimately closed once the remaining students have completed their Primary School Leaving Certificate examinations. In Singapore, English is widely used in both public and private sectors: it is the language of commerce and industry. Although theoretically there are four official languages in the country, English is the main medium of communication. While English educated job applicants are able to get away with a knowledge of only one language, their Chinese educated counterparts are usually required to have in addition to Chinese a working knowledge of English: Singapore's industrialization has been established by Western nationals virtually all of whom use English and Singapore's civil service was established by the British and continues to recruit mainly English educated persons. Gamer also showed that the

Chinese educated were not obtaining jobs quickly enough or on an equal basis (1972: 19, 155). There is no doubt in the minds of the people that Chinese education is becoming redundant in Singapore. So concern for the welfare of their children has encouraged parents to send their children to English medium schools at the expense of the Chinese medium schools.

Certain measures adopted by the Government in recent years have further contributed to the decline of student intake in Chinese medium schools. Rural clearance schemes for housing and development projects have removed the base from which rural Chinese schools recruited their student population. Equally important is the introduction of the use of English as the medium of instruction in Nanyang University, the only Chinese medium university in Singapore. With this change Chinese educated children are no longer able to pursue their studies into tertiary levels. In 1978 Chinese stream students preparing for their "O"-level examinations were using English in all subjects except Chinese language. Chinese stream students are suffering from structural disadvantages imposed by the Government and the Chinese language is progressively losing its effectiveness. This control of Chinese medium education suggests that the present leadership views the Chinese educated population as a constant political threat. They had in the past provided the support base for the opposition parties, for the communist and pro-communist nationalists and politicians. The removal of this threat to the present leadership is reminiscent of the situation in Thailand between 1951 - 52 when all Chinese schools were closed because they were centres of communist influence (Skinner 1958: 128). The approach taken by the PAP Government is less drastic but equally potent. This has been allowed to happen by a population the

majority of whom are Chinese because the educational system currently emphasizes bilingualism, and equally significant, the Chinese educated are aware that they will not be able to survive in an economy that is hitched onto the West and which utilizes mainly English.

iv) Recreation

Significantly the SPHPAA and the NHAM & DA are the bases of power for stallholders Yeo and Lee respectively. Yeo operates a successful fish stall in BWM and he was previously discussed in the context of kinship: his brother's son became his assistant when he urgently required help. As for Lee, he and his wife sells fried noodles in the New Market. Utilizing the social bonds achieved within the economic framework, Yeo established a branch of the SPHPAA at his home in August 1975. The SPHPAA teaches martial art and Yeo equipped the grounds of his house at his own expense incurring several hundred dollars. There were more than thirty members recruited from among marketplace traders and the sons and daughters of older marketplace traders. Yeo's 'brothers' in martial art attempted to elect him to office in two different associations in 1976. The first was the YMA and the second was the election of officers to the headquarters of the SPHPAA. Yeo was not successful. The events may not be related but the enthusiasm for the SPHPAA rapidly diminished and by mid-1977 the Bukit Timah branch closed down. As for the NHAM & DA it was established in 1959 as a clan association for Teochews surnamed Ng (黃). It was reorganized in 1963 to include musical and drama activities and members were then recruited along more universalistic guidelines. However the membership remains largely Teochew; this is related to the fact that the association promotes Teochew opera. The association was formerly

located in the city but moved to its present site formerly occupied by the YMA to reduce overheads but became the instrument by which Lee asserted his influence. The association has a membership of some 100 persons engaged in diverse occupations (including several students) and living in different parts of the Republic. Only one in ten are Bukit Timah residents. Within the context of the social field of the NHAM & DA, Lee is the modal point at which different sets of social relations originating in the town and outside intersect. Through the dyadic personal relationships which Lee has developed with many men in Bukit Timah, he becomes the point by which Bukit Timah is associated with activities organized beyond the narrow confines of the town. When the association staged a three-nights show in the Victoria Memorial Hall in June 1976, Lee was delegated the task of approaching all the voluntary associations in the town for their support. As he is widely known he was also responsible for securing the cooperation of scores of marketplace traders and shopkeepers in Bukit Timah. Although most did not attend the show, all associations and individuals who were approached reciprocated in cash or kind in the form of bouquets or congratulatory messages in the press. Through Lee the NHAM & DA has become an integral part of the whole complex of voluntary associations in the town. This is of significance because the location of an association in the town does not necessarily mean that it is 'of' the town. I will examine this issue again within the context of secret society activities. What I want to emphasize here is that the NHAM & DA is so closely identified with Lee that it is widely recognized as 'Lee's association'.

v) Religious associations

Because religion is viewed as being essentially concerned with death and the hereafter, and because religious ideologies are

associated with the emotional problems of human existence concerning such matters as life and death, health and illness, happiness and misery, the Singapore Government has adopted an indifferent attitude to all religions and allowed different forms of religious organizations to develop. In other words, while sociologists regard a religion a social phenomenon, the Government takes the view that religion is something personal. So, not only have the different ethnic communities organized their own religions but within each main religious grouping, mystical orders or cults have also developed unhindered by the State. In Bukit Timah town alone five Chinese temples are located; of these, two are Buddhist temples and the rest are for the worship of different Chinese deities. In addition there are large numbers of Seventh Moon associations in Bukit Timah. These are not registered organizations although the more important ones are internally organized as if they were. Because of the stringent control of political organizations by the PAP leadership in Singapore there is some evidence that marketplace traders are articulating their informal political organization in terms of a religious ideology even in the same way that the Hausa of Sabo exploited the Tijaniyya Order for the same objective (Cohen 1969). Cohen observed that within a short period after adopting the Tijaniyya Order, the Hausa transformed their community from a tribal polity to an autonomous ritual community in 1952. In the process their formal political organization (which was in fact undermined by the rise of Nigerian nationalism and coinciding with the collapse of Indirect Rule) became informally articulated in terms of religious ideologies, symbols, myths, attitudes, loyalties, ceremonial, and power structure. In other words the Tijaniyya Order articulated the varied communal interests of the Sabo people by means of a strong religious belief leading to effective centralized organization. As for Bukit Timah, we shall see

in due course that because of government control on all organized bodies, religious associations are unlikely to achieve the same level of power and privilege as that of the Tijaniyya Order.

The intensity of Bukit Timah's religious activity is indicated by the large variety of religious associations, the establishment and support of the three spacious well-maintained non-Buddhist temples and the tens of thousands of dollars contributed to Seventh Moon celebrations that has earned for the town the reputation of organizing the most spectacular Seventh Moon festival in the country. The most significant sociological point about the Bukit Timah religious activity is that it concerns the whole community and is not entirely individualistic or familistic as some writers on Chinese religion have emphasized (see Skinner 1958; Willmott 1960). Indeed it is because Chinese religious practice and organization involves group activity that it has contributed to community solidarity. And it is because the religious activities have a community base that they are manipulated by the status seekers for power and privilege.

I am here concerned with the temples organized and supported by marketplace traders and shopkeepers. More importantly these temples are widely recognized in Bukit Timah as 'our' temples and belonging to the people of Bukit Timah unlike the Buddhist temples whose support is drawn from a wider area. The Bee Low See Buddhist temple is affiliated to another Buddhist temple in the Cameron Highlands in Malaysia, and the Jip Leng Tong Buddhist sanctuary is only open to the public on the first and fifteenth days of the lunar month and special festive occasions. Both temples are 'outsiders' in Bukit Timah. As for the Ta Lau Yeh temple established by the first pioneers to the town, its

former prominence has been overshadowed by the TPK temple. While the latter is located in the heart of the town, the former adjoins the Teochew cemetery (see Figure 4). The Ta Lau Yeh temple is currently maintained by the caretaker and his family and patronized usually only on festive days. Its ceiling and walls blackened by the smoke from vast quantities of candles and joss-sticks suggest that it had been popular in its earlier days. I discuss in turn the emergence of the TPK temple,³ the STST, and the Seventh Moon associations.

Ta Pai Kung Temple

Little is known about the Chinese spirit Ta Pai Kung. Purcell's investigations showed that Ta Pai Kung may be the personification of the pioneer spirit generally and not the deification of any special person (1967: 123). He seems to be a purely overseas god though he is celebrated in the communities of Fukien and some parts of Kwangtung from which most of the overseas Chinese came; in Thailand he is called the Pan Tou Kung (see Comber 1958: 33; Purcell 1967: 123; Skinner 1958: 138 - 139; Willmott 1960: 198). These issues are of little concern to people of Bukit Timah. What matters to them is that the god is believed to be especially potent in conferring riches and health to individual worshippers, and prosperity and peace to Bukit Timah. It is a popular and powerful deity and a source of prestige for its custodians. At his annual birthday celebrations, worshippers who have won lotteries in the past year or whose business has been exceptionally good show their gratitude by offering giant joss-sticks (some 2 metres tall), giant candles or sets of costumes (paper) fit for an emperor. The Ta Pai Kung was originally enshrined at a roadside altar but moved to its present site some fifty years ago through

the generosity of the town's businessmen. Its worshippers are from different speech groups, contrasting sharply with Chinese temples in Thailand where particularly prior to 1910 worship was almost exclusively along dialect lines (Skinner 1958: 138). The temple celebrates three main festivities: the god's birthday during the third lunar month, the Seventh Moon, and thanksgiving at the end of the lunar year. We will see in due course that the performance of the ritual and duties associated with these festivities provides the institutional framework wherein status is achieved. What I wish to emphasize here is that such a mechanism has far reaching consequences for religious activities in general. In Bukit Timah there is no evidence of a trend towards the secularism found in other communities (see Topley 1967; Willmott 1960); in contrast the trend is towards a revival because religious activities serve as weapons in the struggle for power and privilege among low status marketplace traders.

The Seu Teck Sean Tong (修德善堂)

The Sean Tong 'Benevolence' or 'Goodness' Hall began as a small shrine at one corner of BWTM in 1959. It was created by ten stallholders who claim to be motivated by practical considerations; worshippers no longer have to commute to the main temple some 12 kilometres away. When its membership increased, funds were raised in the town as well as beyond under the auspices of the headquarters to resite the shrine. Two nationally prominent Teochew businessmen donated the double-storey terrace house in which the deity was enshrined in 1971. In contrast to the TPK temple, the STST has a speech group bias: virtually all members of the honorary, advisory and management committees are Teochew although worshippers are not

necessarily from the sponsoring group. .

The Sean Tong is dedicated to the Great Ancestral Teacher of the Sung Dynasty (大峯祖师). He had been a high official who gave up the luxuries of court life for the life of an ascetic, carried out innumerable acts of benevolence and miraculous works, and was deified after death. Within the Chinese pantheon of gods informants rank him as junior to the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy, Kuan Yin, but senior to the Ta Pai Kung. In ritual the STST is not attached to any formal system of religion and ritual appears to be syncretic, combining Buddhist rites. Shenism⁴ (folk religion, Elliott 1955), and spirit medium cult. It also serves as an ancestral hall, and participates in altruistic activities. Medical facilities are also available: during the even days of the week from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., trained Chinese physicians volunteer their services. They treat with acupuncture and oral medicine. Fees are nominal, 50 cents for members and non-members alike and during these sessions marketplace traders provide clerical assistance. The STST thus blends together religious and secular activities; there seem to be recognized limits to the mystical powers of the deity.

Spirit mediumship and religious training provide outlets for the energies and ambitions of the large numbers of young men who have had little schooling. Their youth and lack of wealth prevents them from playing a prominent part in the executive of voluntary associations although they may in their own right be the natural leaders of other young people less ambitious than themselves. The basic principles of Chinese spirit mediumship is that a spiritual being of vast and undefined powers possesses the body of a human medium and enables him to speak or, as in the STST, write with divine wisdom, giving advice to worshippers and curing their illnesses. This is an example of the

phenomenon of shamanism which is found on a world-wide scale. Elliott has shown that spirit mediums are able to inflict injury upon themselves without feeling pain (1955) and I have on many occasions witnessed these actions myself but such bodily mutilation is not practised in Bukit Timah. Instead the spirit mediums advise and heal through what Elliott has termed 'automatic' writing (1955: 140 - 145). However there are several basic differences in what Elliott observed and my observations at Bukit Timah. The meetings in Bukit Timah are public, the Y-shaped stick used is an instrument with which the spirit medium writes his 'prescriptions' and is not considered to be the 'medium', and this stick is only handled by the spirit medium. In other words the spirit medium is very much in control and attention is focused upon him alone during trance sessions. During festivities these spirit mediums and those expert in the theological text dominate the religious scene, chanting invocations, performing sacred rites, and adorned in striking costumes unlike their daily marketplace apparel. In trance these persons are worshipped by the laity as gods. In their priestly roles these persons hold the believers in awe. It is only in religious activities that young petty traders are able to command such respect from men and women, young and old, which in their normal marketing roles is virtually impossible to achieve.

Elliott showed that practitioners of spirit mediumship are often men and youths with no fixed occupation who hang around coffee shops and markets in order to pick up small commissions and odd jobs, people who have 'learnt to live far better by their wits' (1955: 71). It is for these very reasons that the TPK temple association resisted attempts by certain members of the community to establish a spirit medium cult. The association fears that gangster elements, 'prepared to do anything', will through the cult extend their influence in the

community and probably hold them to ransom because their motivation will be far from a desire to promote religion. As for the STST spirit mediumship is only a spare-time activity and all practitioners combine trade and religious activity.

Seventh Moon associations (庚中元会)

The Seventh Moon Festival of the Hungry Ghosts is more popularly called P'u-tu (普渡), the saving of the suffering souls from torment. The festival stems from the belief that the souls of the dead with no relatives to care for them ritually and those condemned to perpetual torment in hell for some sin are released from purgatory from midnight on the last day of the Sixth Moon for a period of thirty days till the last day of the Seventh Moon. If the intercalary month, which is inserted in about two years in every five, falls between the Seventh and the Eighth Moon, it becomes a second Seventh Moon and the ghosts have extra leave and many of the rites performed in the real Seventh Moon are repeated (see Freedman 1957: 223 - 224; Wong 1967: 12).⁵ During this period these destitute ghosts mingle with mortals in search of ritual nourishment and all men are vulnerable to the mystical danger from uncared for ghosts which are euphemistically alluded to as 'good brethren' (好兄弟). It is necessary to address them with deference and keep in mind the likelihood of assistance or injury. To say that they are evil is to invite the very dangers most feared. In order to appease them lest they cause mischief like bad business, accidents, illness and even deaths, believers offer sumptuous feasts, entertainment (traditional Chinese theatricals and/or modern musical shows) and engage priests to interject appeals in their favour to end the torments of hell. At these rituals all the dead associated

with the neighbourhood come and partake; however the dead are no more tied to a single spot than are the living and invitations to 'friends' of the dead may be extended. For services rendered the mortals anticipate reciprocal 'gifts'; they wish to be conferred with peace, good health, prosperity, and be lucky in lotteries. The ghosts are thought of as moral beings, and men use the ghosts for their selfish ends, manipulating in the context of Hungry Ghosts the spirits whom they worship. In fact as we will see in due course, the whole ritual exercise is really more for the living than for the dead (see Topley 1967).

The Seventh Moon festival is widely observed among the Chinese in Singapore and other overseas Chinese communities (see Freedman 1967; Lim 1974; Sparks 1976; Topley 1967; Wong 1967; Wong 1974). Practitioners are largely from the lower classes of society; marketplace traders, taxi drivers, bus drivers and conductors, factory workers, labourers, and even junior civil servants.⁶ This socio-economic bias has its parallel in West Africa. Among the Efik of Nigeria, Morrill observed that the strongest support for Epko, the belief in the supernatural powers of the society, comes from the least educated and successful in modern society (1967: 179). The significance of the Seventh Moon festival for the social, economic, and political organization of marketplace traders in Bukit Timah will be discussed in detail. What is to be emphasized here is that the organization of Seventh Moon organizations are generally accepted institutionalized means for leadership by persons of lower socio-economic origins.

The importance of the Seventh Moon festival to marketplace traders may be gauged from the fact that apart from the Chinese New

Year day, the only other occasion when they are prepared to take a day off is to celebrate the Seventh Moon. It is an occasion for the affirmation of unity, the reinforcement of religious beliefs, for conviviality and recreation; but paradoxically, as we shall see it is also an occasion for the expression of internal strife. Throughout the whole of the Seventh Moon the ceremonies are repeated over and over again by different groups. The Seventh Moon festival is the only religious event involving public organization and support. It is a public statement of inclusion in a single moral and social community among whose members there is cooperation.

Ceremonies are always held in the open, away from homes. The objective is to exclude malevolent ghosts at the boundary of the community, the marketplace, and the home. Marquees are put up adjoining market sites, at temples, public transport depots, building sites, factories and on the street. Participants contribute daily to the association for a whole year beginning at the termination of the previous year's celebrations. Expenditure items include the hire of the tent, the hire of chairs and tables, the purchase of religious paraphernalia such as hell money, gold and silver paper, joss-sticks, candles, paper clothes, paper houses, paper cars and other forms of transportation which are sacrificed in a bonfire for the comfort of the ghosts. Food is one of the bigger items of expenditure. Offerings include a large variety of canned foods, chickens, ducks, pork, cakes, biscuits, noodles, vegetables, and fruits, among other things. An informant said that these offerings are really what mortals themselves enjoy because at the end of the ceremony, they are taken home to be consumed. Such food to the participants of Seventh Moon festivities is considered blessed and highly potent in conferring good fortune to the partaker.

Such an attribute in fact helps to maintain the festivities. Another big expenditure item is the Chinese theatrical troupe which costs up to \$3,400 for a two-day engagement. In addition fees are charged by priests. Although everyone is able to communicate with the ghosts and secure their help for the supplicants, priests are seen as more effective because of their religious order. The ten-course Chinese dinner is also a costly affair at \$10 per head. Finally household and religious objects have to be bought for auction purposes during the feast to raise money for the following year's expenses. Larger associations are able to offer all these different facets of the festivity whereas smaller associations offer only some of these in different combinations. It is evident that these activities require considerable financial support, manpower, planning, organization and leadership. The marketplace traders are responsible for the organization of some of the biggest and most colourful ceremonies in the Republic.

To raise funds for the mammoth celebrations the largest association in the town capitalizes on the institution of rotating credit associations. This is the only voluntary association in the town providing the organizational base for a rotating credit system, unlike the hui kuan of San Francisco's Chinatown where this became the principle source of capital for entrepreneurship and business development in the nineteenth century (Lyman 1974). The use of credit associations to pay for communal worship is not something new. Yang observed that such associations existed in the T'ang dynasty (9th and 10th Centuries) to promote Buddhist religion (1952: 75). In Bukit Timah the largest Seventh Moon association organizes three different credit associations with a total membership of ninety shareholders. The shares are at \$100 or \$200 each and bids are tendered once a

fortnight. All profits go to the the Seventh Moon association. In addition to trust, supernatural sanctions are invoked to deter default. The organizers are widely known for their administrative abilities.

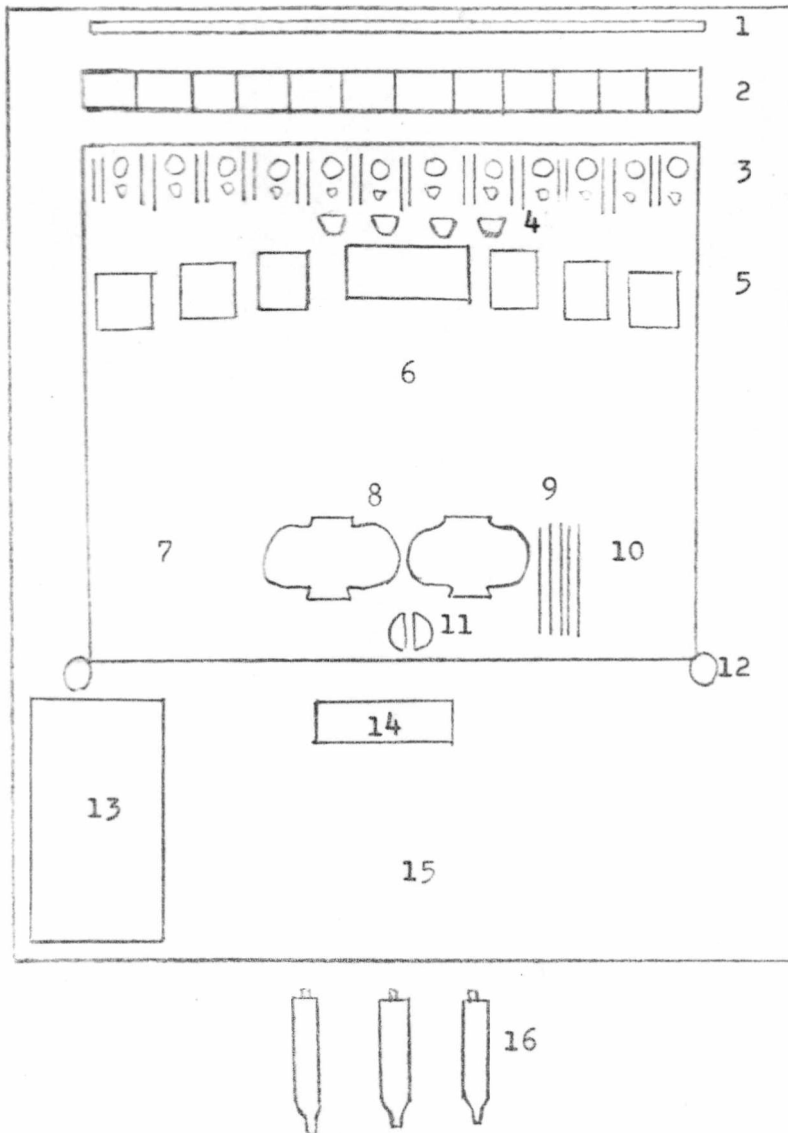
A more common form of raising funds is to hold auctions. This is practised by virtually all Seventh Moon associations. Objects for the purpose are bought by the association or donated by members. These include wooden and clay effigies of Buddha, Kuan Yin, Ta Pai Kung, other Chinese deities, and necklaces and pendants of Buddha. Non-religious articles include blankets, bicycles, toys, prams, clocks, electrical appliances, lanterns, toiletries, umbrellas, bottles of liquor, rice, cakes and so on. Among these objects one of the most coveted is the 'black gold' (乌金),⁷ a symbol of immense wealth. Objects are always auctioned out of all proportion to actual cost. For example in 1976 the black gold fetched \$1,700 in one association and \$1,000 in another, six paper umbrellas fetched \$130, and a bottle of brandy was auctioned for \$200. People believe that it is extremely lucky to succeed in such auctions as all objects have been offered to the ghosts. The auctioneers themselves continually remind the participants that they will be conferred with 'luck, wealth and many sons' if they succeed. The inclusion of one or two Singapore Big Sweep lottery tickets on every item and the chance to win large sums because the tickets are associated with the Hungry Ghosts are added attraction. In addition to the entreaties of the auctioneers to participate in an event that will bring infinite blessings, the rest of the working committee mingle with the diners and apply social pressure upon them to participate. These men ensure that liquor is flowing freely and help to raise prices. Names of all successful bidders are announced over the public address system. It is a method of advertising one's

financial strength and business credibility and contributes to the enhancement of one's status. It is fair to recognize that people also have the satisfaction of knowing that their contributions keep alive the following year's activities. Payment is not made until the following year's ceremonies are repeated although objects are taken away immediately. During the year's interval the successful bidder may just win a lottery or experience good business. But if these 'windfalls' do not occur he would have saved enough. At Bukit Timah the trust has never been breached. In addition to the fear of supernatural sanctions, names of the previous year's bidders are displayed prominently during the following year's celebrations. In a closely knit community adverse publicity can endanger the facilitation of credit, critical to people largely engaged in business, and loss of face will also be difficult to rectify. It is during such auctions that thousands of dollars have been pledged to Seh Chuan High School, and also to the Bukit Timah Scholarship Fund established in 1975.

In Bukit Timah the sizes of Seventh Moon associations range from those with a dozen members to those with some 250 persons. Figure 9 illustrates how one of the smaller associations organizes its tent for the one day ceremony at a site adjoining the New Market. Figure 10 illustrates the organization of an association that is at the other end of the continuum: the whole length of the street is utilized and the celebrations last four days. The activities of this latter association has attracted such national fame that in 1975 coachloads of tourists were observed at the scene for the first time.

In Bukit Timah there is a proliferation of these Seventh Moon associations and marketplace traders alone organize thirteen

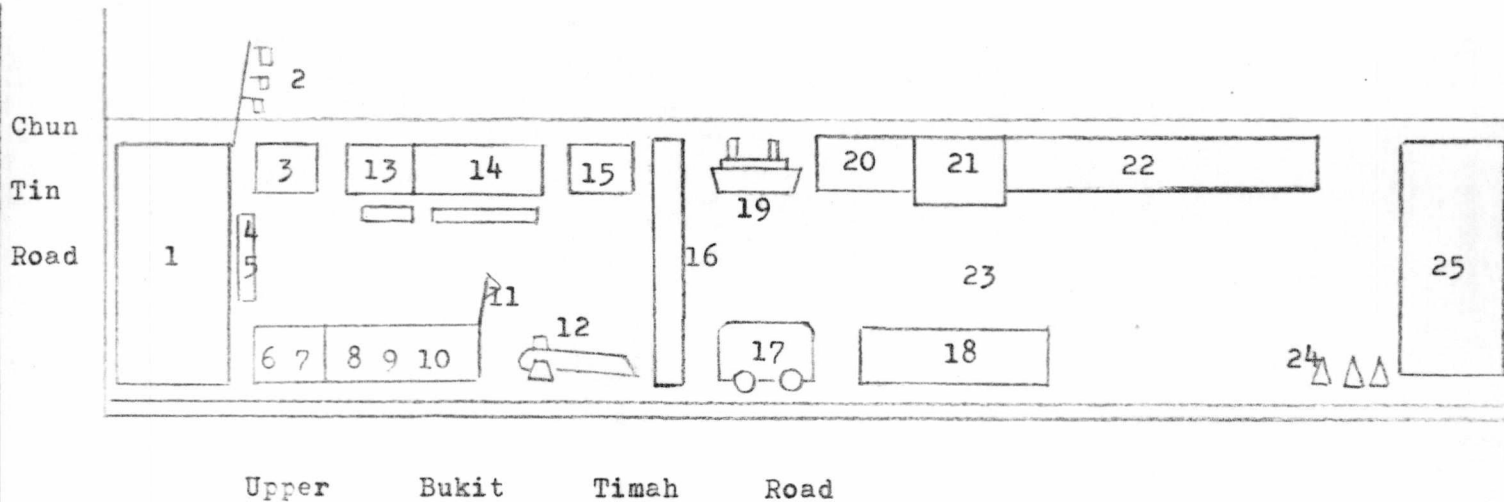
Figure 9 The Plan for the Worship of the Hungry Ghosts
by a Small Seventh Moon Association



Key

- 1 Tapestry of Ta Pai Kung
- 2 Chairs for Hungry Ghosts
- 3 Bowls, spoons, chopsticks for Hungry Ghosts
- 4 Food
- 5 Religious and non-religious objects for auction
- 6 Cooked poultry, pork, fish, etc.
- 7 Bags of rice
- 8 Two urns, one for Ta Pai Kung and the other for Ghosts. The latter is rotated among divined leaders
- 9 Joss-sticks
- 10 Variety of dry provisions
- 11 Divining blocks
- 12 Lanterns
- 13 Traditional theatrical musicians and singers
- 14 Straw mat
- 15 Space for social interaction and feast
- 16 Mammoth incense sticks

Figure 10 The Plan for the Worship of the Hungry Ghosts
by a Large Seventh Moon Association



Key

- 1 Tent for Buddhist ritual
- 2 Bamboo pole with 7 lanterns, symbol of Seventh Moon and bidding Ghosts from near and far welcome
- 3 Tent for paper palace
- 4 Mammoth candles
- 5 Mammoth incense sticks
- 6 Tent for paper house
- 7 Effigies of the Three Messengers on Horseback
- 8 Effigy of the Earth God
- 9 } Two effigies of Wu Ch'ang (无常鬼), the Spirit of Luck
- 10 } 11 Pink and green flag waved by Kuei Wang (鬼王), the King of Devils
- 12 A concord (of paper) some 7 metres long
- 13 Tent for Kuei Wang some 7 metres high
- 14 Tent for giant effigies of the Judge of Purgatory (阎罗王), the Horse-head spirit, the Ox-head spirit, the Dragon spirit, the Monk who journeyed to the West, and the Red-, Blue-, Yellow- and Green-faced guardians of the Four Directions
- 15 Board listing names of honourary members, working committee, divined leaders and people who were successful in the previous year's auction
- 16 A banner proclaiming 中元节, Chung Yuan Chieh, the Seventh Moon celebration of the Taoist persuasion
- 17 A bus (of paper) some 7 metres long
- 18 A row of 12 pigs and 1 goat sacrificed to the Hungry Ghosts
- 19 A boat (of paper) some 7 metres long
- 20 Objects for auction
- 21 The altar to the Hungry Ghosts with 'mountains' of food
- 22 Offerings of many thousand tins of canned food and bottled drinks
- 23 Space for banquet
- 24 Conveniences for Hungry Ghosts
- 25 Tent for Chinese theatrical



Plate 1 A tent for the worship of the Hungry Ghosts



Plate 2 Mammoth incense sticks



Plate 3 Offerings of vegetarian food. Behind ancestral tablets are chairs for the comfort of Hungry Ghosts.



Plate 4
 'Mountains'
 of food
 offerings



Plate 5
 Offerings
 of canned
 food
 eventually
 distri-
 buted to
 members of
 Hungry
 Ghost
 associa-
 tions.
 The board
 listing
 names
 (see
 Figure 10
 Key 15)



Plate 6
 Chinese
 theatrical



Plate 7
Offering of
paper palace
with
'mountains'
of gold and
silver



Plate 8
Offering of
paper boat



Plate 9
Offering of
paper car



Plate 10 Effigy of Kuei Wang



Plate 11 Effigy of Judge of Purgatory



Plate 12 Effigies of Wu Ch'ang

apart from others organized by taxi drivers, public transport workers, residents, among others. For the marketplace traders internal strife has contributed to the large numbers, each with its own leadership. Groups have a tendency to segment because of personality clashes but what is more important, the more ambitious among the members wish to assert themselves and in so doing enjoy the economic perks and social prestige achieved by their more established counterparts. The proliferation of Seventh Moon associations also symbolizes the competition arising from economic activities. But at the same time they provide arenas whereby traders resolve internal disputes, where they can formulate and implement decisions, co-ordinate religious action, and in fact display the corporateness of one group against other groups. What is of sociological significance is that the achievement of leadership positions in Seventh Moon associations may be the beginning of the climb into leadership positions of registered voluntary associations.

Furthermore, the whole of the Seventh Moon is a period of roaring trade for virtually all the marketplace traders, provision shopkeepers, and all other traders dealing in religious images and artifacts. They supply most of the requirements for the ceremonies. There is tacit agreement among the organizers that they purchase only from their own members and so it is common for all these businessmen to belong to more than one religious association. Sources of supply are spread out so that all traders obtain a fair share of this 'market'. Through these channels shopkeepers are known to get rid of unpopular brands of canned food, and pork and poultry dealers are able to dispose of left-overs. For the organizers it is widely known that they are compensated for their time and effort either directly by

helping themselves to the funds or indirectly through commissions, or both. For example one of the leaders was overheard to negotiate with a caterer for a commission of \$5 for every dinner table engaged; so for 21 tables the organizer earned \$105. In addition the same perks are also negotiable for the hire of tent and furniture. I myself overheard a member of a working committee negotiating with the leader for 'expenses' because he had lost four working days. Although the extent of these practices is impossible to ascertain, the participants believe that the power of supernatural sanctions will sufficiently deter any massive misappropriation of public funds. It is on this pretext that Government agents, PAP cadres and members of Government sponsored local community bodies, are circulating rumours that steps will be taken to register all Seventh Moon associations. In addition there are regular notices in the local press reminding the public that the Building Control Authority must be informed if private residences are transformed into places of public worship. The authorities seem to have awakened to the fact that religious organizations, the only organizations not controlled by the public authority, may be transformed into political groups. In Singapore's political history, lower class organizations have been the bases of support of opposition parties. The implementation of controls will curtail the development of associations into effective pressure groups and a power and influence beyond their original objectives.

To summarize, the Seventh Moon festival and cult has social and economic functions. There is no formal method for entering the cult or for electing leaders within it. The emphasis is on immediate rewards, not like Christianity which emphasizes later rewards. But there is no reason to doubt that people are genuine in their religious

fervour and piety. It is rooted in the anxieties of men in their day to day afflictions, and activities are designed to obtain supernatural aid to achieve concrete ends. But the ceremonies involved are in fact like the process of 'compensatory consumption' observed by writers like Caplovitz and Huber (Huber 1968: 168). Even as success is identified with the accumulation of material goods in the American way of life, so there is a temptation among modest income marketplace traders to display their economic power under the glare of public attention through Seventh Moon activities. These activities support the revolt against inferior status. So, the Seventh Moon festival continues to hold an important place in the life of marketplace traders and all the indications point to the increasing intensity of such activities. In these activities some organizations have fragmented because of internal conflict, others have been maintained, and still others have expanded. And as for the individual marketplace trader, in order to achieve fame he must participate in a conspicuous expenditure, and in order to be reputable he must be wasteful.

vi) Clandestine associations

I do not pretend to have gathered extensive or intensive data about secret societies or gambling syndicates in Bukit Timah. My only concern here is to show their emergence and organization, and that secret societies provide yet another base for prestige and leadership among the lower classes. As for gambling organizations they are widely recognized by promoters as channels to wealth, an important element in leadership acquisition in Chinese society. Any analysis of voluntary associations in Bukit Timah will have to treat these clandestine organizations as part of the social structure of the

community. They have always constituted a significant factor in marketplace relationships.

Secret societies

The secret societies were introduced to all overseas Chinese communities (with the exception of Madagascar, see Tsien 1967) from China in the nineteenth century (Chesneaux 1971; Freedman 1967; Lyman 1974; Skinner 1957). Numerous lodges or groups were established among the emigrants in the United States, IndoChina, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. They were originally founded for long-range political ends, the overthrow of the Manchu dynasty and the restoration of the Mings. In fact as Ianni has shown, all secret societies have characteristically emerged in periods of social disorganization or political upheaval: the reformist Chinese Boxers at the turn of the twentieth century, ritual brotherhoods like the Freemasons in seventeenth century England, racist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan and criminal associations such as India's Thugees in the early nineteenth century (1972: 10). While the anti-Manchu aspect was unimportant in Singapore, their general political aspect was for they were for a long time the means by which control was exercised within the Chinese fold by Chinese and a way of regulating the contact between the mass of the Chinese and the British authorities. Secret societies had been instruments of government. They also incorporated benevolent aims for laudable and unobjectionable purposes, like Freemasonry in the West. They provided immigrants with an organization in which they could find a place for themselves in the absence of the traditional territorial and kinship systems. The exact process of ramification of the Triad society into sub-groupings which are organizationally independent is obscure although rivalry among its

leaders must have played its part. Factions, often opposed to one another emerged, grouping together Chinese emigrants from different provinces speaking different dialects. The exact process of how these groupings degenerated into criminal organizations is also not known although it is possible that some of the societies were at an early date criminal groups whose overriding aim was robbery and extortion. By 1890 the colonial authorities no longer tolerated the unruliness of these societies and an ordinance was enforced to suppress them altogether. From that date secret societies really became secret and declined to the status of small scale criminal organizations. They turned to securing protection and economic advantage for members who ran gambling, smuggling, vice and extortion rackets and provoked gang fights. Their principal source of funds is from among the poorer classes of the Chinese community from whom money is obtained by methods of fear and intimidation (C.I.D. Report 1958; Gan 1970). Like the Mafia (Ianni 1972) members of secret societies are recruited from the very classes they harass. It was only with the introduction of the Criminal Law Temporary Provisions Amendment Ordinance No. 25 in 1958 with provision for extensive periods of detention that effectively stifled the activities of secret societies. From a total of 416 secret society incidents in 1959, the figure was 241 in 1960 and sixty-eight in 1971 (Gan 1970). Confronted with effective and harsh measures taken by the authorities, secret societies are exploiting religious ceremonies like the Hungry Ghost festival to justify their existence. And in Bukit Timah charitable aims have been incorporated. The trend seems to be a revival of legitimate activities observed in secret societies during their early days.

The dominant secret society in Bukit Timah is the Koon Tong (群党) of the 18 Group.⁸ Figures are of course lacking about the

exact number of members but membership no longer reflects the divisions of the Chinese prevalent during the 1920s and the 1930s when secret societies were organized exclusively along speech-group identity (Gan 1970: 11; Skinner 1957: 139, 141). Nonetheless the core leaders are Teochew. Originally the Gi Koon Tong of the 18 Group was most active between 1949 - 54 but its activities were hindered when certain of their leaders were imprisoned and others banished. The group was reorganized and the Sio Koon Tong emerged in 1955. During its early years the Sio Koon Tong fought on sight members of the rival 24 Group, and intimidated shopkeepers unaffiliated to the Li Cheng Society and other petty traders. In the 1960s stringent controls forced many factions into inactivity. Mak observed that the inactivity of the parent or previously dominant group is usually succeeded by new gang members (1975). Indeed in Bukit Timah new members emerged and called themselves the Sin (new) Koon Tong. Members are aged 16 to 25, largely school dropouts or odd-job labourers, and perpetuated the signs and symbols of the parent group. These are the people who currently harass school children and certain petty traders in Bukit Timah. In 1976 the Lau (old) Koon Tong members adopted the name Heng Heng Society (兴兴社) as a step towards its new identity and a symbol of its departure from criminal activities. It sought to co-opt the Sin Koon Tong and there was a proposal to call the new alliance the Sin Heng Hup Chok Society with mutual benefit as its prime objective. I am unaware of the outcome because negotiations were still in progress when I left the field. What I want to emphasize is that the Sin Koon Tong is forged by a nucleus of men who wish to assert their independence. Unless they are accorded leadership positions in the new collectivity, it is unlikely that an alliance will emerge. The struggle for power between these two secret societies may be seen in the light of conflict between the

young blood and old.

While many marketplaces in different parts of Singapore and Malaysia are victims of protection racketeering (see Chan 1976: 53; Mak 1975: 5 - 7 respectively) Bukit Timah marketplaces are virtually free from such harassment. The main reason seems to be that the core leaders of the Lau Koon Tong are themselves small scale businessmen scattered over all the marketplaces in Bukit Timah. Whether this is a deliberate strategy or entirely due to chance is unimportant; what is significant is that these leaders are there and are effective deterrents to any extortion attempts.

As for the Beauty World complex the owners have deliberately taken further measures to ensure that it is a safe place for business. If word gets around that businessmen are intimidated, tenants may transfer their business elsewhere in addition to the fact that customers may be frightened off. So they have engaged one of the most notorious leaders of the Lau Koon Tong as its overseer and he assures me that with him around the marketplace traders do not subscribe to any protecting secret society.

But this is by no means the case all the time. Among the traders I talked to, a stallholder in BWT claimed that he is annually coerced into 'contributing to the Chinese New Year clothes' of young gangsters. And he believes that he is not the only victim. He believes that it is useless to take action because the real culprits are hiding behind these young men and if they are apprehended, others will be sent to harass him. His fears are real and I observed that a few weeks prior to the Chinese New Year in 1976, he stopped trading at

8 p.m. instead of his usual time at 9 p.m. in an effort to avoid another confrontation. My investigations suggest that people who are forced into paying protection money are regarded as outsiders to the town although they may have traded at the same site for many years. In other words economically they are members but culturally they are not and so they are victimized. Outsiders are exploited while people 'of' the town are not. Residence is not important in the definition of who is of the town and who is not because many of the traders who do not live in the town are in fact widely identified as of the town. A man will only be regarded as of Bukit Timah only if he is fully involved in primary relations with members of the community. His Bukit Timah identity becomes the expression of his involvement in a web of live social relationships which arise from current mutual interests within the Bukit Timah setting. So the more involved a man is with the wide range of the town's social, economic, religious and political relationships, the more he is identified as of the town, and the less likely will he be exposed to protection racketeering.

Only people of the town are able to tell which Bukit Timah man is a secret society member and which is not. So long as these members do not go so far in their activities so as to endanger the livelihood of the people of the town, and also provided they do not operate among these people themselves, they are tolerated. The people of the town have been known to expose undesirable elements to the authorities via anonymous letters. This system may be abused but nonetheless has proved effective. Although people of the town in theory are not harassed by protection racketeering, in practice they are willing victims through the institution of the Seventh Moon festival.

The Sio Koon Tong annually organizes a feast cum auction coinciding with the Seventh Moon to which their members and people of the town are invited. It is customary among the Chinese to send a gift, an ang pow (cash enclosed in a red envelope) upon the receipt of an invitation card regardless of attendance. Marketplace traders usually contribute between \$20 to \$30, a sum widely recognized as adequate. Using Chinese religion and Chinese traditional practice, the secret society has devised a system of indirect extortion. The term extortion must remain because many traders do not attend the dinner held in a secluded part of the town. However in 1976 many attended because for the first time the leaders emerged into the open and held their ceremonies in the middle of the town on the grounds of the TPK temple.

The process of legitimation of the secret society was initiated in 1974 when one of the town's most influential man was invited to the feast. It was also the time when Seh Chuan High School was at the peak of its fund raising campaign. This old gentleman (the same man who in his younger days trudged around the neighbourhood selling vegetables) brought along two of the school's trophies to raise funds as well as a personal gift of \$40. The secret society leaders were so enthusiastic that they obtained more trophies and through their contacts raised several thousand dollars for the school in different parts of the Republic. In 1975 it again contributed to the school through the Seventh Moon auction. In 1976 the society invited all the leading members of the town to the feast as well as to witness the handing over of a gift of \$2,000 to the Bukit Timah Scholarship Fund. The same evening more than \$9,000 was pledged to Seh Chuan High School. The status of the organization and its organizers were further enhanced

when the Member of Parliament for Bukit Timah made an appearance. The secret society is no longer secret. It has developed universally approved objectives as associative forces. This is the direct effect of many factors operating singly or in different combinations: firstly members mellow with age, and marriage brings commitments and pressures to conform to an 'ordinary' life style, secondly stringent Government controls hinder the development of criminal activities, and thirdly the change is also a function of the rising standard of living in Singapore as a whole. The last factor may be the most important. Ianni (1972) demonstrated that organized crime has been the path to ultimately respectable areas of business by different ethnic groups. He argued that in America, the Irish came first and early Irish gangsters started the climb up the ladder of social mobility. As they came to control the political machinery of the large cities, the Irish won wealth, power, and respectability through consequent control of construction, trucking, public utilities, and the waterfront. In organized crime the Irish were succeeded by the Jews. The Jews quickly moved on up the ladder into the world of business, a more legitimate means of economic and social mobility. The Italians came last and did not get a leg up on the rungs of crime until the late 1930s. Translated into the Singapore context the rising levels of economic development achieved by its population is causing secret society members to move toward legitimate and prestige giving activities. Members launched into sensational stunts winning instant wide approval from members of the community as well as from Government quarters. The object seems to be to erase as quickly as possible any lingering memory in the minds of people of their past policies of social or political dissent from the established order. Although their past hinders them from leadership in Government sponsored local committees, there is nothing to prevent

them from seeking election in the other voluntary associations in the town. The indications are that this has begun.

The bookmakers

The people of Bukit Timah are able to identify who are the promoters of the '4-digit' or '10,000 characters' lottery and the bookmakers concerned with taking bets on horse races just as they are able to differentiate secret society members from those who are not. Several of the bookmakers are marketplace stallholders and shopkeepers. These operators are either long-standing residents of the town or people who interact intensively with members of the community occasioned by social, economic, religious and political activities. The web of primary ties that have been established make them more acceptable to potential betters in the town and gives them access to shops, stalls and even residence to serve as pick-up spots for bets. In these operations the prospect for success is heavily dependent upon particularistic criteria of friendship, kinship and community ties. So betting relationships encourage practitioners to become more closely tied to the community than to break such ties. The more closely involved they are with the community the more safe they become.

The bookmakers and their agents are widely recognized as the most generous supporters of voluntary associations. During Seventh Moon auctions they form the core of the big spenders. Like the racketeers in Whyte's Cornerville (1969: 142) and Perrucci's neighbourhood bookmaker (1969: 307) they are also liberal towards community causes. Their generosity creates obligations which are recognized by its recipients. So the activities of the promoters may be widely

known in the town but unknown to outsiders. Police officers have described Bukit Timah as 'impenetrable' and apart from isolated cases of rivalry and personal vengeance, the arms of the law have had little success in Bukit Timah.

The role requirements of bookmaking tend to select persons with skills and personal qualities similar to those required for more socially desirable occupational pursuits. As leadership roles require a measure of these qualities, this also means that some of them have succeeded into offices in voluntary associations. So some of the leaders in Bukit Timah would not be regarded 'law-abiding citizens' in the eyes of the State but popular patrons in local community causes.

The leadership structure of voluntary associations

The typical Chinese mode of leadership is through a committee which usually makes its decision on the basis of consensus. The concept of a leader with a group of patrons bound exclusively to him is 'un-Chinese' (De Glopper 1965: 194). Nonetheless an apex leader can be distinguished easily as he will be widely recognized. Collective leadership is characteristic of all the voluntary associations in Bukit Timah.

Leadership is the exercise of influence which consists in affecting the policies of others than the self (Skinner 1958: 79). So in the Chinese community, leaders not only occupy a high position but also by virtue of that position and potential, consistently affect the courses of action of the society's members; more significantly, they are the big men who bring in the votes.

Wealth is essential for leadership status; how it is derived is of little importance. Although most built up their fortunes through hard work, savings, reinvestment and a measure of good luck, the rise to wealth of others contain elements that are hardly flattering. Opportunists often build up their reputation by all possible means, avoiding social censure for a time. Then, once wealth is acquired, power attained, and position consolidated, they trust their 'face' to be strong enough to hush talk about their moral character (see Hu 1944: 61). For the Chinese wealth is always seen as positive, regardless of the fashion in which it was attained. Thus the process of legitimation whereby illegitimate wealth is made to resemble well-begotten wealth can be speeded up by investing in community welfare. While a poor man is justified in husbanding his resources, the wealthy man who shows himself stingy offends the code of decency and incurs public censure, all the more so if his wealth had been got through unscrupulous means. So the more generous he is observed to be towards community projects and voluntary associations, the more rapidly he recovers his public image and the more willing are people to forgive his former trespasses.

Virtually all the voluntary associations in Bukit Timah (apart from secret societies) are stratified according to lines of social class. All the rich and influential members of the town are invited and accorded honourary positions. Many presidentships and directorships have been created for these rich patrons who provide the capital for community causes and make personal contributions to them commensurate with their position of authority (see Seah 1973: 61; Skinner 1958: 195; Willmott 1960: 164). For example the YMA has nineteen honourary members and thirty-six directors, and the Li Cheng Society has twelve presidents, twenty-four directors and a management committee of twenty-three men. These are the rich men who bail out the

associations in financial difficulties. The less wealthy, unhampered by financial considerations, seek election to executive committees. The executive is the de facto leadership making decisions and shaping policy and in which membership ranges from eight to twenty-five. This arrangement means that the majority of the association members are able to elect from amongst themselves men of proven ability to the executive. It is a safety valve against the wealthy but not necessarily 'leaders' to dominate all the voluntary associations. This two-tier class structure is of significance to ambitious small scale traders because in the traditional clan and mutual aid organizations, leadership is the preserve of only the commercially successful whether in Singapore, Sarawak or the United States (Freedman 1967: 22; T'ien 1953: 69; Lyman 1974: 476). The traditional arrangement also splits the membership into two discrete classes but there leadership was strictly in the hands of the upper class, people with economic strength who commanded the paths to social and political power. In the current arrangement intra-class conflict may be accentuated by the struggle for positions of office but the conflict between classes has been mitigated because each competes for power in different arenas. Wealth buys status, and finances the institutional framework whereby small scale traders in turn acquire status.

In addition to executive positions, petty traders may seek office in the 'divined' offices of religious associations, a vacuum not filled by more established businessmen who concentrate on the 'bigger fish'. All Seventh Moon associations as well as the TPK temple have divined leaders. These de jure leaders carry out decisions formulated by the de facto leaders who are members of the executive or management committees and who organize de facto the festivities.

The number of divined leaders varies with the size of the association from two to sixteen. In the TPK temple, all supporters have an equal chance of being divined the lo-tju (爐主) or Stove Master. Bean-shaped blocks usually made from bamboo root with one side flat and the other side rounded measuring from about 3cm. to 15cm. in length are used for divinations. Held together the blocks are tossed into the air in front of the altar. If both blocks land with the flat side up or both rounded sides up, this is not the right person; if the blocks land with one rounded side up and one flat side up, this is the right person. The person who gathers the most number of correct combinations is assigned the lo-tju and the person with the next most is the vice-lo-tju. Modesty in aspiration notwithstanding, an internal organization such as this provides the most humble and unknown stallholder with instant fame and prominence in the town. As the offices are considered a divine duty and privilege, the office bearers are assured of good fortune, good health, and success in every venture as they have incurred the god's pleasure. In more tangible terms, the offices put the elected in close contact with its influential management committee which may be manipulated to economic-political advantage. In 1976 the lo-tju was the father of a fried noodles seller in the New Market but because of age and physical handicap the man delegated his son the job. The vice-lo-tju was a vegetable seller in BWN. During his term of office he won a lottery of \$8,000 which he attributed to divine favour. Both men have become entrenched in the informal leadership structure in Bukit Timah.

As for the Seventh Moon associations, in addition to the lo-tju and vice-lo-tju, the treasurer and vice-treasurer are also divined. The autonomy that these persons have over several thousand dollars may

be translated as interest-free loans that may be invested into business. This is feasible because marketplace turnover is rapid. In some associations towkayships are also divined. These positions are honorary and stallholders are addressed in terms usually reserved for successful shop proprietors and businessmen of established enterprises. In more tangible terms this process creates a ready pool of manpower from whom service and funds may be mobilized. Divined leadership is characterized by an annual turnover of 'winners', a device distributing the social prestige pie to the largest number of persons possible. It is a system best termed the annual pooling of luck.

The Bukit Timah leaders

Structurally the Li Cheng Society can be seen as the centre of a network of relationships with voluntary associations in Bukit Timah. This distinction achieved by the Li Cheng Society derives from the concentration of wealth, prestige, social and political power among its leadership. The association supplies the honorary members to the rest of the voluntary associations, all the directors of Seh Chuan School, and, from which the core of Government sponsored committees are recruited. Some half a dozen of its members have been decorated with the Bintang Bakti Masyarakat (Public Service Star) and when these personages accept invitations to be patrons of other organizations, they enhance the status of these organizations and the organizers.

The voluntary associations in Bukit Timah are not arranged in a formal hierarchy with specific lines of control. They are independent and unaffiliated and even the Li Cheng Society has no power to dictate policy or issue orders to other associations. In

the absence of a formal organizational hierarchy and of formal lines of authority among the associations, interlocking officerships have important significance (Skinner 1958: 200 - 266; Willmott 1967: 84 - 93). They are the main channels of communication and influence uniting the various organizations. It is largely because of them that groups of associations can co-ordinate policy and mobilize support for community activities such as raising funds for school and scholars. Table 2 presents, on a Guttman scale, twenty-two of the most influential people in the Bukit Timah community: the more officerships, the more influential is the individual.⁹ For clarity as well as to illustrate real influence I have not included ordinary membership but only where office has been delegated. The Table shows how the associations in Bukit Timah are united by virtue of having common officers or interlocking leaders. What it does not show is that for example although A is the most powerful man in Bukit Timah, D is the most popular and approachable and one who is widely recognized to enshrine the virtues of the Chinese deity Ta Pai Kung. In addition J, aged 73, has delegated much of his commitments to the community to his son G. And similarly R's liabilities are discharged by his son who is the chairman of the YMA and vice-chairman of the Li Cheng Society. Generally, the more the offices concentrated in the hands of a person, the more his authority and the more able is he to resolve internal disputes and to co-ordinate the different groups for action.

Bukit Timah's big men are absorbed into the Government sponsored CCC and MC. But ironically despite the prestige and power accorded them by the State, the big men remain the patrons of lower level voluntary associations and cleave on to the associations that had put them into positions of prominence. The direct experience of

TABLE 2 GUTTMAN SCALE OF INFLUENCE OF LOCAL VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS AND GOVERNMENT SPONSORED ORGANISATIONS BY COMMUNITY LEADERS

ORGANISATION

Person	B of D	LCS	MC	STST	TPK	YMA	CCC	WS	TTSS	NHAM & DA	BTSMA	TTPS	BWTSMA	HLA	BWMSMA
A	VC	HM		HM		HM	C	D	CM	HM	HM				
B	C	C		HM		HM		VC			HM				HM
C	D	HM			CM		T	T				C			
D	D			HM	CM		CM		CM						
E	D	HM	T	HM		HM									
F	T	VT	C		CM										
G	D		CM		CM		CM								
H	D	PRO							CM				HM		
I	VC	HM			CM										
J	D	HM						D							
K	D	CM	CM												
L	D			VPRO	CM										
M	D	CM												C	
N	D	GAO													
O	D	VA													
P	D		CM												
Q	D									HM					
R	D				CM										
S	D														
T	D														
U	D														
V	D														

Key

B of D	Board of Directors of Seh Chuan High School	NHAM & DA	Nam Hwa Amateur Musical and Dramatic Association	C	Chairman
LCS	Li Cheng Society	BTSMA	Bukit Timah Seventh Moon Association (not registered)	VC	Vice-chairman
MC	People's Management Committee (Government sponsored)	TTPS	Toh Tuck Primay School Advisory Committee	T	Treasurer
STST	Seu Teck Sean Tong Temple	BWTSMA	Beauty World Town Shopkeepers Association	VT	Vice-treasurer
TPK	Ta' Pai Kung Temple	HLA	Hwa Liang Association	D	Director
YMA	Sin Chew Yat Meng Association	BWMSMA	Beauty World Market Seventh Moon Association (not registered)	HM	Honourary member
CCC	Citizens Consultative Committee (Government sponsored)			PRO	Public relations officer
WS	Wei Sin Public School Board			VPRO	Vice-public relations officer
TTSS	Toh Tuck Secondary School Advisory Committee			GAO	General affairs officer
				VA	Vice-auditor
				CM	Committee member

serving on these Government committees has produced a set of mixed reactions from the members with regards to their role in and contribution to the political system. Chan argued that whilst many see themselves as a useful transmission belt between the Government and the people, and thereby somehow enhancing the probability of good government, there are equally many who are disillusioned about their exact part in the political process (1976: 139). The frustrations emerged because of the high expectations which were entertained when some of the individuals accepted appointment to the CCC, and MC. The discrepancy between the role and powers which the members believed they would hold, and the actual position they subsequently assumed, led to much dissatisfaction. Initially the CCC members for example envisaged themselves as local minor members of parliament making decisions affecting local municipal matters and articulating the needs of the local constituents. But from all accounts their spirits were often dampened by the many bureaucratic rejections of their proposals and a constant disregard for the grass-roots level suggestions. The result is the undermining of the confidence of the local leaders in the Government. In the study of Bukit Timah what has emerged is that all the major decisions regarding national development are decided by the PAP Government and bureaucracy. The local leaders are only effective in local community issues, which gives an impression of their importance. All the serious problems that confront the community remain firmly in the hands of the Government and by the time the CCC comes to handling them they are already irreversible. The local leaders are usually concerned with local community matters like street lighting, storm drains, paving roads, the building of bus shelters, and the support of the numerous campaigns to indoctrinate and socialize the population to emulate particular ways of behaviour which the

Government considers desirable for the city-state. These campaigns include anti-littering, anti-spitting, the 'garden-city' city image, 'gracious living', the latter being an attempt to temper the materialistic outlook of its citizens with more refined spiritual and artistic pursuits, and currently (1979) a courtesy campaign and another urging the use of Mandarin rather than dialects. In addition local leaders have become cast as arbitrators in local quarrels such as money disputes, roles that were not stipulated at the outset. So the local level big man is in fact ineffective in the Government machinery. In big issues their effectiveness and legitimacy at the community level are threatened because they are forced to carry out policies that may have little regard for the local community, the community which they are supposed to represent. The one way transmission on most matters that has become the pattern of communication between the Government and the local representative body is a reflection of the authoritarian nature of the PAP Government.

The small scale traders do not compete where the big men are: there are roles for the small man to move into as there are special mobility channels in the social hierarchy. For example in 1976 a new comer to the HLA executive whose organizational base and muscle is in the Seventh Moon associations collected the most votes. This makes him the rightful chairman. However because the chair had been occupied by a big man for some ten years he invited the older man to assume the chair. But the sociological issue involved in this case quite apart from wealth also concerns differences in age. In 1976, the elected body included more young men, three in five being aged 40 and below, a situation contrasting with for example Government sponsored bodies in which more than half of the members are between the ages 40 to 60 (Chan 1976: 146 - 148, 159). Ross's observation of ancient and the then

modern societies made some five decades ago continues to be empirically verifiable in Bukit Timah: quiet epochs leave power in failing hands whereas stirring times, which discredit precedent and tradition, give the capable young their opportunity (1920: 190). For illustration Ross cites the Protestant Reformation in England led by churchmen whose average age was thirty-eight, whereas in quiet times the Church has been guided by men well up in the sixties. As for the HLA the changes are occurring at a time when the marketplace traders are unsettled about relocation. The HLA had been established by men in their thirties and forties who stayed in power during two decades of calm and now according to the young leaders have become timid, inert, hidebound, routinary, wanting in initiative, slowness of decision and failure to recognize and understand the rapidly changing factors in the new situation. The old leadership is now aged fifty and over and the new, men in their thirties and who have had some education, are rapidly edging them out. Marketplace traders showed their impatience with the old leadership and are tending to rely upon younger members to guide them. The elders are not forced into retirement from public office. Their ages are often commensurate with their relative economic power and they have built for themselves an effective network of social relationships in their own right. So the HLA will progressively put the established gray-heads in honorary and advisory positions while the young demonstrate their initiative, ability and force on the executive. Already the young leaders have succeeded in instituting several changes to the HLA. Ad hoc decisions to meet have given way to regular fortnightly meetings with ample notice given, minutes, and a circulated agenda. People are punctual at meetings and come prepared instead of doing their homework on the premises. Obscene language which is part and parcel of marketplace vocabulary is carefully avoided at meetings, and hot drinks replaced beer.

Other areas where the small man is able to assert his influence are in specialized organizations attached to voluntary associations such as funeral bands, and the institution of spirit mediumship. For example fishmonger Koh of BWM rose from band member to band leader and in the process enhanced his economic activities through the contacts he made among members of the YMA. In 1975 he was elected the treasurer of the YMA, treasurer of its lesser mutual benefit committee, and treasurer of the HLA. As for the spirit mediums of the STST, because the traders are seen to be suitable candidates by a spiritual being, the mortals also see them as suitable candidates for secular office. They are members of the advisory committee, positions that in other voluntary associations are reserved for the local Member of Parliament. Like the malam of Sabo (Cohen 1969) and the imam of Malaysia (Syed Husin 1972) men who have knowledge of the theological texts have an enormous amount of influence over the local community.

Conclusion

Voluntary associations are a distinctive feature of social organization in Bukit Timah. Through them the marketplace traders and the rest of the community participate in a common social, religious and political entity. The attempt here has been to examine not only the membership of voluntary associations, the composition of its leadership, but more important the processes through which people at the bottom of the socio-economic strata are able to achieve leadership roles that in most societies are the preserve of the elderly, the wealthy or some such widely accepted characteristics. A small group of men who because of their wealth or economic position determining the destiny of

community events and activities is alien in Bukit Timah. Rather leadership tends to become diffused throughout the community with one committee exercising leadership in one situation and another committee exercising leadership in another situation. So in Bukit Timah the local influentials operate almost exclusively on the horizontal axis, as instruments of integration within the community because of considerable overlap in officerships. This situation is common in many overseas Chinese communities including Indonesia and Cambodia (Willmott 1960: 147 - 168; Willmott 1967: 90 - 91). However because of State instituted committees like the CCC and MC in Singapore, committees that are at one and the same time the most powerful political unit in the local community and the lowest in the State political system, the local influentials have in the past fifteen years also been operating along the vertical axis; like Merton's (1957: 387 - 420) cosmopolitan influentials, they are linking the local community to the larger national political structure although in fact their influence is minimum. In other words the Bukit Timah influentials are 'generalists' exerting influence in the area of ethnic, mutual aid, recreational, and educational associations, and at the same time are limited to specific activities at the political level, as instruments of the national political machinery. In Bukit Timah these instruments are the built-in leadership of the marketplace and local community.

But while the local influentials help to integrate the host of voluntary associations, the multiplicity of these associations is also an indicator of low cohesion which has a dampening effect on centralization. As a butcher succinctly put it, each little man created his own little kingdom to lord over. So the more the we-group or in-group, the more the others-group or out-groups and the less the

solidarity among associations because each one of these groups look at the others as an out-group. However because of the conflict situation arising from the latent threat from an external source, whether landlord or Government, the lines of division are also lines of integration because conflict with an out-group closes ranks and heightens the distinctiveness of its boundaries against the enemy. Through the interlocking of officers, the considerable overlap of membership, and the intense interaction among voluntary associations, these organizations have the potential for collectivization and centralization. But because dissolving elements are always at work, voluntary associations consistently oscillate between internal differences, and unity.

The voluntary associations in Bukit Timah have aimed not at the development of ethnic exclusiveness nor any longer promoting the adaptation of its members to modern urban conditions. They emerged at particular points in history, served their original function, and then adapted to new circumstances and conditions as the surrounding social, political and economic factors undergo change. The large number and variety of voluntary associations have persisted despite changed social conditions because the more associations there are the more outlets there are for the energies and ambitions of the rising class of young traders. Although associations function as important channels for status enhancement for rich and poor alike, participation insures mutual benefits, general welfare, and advantages in business. In other words voluntary associations are mechanisms which may be manipulated for social, economic and political advantage. They have become a form of urban life (see Jongkind 1974: 482), and their primary function is to offer attractive opportunities for its members to achieve and to display their influence, and against which the successful trader

measures his success. Through success in trade, men attain leisure which they devote to voluntary associations and one of the most coveted prizes which wealth brings to a man is officership. So the more ambitious the man is for status, the more will he frequent the associations. And what is of sociological significance is that when men come together within the framework of a formal single-interest association, they interact as whole personalities and soon create informal social relations which are not a necessary part of the formal association but which nonetheless have important significance for social, moral, economic and political relationships. In other words voluntary associations provide a framework for multiplex relations for the individual, and structurally, they link the masses to the State. But the social and authority structure of the whole community will be undermined with imminent redevelopment. There is some evidence that the government regards redevelopment and dispersal as a means of social control and that this perception has influenced its policies. For example residents of middle income flats built by the Housing and Urban Development Company (HUDC, a subsidiary company of the HDB) scattered in different parts of Singapore are not entitled to form Residents Committees (RC) as they are seen by the authorities as a powerful threat whereas tenants of lower income HDB flats are encouraged to organize RCs. As for Bukit Timah, when relocated, traders need no longer submit to the authority of local leaders, and simultaneously their unity will be weakened. It is ironical that even as the State recognizes the important roles of local leaders it is also actively dispersing their bases of support through urban development programmes.

Chapter Five

Footnotes

- 1 Between 1971 and 1975 no clan and surname or locality and dialect associations were registered in Singapore.
- 2 In 1976 a recommendation by school principals was submitted to the Education Ministry for the capitation grant to be raised to twice the present rate to meet increasing cost.
- 3 The better known TPK temples and shrines in Singapore were built in the time of Emperors Tao Kuang (1821 - 51) and Hsien Feng (1851 - 61) of the Manchu Dynasty (Comber 1958: 32 - 35).
- 4 The term has been coined by Alan Elliott (Elliott, Alan 1955. Chinese spirit-medium cults in Singapore. London School of Economics and Political Science).
- 5 Wong wrote that as the Chinese calendar is of luni-solar origin, that is it regulates the solar seasons, the Equinoxes and the Solstices, and combines them with the lunations for the predictions of the full moon and the new moon, a system of intercalated months (synodic), called Jun Yueh (閏月) was devised. There are roughly 365.25 days in the tropical year (solar), whereas a synodic (lunar) month averages only 29.5306 days, with approximately 354 days in the entire year. This arduous task of combination was achieved by the simple process of inserting an intercalated (lunar) month in every three years (tropical), and two intercalated months in every five years, making a total of seven intercalated months in nineteen years called, Chang (章), a cycle of nineteen years. At the end of every Chang cycle, the Ch'i (氣, the twelve months of the solar year) and the Shuo return to the same place, i.e., the solar and lunar luminaries come back (almost) exactly to their relative original positions. There remains, however, a surplus of 3.25 days. This surplus would disappear when the Chang was repeated 81 times (1,539 years), after which the difference would be resolved and all would return to the original state (1967: 12).
- 6 An informant observed that his friends working on homicide cases in the Criminal Investigation Department also organize their own rituals.
- 7 This is a large chunk of charcoal measuring approximately 36cm. high and 15cm. in diameter that has been elaborately dressed in gold paper and affixed to a colourful portable altar that sometimes includes a tiny effigy of the Ta Pai Kung or Kuan Yin.

8 Sandosham (1972) wrote that the active secret societies in Singapore are

- i) 24 or 969 Group Sio Loh Kuan
 Gi Leng Hor
- ii) 18 or 369 Heng Kee
 Sio Koon Tong
 Sio Gi Ho
- iii) Ang Soon Tong Triad Society
- iv) Independent Group of Sar Ji

Revivals of other secret societies not always heard of do occur (The Straits Times 6th March 1976; 14th June 1976).

9 The Guttman Scale was composed by examining lists of officer-ships (of both honorary members and members of the executive) supplied by all the voluntary associations at Bukit Timah.

Chapter Six

The Political Process of Marketplace Trade

The economic development of Third World cities

In the majority of cases Third World cities are characterized by rapid population growth but more significantly, this growth has not been associated with a rate of economic development which is fast enough to provide employment opportunities for the rapidly increasing populations of these cities (Armstrong and McGee 1968; Bloomberg and Schmandt 1968; Mouly and Costa 1974). Given a situation in which many of these city populations continue to exist at what appears to be low levels of subsistence, that is under conditions of chronic unemployment and underemployment, faced by physical problems of overcrowding and inadequate housing, and continually reminded of their marginal living conditions by the affluence of the observable city elites, the poor have not yet proved the base for a successful and genuine revolutionary movement (Armstrong and McGee 1968). Armstrong and McGee attributed the lack of revolutionary activity in the larger cities of the developing world to the persistence of 'traditional economic systems' of the Third World city economic structure. These writers assert that the labour intensive traditional economic systems, characterized by low productivity and underemployment, provide 'a sense of employment' to many Third World city populations. These labour intensive activities occur primarily in the tertiary or service sectors which form a large proportion of the Third World cities' occupations. The service sector is characterized by its ability to 'involute', that is the capacity of the sector to absorb increasing labour as population grows. This term

has been borrowed from Geertz who used it in the context of Javanese peasant agriculture, more specifically wet-rice cultivation, which seems to allow marginal levels of labour productivity to be maintained despite the working-in of additional labour (1963b: 82). Armstrong and McGee (1968) have provided some insight into the capacity of the service sector, more particularly the labour intensive marketing system incorporating production and sales, to involute. They argued that firstly the institutional basis of marketplace enterprise is the family and so the head-of-the-house is committed to ensuring members of his family entrance into this system. Secondly the highly labour intensive flow of goods and services characteristic of the marketing system allows the introduction of more labour. Thirdly the marketing sector has a self-inflationary quality: so the more people who enter the sector, the greater the 'market' and this is illustrated with the proliferation of prepared food vendors whose numbers increase as the population of the cities increases. The fourth factor is the relationship of the marketing sector to the agricultural economy: the population movement and the flow of goods and services between the two sectors is common, allowing greater flexibility both in terms of seasonal labour and longer-term employment. Finally there is the relationship of the labour intensive sector to the capital-intensive sector: profits earned in the latter sector are siphoned downwards and increased buying power enables the market sector to absorb greater population. Armstrong and McGee go on to show that there are two schools of thought regarding high levels of tertiary employment (1968: 364 - 365). The first group of writers argue that the inflated tertiary sector is both unproductive and economically irrational as well as politically dangerous. They assert that an inflated tertiary sector will have disastrous repercussions on the stability of the society largely because it leads to the creation of an impoverished

and explosive lumpen-proletariat. The concentration of such a group in the cities is said to provide a politically malleable and revolutionary-oriented population, and that the lumpen-proletariat forms a significant element in the eventual overthrow of the existing governments. But opposing viewpoints have been put forth by other writers who have argued that the growth of tertiary services in the cities may, on the contrary be regarded as a sign of economic growth and also social wellbeing. In the same vein the International Labour Office has observed that the service or small scale sector indeed directly absorbs large numbers of unskilled and illiterate people; however what is more significant is that marketing activities are observed to be dynamic and viable, and even a source of a new strategy of development in developing countries (1972: 51 - 64). Further ILO reports of 1973 and 1974 written by Bairoch and Mouly respectively argued that the small scale sector is far from being a 'residual' economy into which the unemployed and marginally productive who cannot obtain paid jobs in the large scale sector sink; small scale trading performs the role of helping newcomers to the city to accustom themselves to work disciplines and fosters adaptability and mobility in all developing countries. But such a claim is not universal. According to Peattie who studied the organization of commercial life in Bogota, only certain kinds of small scale commerce are particularly accessible to migrants (1975: 117). She argued that anyone can sell vegetables on the corner but to get a central site one must either be a person who held the place before the freeze on new permits or someone with the financial or political resources to negotiate a permit then. However all these issues no longer concern Singapore; it is unlike the majority of the Third World cities. Comparing the process of development of seven Southeast Asian cities - Greater Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore,

Greater Djakarta, Hong Kong, Saigon and Manila - McGee (1976) argued that the process of development in the Southeast Asian region alone differs considerably. To summarize his argument, firstly in the smaller nations such as Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand, while economic growth has been occurring, the institutional and social problems are still a grave hindrance to economic growth and have an important effect on the character and pattern of urbanization. In Malaysia for example the communal structure consisting of Malays, Chinese, Indians and other ethnic groups is the key to the understanding of the country's economic development. Secondly Indonesia and Burma continue to be characterized by high rates of rural-urban migration and little economic development based within the cities; so in these countries a pattern of urban involution prevails. Thirdly until the early 1970s the Indo-China War had produced a pattern of urbanization typical of the early phases of military decolonization, for the cities have become refugee camps with an economy based on the war and a large influx of foreign funds. And finally as for Singapore and Hong Kong they have emerged as the two fastest growing cities in the region in economic terms. The high rates of economic increases have been attributed to their city-state character. As we have previously seen, Singapore's city-state situation means that it does not encounter problems of immigration and resources may be fully channelled into the task of development of its economy, that is, international trade and commerce, manufacturing, and tourism. To this end the State has directly intervened to control the size of its tertiary sector. As we have seen in an earlier chapter, labour is Singapore's most important resource contributing to the successful development of its economy. Labour is carefully harnessed and has been shifted into its fast growing large scale sector, more specifically the industrial sector.

In other words economic progress has been achieved through a policy reducing the previously high concentration of tertiary employment into industrial development. The expansion of the tertiary sector has been curtailed through the employment of several measures: the marketing sector in Singapore will illustrate this phenomenon to which we now direct our attention.

The policy towards small scale traders

Official policy considers small scale traders as a perennial problem that requires licensing and control. Uncontrolled stalls of these traders are a source of concern as the stalls selling meat, fish, vegetables and prepared food encroach increasingly on the road creating traffic congestion in the busiest parts of the town or neighbourhood. Other objections to small scale trading are noise nuisance, the construction of unauthorized structures, indiscriminate depositing of refuse, and hazards to public health as food and drinks traders are often linked to contagious diseases such as cholera. The resiting of traders into controlled premises is the official long-term objective, an objective that has been summarized by Tan as follows,

the transplant of hawkers into a clean and healthy environment without losing the intrinsic qualities of their traditional mode of trade (1975: 196).

Although personal and environmental health are important considerations, what I will show in due course is that a far more important consideration for the control of small scale traders is to meet Singapore's industrial and construction sectors where there is labour shortage because of rapid economic development.

Comparative material on Southeast Asian cities reveals that policies toward small scale trading vary considerably. McGee and Yeung showed that there is a wide range of attitudes from the most positive where small scale trading is encouraged to the most negative where the policy is to eliminate traders from the city by clearance operations (1977: 41 - 60).¹ At one end of this continuum is the approach adopted by the Malaysian Government which encourages and supports small scale trading. In Malaysia after the racial disturbances of May 1969, broad new economic policy measures were developed under the Second Malaysia Plan of 1971 - 75 which, among other objectives, aimed at eradicating poverty by raising general income levels and correcting the economic imbalance among ethnic communities. The result was a more liberal licensing policy, the enforcement of law through education and not prosecution, the provision of loans (even adopted by private finance organizations)² and other inducements, and the recognition that small scale trading provided an important avenue for employment and entrepreneurial development particularly for the Malays. In this context national Government agencies like the Urban Development Authority, MARA (Majlis Amanah Rakyat), and small scale traders associations are combining action to promote Malay participation in commercial activity. On the other hand Manila and Jakarta city authorities want to sweep the streets clean of small scale traders as they regard it a necessary part of the beautification plan for the cities. (However although the policy is closely adhered to in the two national cities, a more tolerant attitude is adopted in their respective provincial cities). Similarly Fitzpatrick and Blaxter reported the same policy by Papua New Guinean authorities as part of their 'modernizing' goals (1978: 7). And in Lagos officials regard street markets as 'eyesores' (Baker 1974: 232). As for Singapore the current

attitude is to incorporate the traders into the 'legal' marketing system by taking them off the streets and putting them into tidy and controllable business places; a policy that has taken many decades to materialize.

Until the late 1950s, legislation regarding small scale traders was enacted by the colonial administrators and McGee and Yeung argued that it was essentially prohibitive because the British administrators regarded small scale trading as traditional and the antithesis of a modern city like Singapore (1977: 42). These writers showed that the legislation in fact was geared to establishing environments that were replicas of those that existed in the homeland of the colonial administrators and made no provision for small scale trading. However, small scale businessmen rapidly increased in number. In Singapore small scale traders had originally come into existence as a function of the division of labour in a migrant population largely engaged in commercial activities, more specifically the entrepot trade. The largely male immigrants employed in such occupations as shop assistants, apprentices, coolies and rickshaw pullers had their food requirements catered for by large numbers of cooked food traders operating in the streets. The increasing numbers of such traders culminated in the enactment of By-laws in October 1907 for the registration of traders who set up stalls in public streets (Singapore Municipality Administration Report 1907: 9). As the population continued to expand from the influx of migrants, and females began to arrive in larger numbers particularly during the period 1934 - 38 after the imposition of a monthly quota on male migrants in 1933 (Singapore '76: 66), the demand for prepared food traders increased and simultaneously with the establishment of permanent households there were increasing

demands for traders of raw commodities like meat, fish, and vegetables. The rapid increase in the number of small scale traders after World War II led to the setting up of the Hawkers Inquiry Commission in 1950 (Report 1950). Among its recommendations which were acted upon were the establishment of fixed pitches and the judicious siting of shelters for traders. But the official attitude remained negative and traders who were not registered were frequently harassed, their premises raided and fines imposed. It was only after 1959 that a more accommodating and positive approach was adopted.

Since the 1960s small scale trading has been recognized by the authorities as an important feature of the Singaporean way of life: eating out is common (see Tan 1975: 196; Wong 1974: 22; Yeh 1972: 46 - 48) and there is a preference for freshly slaughtered in contrast to chilled or frozen meat. Small scale traders are seen to have an important role in the country's economic development and commodity distribution process. They provide food and other commodities at relatively lower prices, because of lower overheads, than the supermarkets and related distributive channels. Yeung observed that with Singapore's thriving entrepot trade, small scale traders provide a convenient avenue for the disposal of 'broken cargoes' to the benefit of all parties (1976: 156). Small scale trading is also observed to provide employment for people with little or no education and who are unable to find employment in Singapore's manufacturing industries requiring a certain level of skills. In addition, in certain parts of the central city area where poor cooking and housing facilities exist, prepared food traders provide important services (Wong 1974: 22). Likewise cheap food produced in the small scale sector of the economy is an important element in the survival of the urban worker on low

wages, and for the large scale sector as a whole, a crucial consideration is the fact that the supply of cheap services reduces the pressure on wages by industrial workers. So small scale traders have come to be seen in important cultural, economic and social terms. As a result steps have been taken to accommodate them within the wider marketing system.

Major changes affecting small scale traders were instituted in the 1960s and 1970s, coinciding with the period of rapid economic development and the introduction of public housing programmes on a national scale. Plans for development projects such as multi-storey office complexes and factories were required to provide canteens on the premises to accommodate prepared food traders; this arrangement helps to accommodate the large numbers of registered street traders and simultaneously combats rising food prices. As for housing projects, public marketplaces and cooked food centres are built on all new housing estates. As a preliminary to the Hawkers Reorganization Programme, a Hawkers Code was introduced at the end of 1965 to register traders and to eliminate uncontrolled trading. The whole project was to be a long term one as large numbers of traders are involved: there are planning requirements, building of premises, and relocation is dependant on the availability of new sites for building. In December 1968 all 'bona fide' traders who were Singapore citizens were enumerated and registered. There were 24,845 'static' traders, 7,711 who operated within marketplaces and centres, and 17,000 itinerant ones plying in streets, backlanes and footways (Chan 1976: 63). As a temporary measure 'holding' operations were begun so that by 1975 most street traders were relocated at suitable sites where their operations are controlled

and where facilities like water and washing areas are provided.³ The long-term policy is to house all traders in permanent establishments such as marketplaces and food centres. In order for this mammoth project to be achieved stringent measures were enforced: no new traders are to take the place of those who have been relocated, and the issue of licences has been severely curtailed. I will discuss the significance of these measures in due course but what I want to emphasize here is that the result is the rapid decline of the marketing population in the past decade: in 1968 there were 49,556 petty traders but only some 25,000 in 1978 (Singapore Bulletin Vol. 6 no. 5 January 1978).

The implementation of the age legislation

For the grant of a small scale trader's licence the eligibility conditions are, singly or in different combinations, age, citizenship, physical handicaps, and financial hardships. In other words small scale trading is in the process of being transformed from an occupation whereby the poorer people with ambitions for entrepreneurial activity establish entry to a 'social security' occupation. This form of restrictive licensing operates to curtail the expansion of trader numbers and equally significant, refuses licences to people under forty years of age. This latter stipulation has its origins in the period of rapid economic growth from 1968 to 1973 (Singapore '76: 9) when Singapore's fast expanding industrial development brought about an acute shortage of skilled and semi-skilled workers.⁴ To solve this urgent problem the Labour Ministry liberally issued work-permits to foreigners (largely Malaysians) so that by June 1971, 55,800 such permits had been issued. In addition temporary permits on a month-to-month basis in the form of block permits were issued to non-citizens

engaged as construction workers and there were 10,000 such workers (Wong 1974: 20). The migration of Malaysians to Singapore is in fact advantageous to both countries: Malaysia gets rid of its surplus population which will be sending home its savings, while Singapore is supplied with workers for the jobs none of the indigenous population wants to do any more. Because there is a profitable exchange of services both countries therefore complement each other's needs. But the advantages may be outweighed by disadvantages. The heavy dependence on foreign labour brings with it other problems: increasing demand for housing, health services, and other public services. Also to accept workers only for jobs which the local people do not want usually means that these are the heavy, poorly paid jobs. Not only will immigrant labour depress wages, in addition the expansion of the size of the lower classes will surely contribute to political unrest in the long run.⁵ The result was that all able-bodied persons under forty years of age were refused licences to trade and encouraged instead to seek employment in the building construction and industrial sectors. In 1971 a cabinet Minister who was the then vice-chancellor of the University of Singapore told me in an interview that if all the small scale traders were to abandon their occupation and join the industrial and construction sectors, Singapore would not face a shortage of labour. He clearly sees small scale commodity traders as a reserve army of labour. But as I have shown in a previous study the motivations for trading are numerous: the more important are being their own masters, receiving incomes higher than that of industrial workers, and not subject to the rigid routine of industrial work (Wong 1974: 112 - 151). Traders in Bukit Timah assert that they are aware of relatives and friends who fulfil most of the new requirements for licences but

whose applications are always rejected. Tan-Kang's study of the administration of public laws affecting small scale traders showed that in 1975, of the 3,206 persons who claimed to be in financial hardships or suffering from physical handicaps who applied for licences, 937 applicants or 29 per cent were successful; in 1976 only 16 per cent (88 out of 558) of the applicants were successful (1978: 6). Over the same period travelling night markets were rapidly being phased out and according to official sources, the policy is to remove them to permanent establishments as they are a source of traffic obstruction and environmental pollution. Simultaneously temporary licences issued to traders accompanying Chinese theatre troupes were no longer issued. Restrictive controls have contrasting but significant effects for the current traders at public and private marketplaces as Bukit Timah will illustrate.

The Government has unwittingly legislated for the protection of the economic interests of the currently licensed operators, unlike for example Kenya, where restrictive licensing is consciously adopted as part of the country's Kenyanization policy (ILO 1972: 204 - 206). The legal strictures controlling the proliferation of small scale traders in Singapore have long-term significance; fewer persons entering this occupation means greater earnings for the existing traders. This is applicable to virtually all public marketplaces and food centres although as we have previously seen, the New Market is clearly not typical. Nonetheless for the vast majority of the traders operating at sites controlled by the public authority, trading thereby becomes increasingly attractive in the long run and ironically ensures the persistence of this occupation. The viability of small scale business is further enhanced as Singapore's national income rises and the

people enjoy a higher standard of living. These changes have contributed to a change in life styles, and large increases in private and public expenditure. For example the total private consumption expenditure more than doubled between 1968 and 1975; it was \$3,179.7 million and \$8,281.7 million respectively (Singapore '76: 252 - 253). As we previously saw, although Singapore was also caught in the world-wide economic recession in 1974, its economic growth has otherwise been consistently high. To recapitulate, the simple average economic growth rate was 10 per cent for the 1960s, between 1970 and 1973 the nation experienced an annual growth rate of 13 per cent, and in the mid-1970s the annual growth rates were between 6 to 8 per cent. These figures far exceed the corresponding population growth rate of 1.3 per cent in 1975. When these statistics are viewed against a stable consumer price index between 1960 and 1973 (see Monthly Digest of Statistics 1972: 109; Singapore '76: 246), the high growth rates of private expenditure represent real gains and not inflation. Furthermore the higher standard of living can be gauged from the following: in 1977 one in seven persons had a television set in contrast to one out of every 29 persons in 1965, there is a telephone line to every six persons in 1977 compared with a line to every 22 persons in 1965, and there was one private car to every 16 persons in 1976 in contrast to one in every 18 persons in 1965 and the ratio would have been lower if not for the Government's restraints on car ownership introduced in 1975 (The Mirror, Singapore 13th March 1978: 4; Singapore '76: 191). So the higher the national income, the higher the consumer expenditure and the higher the demand for the services of small scale businessmen.

Yeung argued that changes in expenditure patterns also result from changes in the demographic structure (1967: 158 - 159). The

Singapore population is characterized by its youthfulness, a trend developed after World War II. In 1975 46 per cent of the population was aged nineteen and below. When this is translated into expenditure patterns, the young families usually spend more on food, clothes, and services, provisions specialized in by small scale traders, than on transportation, furniture, or housing. Finally with the large numbers of private automobiles and the reorganization of bus services for more direct routes (since August 1974)⁶ instead of the need to change buses, marketplaces and food centres in particular are able to cater to a wider public instead of confining demand to the primary service area of the trading establishment. Currently all new trading establishments have provision for the customer on wheels and for those without, it is not important because new sites are located usually with easy access to public transport. So in general the public marketing sector becomes increasingly attractive.

If not for the tight control on the expansion of the marketing sector the bandwagon effect would have operated and many more people from the poorer classes would have taken up small scale trading. However the channels are not entirely closed: whereas public marketplaces accommodate limited numbers of operators, private marketplaces are involuting. In other words private marketplaces have the capacity to absorb large numbers of traders. What is significant is that while traders in public marketplaces enjoy apparent prosperity, those in private marketplaces are forced to share the same economic pie with an increasing number of new traders. So while cut-throat competition is reduced in public marketplaces, informants claim that the increasing competition at private marketplaces may in contrast contribute to the poaching of clients, and the norms of behaviour that we previously saw

observed between traders may take on new significance or even collapse in the face of new changes. But Bukit Timah seems to be an exception; its marketplaces do not conform to this generalized model contrasting public and private marketplaces. We previously saw that while cooked food operators in the New Market enjoy reasonable business, the section where traders in raw commodities operate is virtually deserted. As for the private marketplaces in Bukit Timah, they may be overcrowded but informants claim that nonetheless they enjoy good business. In fact Bukit Timah on the whole is not typical because it is a neighbourhood where a public marketplace was established to compete with a long established private marketplace and equally significant, it is probably the only neighbourhood in Singapore with four different marketplaces clustered together.

Large numbers of traders have been and are still in the process of searching out available stalls in private marketplaces. At the grassroot level would-be entrepreneurs have realized that private marketplaces are the only avenues left for the establishment of marketing operations. It is only in private marketplaces where stalls may be acquired irrespective of citizenship, age and physical condition. The only eligibility conditions are money and opportunity. We previously saw that the increasing demand for business premises in BWM and BWTM is reflected in over-crowding and equally significant, the considerable sums of money involved when negotiating for rights to a stall. Whereas applicants for licences to operate in public marketplaces are carefully scrutinized and usually rejected, the usual procedure in private marketplaces is for a would-be operator to arrange to take over the premises of another, or arrange for a stall to be subdivided into two stalls, and the process then finalized by applying to

the marketplace owner together with a cash gift. This explains the wide range of the ages of these operators from 17 to 71 years and during the period of field work I observed three people in their early twenties setting up new enterprises. Hence the more stringent the licensing regulations are, the more the demand for stalls in private marketplaces.

The implementation of marketplace zoning

A rule that is closely adhered to in public marketplaces is the 'zoning' of the marketplace by product. So pork traders operate in the meat section (Muslims selling mutton have their own separate section away from pork), fish and fishballs in the fish section, fruits and vegetables in the vegetable section and so on. The main motive for this arrangement is orderliness but it has wider implications some of which have received analysis by Davis (1973). He wrote,

[Zoning] is an arbitrary restriction on the number of sellers of particular goods --- the obvious result is an infringement upon the free exercise of supply and demand: the number of sellers of particular products is fixed by administrative decision, not by the interplay of economic forces --- these arbitrary limitations imply high prices in those areas of the market in which the number of sellers is kept low relative to demand, and lower prices --- in those areas in which mobility is more nearly perfect (1973: 107).

Davis emphasized the economic considerations effected by stringent zoning measures but equally important are the social consequences which he neglected. The clustering of traders dealing in identical commodities contributes to the friction that arises because these traders are competing for the same customer. Informants indicated that traders in identical commodities located alongside one another are

either the worst of enemies or the most superficial of friends. What is of sociological significance is that while this is more evident in public marketplaces where in fact profits are increasing (with the exception of the raw commodity dealers at the New Market), such friction is less evident in private marketplaces where profits are declining because of the virtual absence of marketplace zoning. Traders operating alongside one another are often the most bitter of enemies and in certain marketplaces outside Bukit Timah, physical violence is not unheard of. However my observations, although admittedly impressionistic, are that violent outbreaks between competitors are more frequent in the newly established public markets where traders are strangers to one another than in old established marketplaces where traders, influenced by wider community considerations, observe norms of behaviour avoiding the open display of animosity. For example, competition is less evident in BWM and BWTM than in the New Market. In the latter as we previously saw, there was open friction when different groups of street traders were resited within premises; competition was intensive among traders of identical goods as each sought to establish a set of clients at the very outset because an inability to do so often means business failure.

So, the older the marketplace is the more likely that channels of communication and interaction have been established by the traders which serve to reduce the underlying antagonisms arising from competition among traders dealing in identical commodities. In addition to norms of behaviour these channels comprise the host of voluntary associations participated in by marketplace traders. The significance of these bodies for social relations in the economic and political organization of the marketplace traders in Bukit Timah have been

discussed. What I want to emphasize here in the context of marketplace zoning is that the involvement by traders in such social, moral and religious relations facilitates co-operation and intensifies interaction among its members so that any conflict arising from economic competition is ameliorated. In addition, any further differences among traders operating in long established marketplaces soon disappears in the wake of confrontation against an outsider, whether landlord, gangster, or State. Marketplace relationships are dynamic processes; even as peaceful arrangements follow from conflict situations, conflict may emerge following a period of calm.

The implementation of the Environmental Public Health Act 1968

All licensed traders operating in both public and private establishments are governed by a set of ordinances contained in the Environmental Public Health Act of 1968 which concerns issues like licences, hygiene, stall maintenance, and fees among others. And in 1973 the Environmental Public Health Food Handlers Regulations were implemented and all cooked food traders have since been required to be screened regularly for typhoid and other transmitted diseases. Consequently the By-laws for Municipal Markets of 1909, and the Rural Board (Market) By-laws of 1949 implemented during the colonial period have been revoked. A hierarchy of Public Health Officers ensures that all the rules are closely adhered to and in fact the 1968 Act brought about a period of regular harassment by public health officers. But even as gangster elements are wary of being investigated by the Criminal Investigation Bureau, public officials similarly dread investigation by the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau via the informal but powerful mechanism of anonymous letters. As far as I am aware the relationship between the traders and public officials in

charge of Bukit Timah is aboveboard. However in the Beauty World marketplaces the existence of informal links in fact averts graft: the marketplace owner advertizes to all visiting officials that her brother is a senior public health officer.

Small scale businessmen who commit offences under the 1968 Act are heavily fined:

- i) for a first offence, to a fine not exceeding one hundred and fifty dollars and to a further fine not exceeding fifty dollars for every day during which the offence is continued after conviction;
- ii) for a second offence, to a fine not exceeding five hundred dollars and to the like further fine; and
- iii) for a third or subsequent offence, to a fine not exceeding one thousand dollars and to the like further fine (Government Gazette, Subsidiary Legislation Supplement 1969: 7)

But more important when offenders are prosecuted, they either plead guilty or are found guilty (personal communication Tan-Kang), a reflection of the tight control of the marketing population by the State. The surge of activities by public health officers since the implementation of the 1968 Act had alarmed BWM and BWTM traders. Public health officers were empowered to issue fines and as inspections were intensified, Beauty World traders united and successfully petitioned through the HLA for inspections to take place only after 10 a.m. Their justification had been that they are far too busy especially during peak business hours to keep their stalls clean. Indeed the traders in BWM and BWTM have a peculiar system of depositing garbage and strangely enough have obtained official permission since 1973 to perpetuate it. Virtually all traders foul the marketplace apart from cooked food traders who use receptacles supplied by swill collectors. Traders throw offal, fish scales, faded vegetable and other unwanted things to the floor and after peak hours sweep such garbage to the

shallow drains around the marketplace. On one occasion I was taken aback when a pair of pig's lungs flew by my side; it had been tossed from the centre of the marketplace to land in an already cluttered drain. The drains are not cleaned until the evening by Indian labourers employed by the marketplace owner. Needless to add the stench emitted (under hot tropical conditions) when the labourers are at work stimulates spitting onto the market floor by traders and passersby.

In Bukit Timah the inspection of public marketplaces is more frequent than that of private marketplaces. In fact the Beauty World marketplaces appear to be avoided by health officers because of its informal link with a senior official, and equally important, open hostility shown by traders in the late sixties and early seventies when over eager public officers conscientiously implemented instructions and regulations from higher levels of authority instead of being 'reasonable'. The result is that operators in public marketplaces are more aware of the set of rules governing market activity because of the closer contact with public officers. In private marketplaces the rules are less clear and because traders in BWM and BWTM are not constantly reminded of the rules they become set in certain idiosyncracies. The result is whenever enforcement campaigns are revived in their establishments they are bitter and resentful and view the matter as yet another bureaucratic invention to hamper their activities. In a letter to me in November 1976, a fishmonger wrote that there was an outcry among the traders in Beauty World because public officers had given orders to stallholders to tidy up their stalls and dispose of boxes and crates projecting beyond the boundaries of stalls or occupying parts of passageways. These boxes frequently serve multiple purposes for storage and display, and more important some are sub-let as 'stalls' to lower level small scale traders and such action by the

authorities in fact jeopardizes the traders' livelihood. The traders will be forced into complying because of the power public officers have associated with their office. Depending on how serious the matter becomes the traders may again join forces to confront the authorities in another concerted effort to withstand State intervention in the internal organization of private marketplaces.

Confronting the policy makers

It is completely alien to the Government to consult with small scale traders before any policy regarding them is implemented. The Superintendent of the Hawkers and Markets Department explained in an interview that the formulation and especially implementation of policy will be delayed because of extended meetings and discussion with trader representatives. He said that the traders' representatives in the past represented sectional interests and not the universal interests of the nation's traders. Since 1963 there has been no representation at the national level and the authorities have governed the traders with virtually no resistance. We saw in the previous chapter that all hawker associations were banned in 1962. Under the auspices of the Barisan Sosialis, no less than three hawkers' organizations flourished; the Singapore Hawkers Union, the Singapore Itinerant Hawkers and Stall-holders Association, and the Association of Singapore Hawkers, with a reported membership of 14,000 (Chan 1976: 181). These organizations fought for lower market and licensing fees, for more night markets, and provided legal assistance and instruction in modern co-operative marketing techniques to members. They ran night schools but political instruction and agitation were the paramount goals. The associations were dissolved by the Singapore

Government in October 1963 on the grounds that they were fronts for the underground communist apparatus. One of the conclusions that Chan drew which has particular relevance here is that Government authorities currently discourage 'a conflict and bargaining ethos' and instead nurture a petitionary one as the way to approach a 'paternalistic political authority' (1976: 232). The marketplace traders, like the rest of the population, have conformed. To express and petition their requests to the authorities, people nominate or elect spokesmen from among themselves. As for traders they are organized by street sections or by marketplace and each section or marketplace has its own spokesmen. These spokesmen are sometimes the same as the Seventh Moon committee. In Bukit Timah the spokesmen for BWM and BWTM are not synonymous with the committee for religious activities whereas that of the New Market are. To explain the stifling of tendencies to display any aggressive opposition or the rejection of authority among the people in Singapore now, Chan resorted to psychological factors. She argued that the Chinese population have been reared in the Chinese cultural tradition shaped predominantly by Confucian political philosophy which emphasizes deference to authority and stresses filial piety as the basis of superior-subordinate relations (1976: 232). But the point that Chan has altogether overlooked is that there had been opposition in the past notwithstanding Confucian ideology. The events in Bukit Timah illustrate that the main reason for the curbing and virtual disappearance of resistance may well be because the lower classes have been coopted by the Government, and in Bukit Timah one from their ranks is the local Member of Parliament. Bukit Timah had been a Barisan Sosialis stronghold. Lim Chin Siong, one of the founder-leaders of the PAP and later founder of the Barisan Sosialis was Bukit Timah's first Member of Parliament in 1955. Shortly after

he was detained as the English-educated non-communist nationalists of the PAP consolidated their position within the party. He was succeeded by a PAP candidate between 1959 and 1963 but Bukit Timah constituency was captured by a Barisan Sosialis candidate in 1963. However from 1966 until now the PAP candidate Chor Yeok Eng has been in office. Chor is a Bukit Timah man, having lived and worked there all his life. Similarly his wife: during her younger days she attended Seh Chuan School and assisted her parents' marketplace trade. Chor was a carpenter and associated closely with marketplace traders. Informants described him as having grown up together with them in the same community and claimed that they had contributed in no small way to his political success, forming the backbone of his supporters. Chor is not only the Member of Parliament for Bukit Timah but is also the Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Environment whose portfolio includes the control of the Hawkers and Markets Department. His wife remains close to the grassroots because she helps at her best friend's vegetable stall at BWTM every morning. In Bukit Timah the PAP nurtured a local man to fight their powerful political opponents, and he brought into the party the Chinese educated lower classes. The lower classes and especially the marketplace traders perceive him as a powerful ally who can represent their interests. He is also a leader with whom they can relate on familiar and friendly terms. What is of sociological significance is that through Chor marketplace traders are informally linked to the higher levels of authority. Through this political link traders can achieve some of their requirements. A recent incident illustrates how this had worked in Bukit Timah. The eleven victims of the fire of 1975 had been prohibited from rebuilding or operating on

the same site because it had been claimed by the State. Through the intervention of Chor, the structures which were in fact rebuilt by their respective owners soon after the fire were not demolished and traders resumed operations unharassed by the authorities concerned. A politically powerful patron must find it to his advantage to meet some of the demands of his clients from time to time to ensure continual support.

The system of local level representation among marketplaces in Bukit Timah is in fact complex. In the Beauty World marketplaces we have previously seen that the interests of the traders are represented by the HLA. We also saw that the strength of the HLA has declined compared to its earlier years. In 1976 the tiny voice of the HLA was superseded by that of the BW TSA. The shopkeepers' association is a group of more established businessmen, men with large scale business concerns relative to marketplace stallholders, and also men with political influence. In addition to powerful patrons among their honorary members, their advisors are the chairman of the CCC and the Member of Parliament. With such powerful ties, the voice of the shopkeepers is heard and two of their representatives meet regularly with the city planners in the face of imminent relocation. It is onto this bandwagon that the HLA has jumped because it has little access to the administrative machinery.

Some 350 stallholders, shopkeepers and tenants of Beauty World estate are now represented by the previously mentioned ad hoc Beauty World Residents' Resettlement Working Committee. The committee submitted a joint memorandum to their Member of Parliament in May 1976

to petition to be temporarily resettled in a nearby transit centre before development of the estate and also asked to be given priority to return and reside in flats of their choice after development (The Straits Times 24th May 1976). Until the end of field work the one main fear of the traders had yet to be allayed, the fear that they could be relocated permanently out of Bukit Timah and their original sites taken by other businessmen. A change in location threatens not only the economic organization of the traders but also the complex social, religious and political institutions that altogether have taken some three decades to establish (see chapter five). The flow of trade, the organization of credit and trust relations, the support of Seh Chuan High School by the trading community, plus the large number of voluntary and religious organizations organized and supported by traders are all in danger of being undermined. The worst that can happen to this large group of traders is for them to be fragmented and dispersed into separate commercial districts; their economic, social, religious and political bonds would dissolve. Highly aware of this danger they are appealing to stay together. The traders are grateful that the authorities currently seem to be cooperative but simultaneously are aware that the wool may still be pulled over their eyes. Chan (1976: 181 - 182) described how 150 stalls were moved out of the Boat Quay area in the Central City Area of Singapore. The Government authorities were prepared to accommodate 100 only in a proposed new hawker pitch. The local CCC for the area launched into a series of negotiations with the relevant Government departments but very quickly realized that the Government officers would under no circumstances increase the number of 100. The CCC adopted the strategy of informing the hawkers that the Government was prepared to accommodate

only 70 stalls and that they were haggling fiercely to increase the number. The CCC leaders after at least twenty meetings over a period of four months with the bureaucrats finally informed the hawkers that the bureaucracy agreed to accommodate 100 stalls. The hawkers were fairly relieved and pleased with the settlement. Those who were not accommodated in the same location were placed in the side streets. Gamer (1972) argued that in Singapore all who stand in the way of national development projects are usually 'bull-dozed' out of the way. So the traders in Bukit Timah, despite their links with a Member of Parliament are unable to determine the outcome of their predicament. While the Member of Parliament meets requests concerning local level issues, on national issues like redevelopment, local interests are waived in favour of national interests. As for the traders themselves, having lost their strength as a pressure group since their unions have been deregistered, they are even less able to affect national development policies.

Whereas the requests of Beauty World traders have customarily been in the form of group petition, the interests of traders in the New Market were for a time channelled through one trader selected by the public health officer in charge of Bukit Timah marketplaces. The arrangement was novel but short-lived; a group of men representing the interests of its members is the traditional form of leadership among the Chinese community.

The traders accommodated in the New Market originally came from three different street markets. Each had its own committee for the Hungry Ghost festivities and the same committees had previously

dealt with the authorities on behalf of their respective members. During the early months there was a struggle for power and control over the marketplace that was symbolized by the struggle to control the Hungry Ghost festivities. There was a movement to centralize the annual celebration and a series of negotiations were launched to amalgamate the three different committees and to delegate offices. A settlement was arrived at on most matters including dates, amount of subscription, the delegation of duties and so on, except for one crucial matter. The chief spokesman of the smallest group of traders (eleven stallholders) insisted on sole control of finances. This request alarmed the other negotiators who have customarily distributed the care of funds among a score or so men on their respective committees. In the final stage the smallest group under Lee's (the same man associated with the NHAM & DA) leadership organized its own celebrations separate from that jointly held by the other two groups. The disputes and accusations had led to what appears to be a permanent internal cleavage in the organization of the New Market traders manifested in two Hungry Ghost celebrations at two different times under two different leaderships.

Even as the struggle for power was going on, traders were encountering many other problems in the process of settling into their new environment. With the uncertainty over the leadership structure the public officer in charge encountered difficulty disseminating regulations. Among the few traders who interacted with the officer, largely members of the three committees, Lee made the most impression. He was delegated to be the marketplace spokesman. Lee's influence in the marketplace is attributed to wealth and his strange network of unorthodox connections with many people within and outside Bukit Timah. Lee no longer operates his fried noodles stall which in recent years

had been transferred to his wife. His daily activities are now centered at the premises of the NHAM & DA of which he is responsible. Besides participating in book-making activities, he operates a small pawn business for people in urgent need of small amounts of cash. Although the premises of the NHAM & DA are strictly for aesthetic pursuits, gambling is a daily occurrence at the rear of the premises. A trader cum collector of illegal lottery tickets told me that she is reluctant to visit the premises although many of her lottery clients may be located there because a detective in the police force frequents the place. Lee is also a secret society leader although towards the end of field work his popularity had declined because funds contributed to the society through the Hungry Ghost festival were appropriated for his personal use instead of sharing them with fellow members. With regards to his nomination as the New Market spokesman, what is important sociologically is that apart from traders being a source of anxiety to the authorities, it is essential for someone to liaise with traders through whom a number of administrative functions that are necessary for the continuity of the marketplace are maintained. The authorities believed that traders can be controlled by forcing an individual trader upon them who in turn is under the authority of the public officers.

For the authorities Lee's new role served two purposes: to express the needs of the traders, and for the authorities to achieve communication with traders. Through the use of representation the authorities sought to remove the fear of contact with the authorities and equally important, these channels operate to soften the harshness of policy measures. This system of communication is in fact a miniature replica of the nation's political apparatus whereby local level community leaders are co-opted into Government sponsored CCCs

and MCs to mediate between the governors and the governed (see chapter five). But where members of these latter committees are carefully screened for secret society connections, Lee's connections are seen as assets by the official in charge of the New Market for the effective supervision of marketplace traders many of whom are themselves associated with clandestine organizations.

Lee's new role necessarily increased his contact with the public officer but it brought its own problems. Many accusations were hurled at both men. Lee's integrity became suspect and suffered more serious damage when it was discovered he got commissions for equipment purchased on behalf of the traders. In March 1976 he 'resigned'. Until the end of field work he has not been replaced. The officer in charge was amused when I asked whether he had considered a female. Although women have shown themselves to be shrewd businesswomen, we have seen that in public matters they are relegated to the background. This situation contrasts sharply with Lagos market women. Baker observed that they are highly organized, socially cohesive, and probably the most class-conscious occupational group in the city (1974: 223). She demonstrated that there is also public awareness of their collective potential strength which could be marshalled for political protest, electoral victory or material support, and Government and political parties alike are sensitive to the reactions of market women to major political programmes and adjust their policies and strategies accordingly. In contrast, in overseas Chinese communities leadership has always been assumed by a committee of men. Instead of replacing Lee with another individual in the New Market the officer should confirm the authority status of the newly emerged Seventh Moon

committee. This committee is made up of middle aged and elderly, well established stallholders who have built for themselves an effective network of social relationships in their own right. Such a committee would be in a powerful position to liaise between traders and public authority, especially when it has popular support. For the Chinese, power concentrated in the hands of a particular individual is suspect but widely accepted when shared among a few individuals; it is a device preventing self-interested individuals from manipulating situations to their private advantage.

Public authority and prices

Another area where the public authority has attempted to induce modifications is in prices, although the distribution sector, from import-export establishments to marketplace concerns, has always been in private hands. This situation is radically different from several African countries attempting to bring about economic development. Berg (1968) showed that these countries, for example Guinea and Tanzania, motivated by socialist ideology, has transferred the distribution sector from private hands to State directed trading organizations. But because political and cultural factors hinder economically rational public sector decision-making and management, the result of the socialist model of development caused shortages, poor quality goods, long queues and black markets. In Singapore its prosperity is a direct attribute of free market capitalism. So Government intervention with respect to prices only takes two forms. The first measure taken by the Department of Trade to curb the inflationary trends started in 1973 on a worldwide level is to keep a surveillance on essential commodities. In this respect the semi-Government international trading company, Intraco,

helps to keep the price of rice stable by managing the Government's rice stockpile and the retail price is effectively set by the chain of eleven (The Straits Times 25th April 1979) supermarkets operated by the Government controlled National Trades Union Congress. The dependence on imported commodities subordinates traders to the changing requirements of the world market over which they cannot exercise control, and to the exactions of the importers and distributors (producers in the case of pork) on whom they rely for supplies in their operations (see Williams 1974: 123). In a free market system these politically induced actions can still contribute to the constraint of the forces of supply and demand from being given free rein in price formation. The result is a fairly stable consumer price index over the past decade and inflation is well under control at five per cent.

The second form of Government intervention is moral but in fact achieves little. When food prices escalated in 1973 (Table 3),

Table 3 The Singapore Consumer Price Index for Food

1960 = 100

Year	Index
1967	114.3
1968	114.6
1969	112.2
1970	111.5
1971	114.3
1972 (January)	115.2

1972 = 100

1973	131.4
1974	165.1
1975	166.9
1976 (January to August)	157.6

Sources: Monthly Digest of Statistics, Singapore Vol. XI no.3, March 1972: 109; Singapore '76:246.

small scale traders were the targets of moral pressure by various Ministers and Members of Parliament to reduce prices and not make excessive profits. The campaign was still very much alive in 1976, and during the official opening of the New Market the Member of Parliament for Bukit Timah reiterated the appeal for 'reasonable' prices (The Straits Times 29th March 1976). Consumer awareness is also promoted. The press, the television and radio networks give wide publicity to food establishments and marketplaces offering attractive prices. However in lesser markets that I have observed, the usual defence by the traders unable to sell at more competitive prices is that the prices quoted over the mass media are always a day old and customers are made to appear ridiculous in citing prices of the previous day for the following day's stocks. So for these people bargains are only to be obtained at higher transport costs at the recommended markets.

Licensing

In his analysis of imposed law in the containment of Papua New Guinean economic ventures Fitzpatrick distinguishes two types of licensing: 'restrictive' licensing where getting the licence depends on some sort of official discretion and where the explicit aim is to restrict the number of licences, and 'standards' licensing where getting the licence depends on meeting certain conditions and the explicit or ostensible aim is not restriction (1978: 3). Translated into the Singapore context, licensing policies are restrictive and standards in this sense are not stipulated. As we have seen, apart from citizenship, age, physical and financial conditions, licences are not limited to operators with a certain minimum amount of capital and

economies of scale are not fostered among licensees; nor are licence fees so prohibitive. In contrast the Hong Kong Government for example, charges an allocation fee of HK\$50 per annum for pitches less than 12 square feet (1.1m)² and HK\$500 per annum for pitches above this size in addition to licence fees. The effect of this policy is to discourage the physical expansion of trading operations and increase illegal selling instead: discouraged from operating at permanent sites because of high overheads, traders are encouraged to be mobile and this in turn increases the costs of enforcement. In addition because the average actual operating size of street stalls is 20.2 square feet (1.8m)² most traders have to pay large allocation fees. For some traders the allocation fees represent well over one month's income and the infringement of these laws entail fines of over HK\$500 which altogether increases the possibility of corruption (McGee and Yeung 1977: 57). The situation in Singapore is different: small scale trading is being phased out through restrictive licensing processes.

In all Southeast Asian cities controls are enforced even by the Governments maintaining the most permissive policies towards small scale traders. City authorities find this necessary for the alternative is chaos. On the other hand the enforcement officers themselves constitute a self perpetuating group and are difficult to disband: their authority over the large numbers of small scale traders could be a useful source of income, a common characteristic of Third World countries. In Manila, traders need a licence to operate within the city except those who sell only native vegetables, fruits, or goods personally carried by the pedlars. In Jakarta there is in theory no licensing system; instead, market vendors buy tickets to operate daily. The justification for licensing in all these cities is to

enable the trading population to be identified, and therefore a method of limiting their numbers. It is also a method of enforcing and maintaining standards of hygiene (both personal and environmental), of locating traders in certain areas and prohibiting them from others, and a source of revenue. The Singapore Government, like her counterparts in the other Southeast Asian cities, adopts sliding fee scales that vary with the commodity dealt in and the location of the marketplace. For instance we previously saw that a stallholder selling locally slaughtered meat pays a licence fee of \$25 a month if he is operating in a Class A market and \$20 a month if operating in a Class B market, and a vegetable stallholder operating in a Class A market pays \$15 in contrast to \$10 paid by another operating in a Class B market. The fees of small scale traders are classifiable into eight categories ranging from \$10 a month to \$60 a month. But in January 1978 licence fees were increased ranging from \$5 to \$60 per month calibrated to increase with profit margins of different commodities and sales: retail vegetable licences whose commodities are perishable and less profitable pay less than the cooked food, fruit and piece and sundry goods traders (The Singapore Bulletin Vol. 6 no. 5 January 1978: 8). As there is no way of checking up on their income, small scale traders are taxed indirectly through increasingly higher licensing fees. In place of the monthly collection traders have been forced into a three-months advance fee payment since 1970. In fact these licence fees raise limited revenue, only about half (\$2.8 million in 1977) of the budget of \$5 million invested per annum since 1972 in building establishments for operators.⁷ So investing large sums into permanent establishments for traders seems to be a waste of public funds but comprehensible because the short term policy is to identify and control them and in the long run, an occupational group that has previously been differentiated from the rest of the population can easily be legislated out of existence.

Conclusion

Small scale trading is a distinctive occupational category. The large numbers and the tendency for traders to operate in areas with maximum pedestrian flow call attention to themselves. They were then subjected to innumerable policy measures ranging from getting rid of them to the current policy of recognizing them as assets contributing to the efficient functioning of the market distribution system and complementary to the capital intensive large scale economic sector. But the policy is in fact ambivalent: in spite of the more recent positive approach, stringent controls are enforced on small scale trading with the result that the number of small scale traders has rapidly declined.

Small scale marketing arrangements are not inefficient or unnecessarily repetitious because they break bulk and bring goods to as near to consumers as possible: they have emerged in response to the demand by producers, wholesalers, distributors and more importantly consumers, for the essential services they perform. The marketplace trader is essential to the distributive process as it is presently constituted. However the State does not regard crowded marketplaces and large numbers of sellers an efficient and flexible response to the needs of its modern industrial economy. On the contrary it feels that scale economies (what Hart has termed the classic capitalist means of achieving reduced production costs (1975: 12) and rationalization resulting from large scale enterprise are more consistent with its economic development; that is, entrusting the marketing tasks to few and bigger but western style establishments such as supermarkets and

shopping emporiums. This orientation has been evident since 1971 when the Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew warned small scale traders and shopkeepers to get together to organize their own supermarkets or that they will find it increasingly difficult to compete with the increasing number of supermarkets and lose out instead (The Straits Times 7th July 1971). Even though marketplace trading may be small scale characterized by low output and so contribute little to the country's economy, nevertheless it provides jobs and income to a large number of the poor which in turn reduces the potential for civil strife which long-term unemployment may precipitate. But it is precisely because more labour is utilized than is required to accomplish marketing tasks that the State has intervened: labour is a scarce resource and this resource is regarded as faultily allocated since the resource is misused consumed in one activity when it would yield a higher real return if employed in the more productive industrial sector.

In Singapore the capital intensive industrial sector of the economy is the target for development and not the small scale trading and service sector. There is growing evidence that the marketing sector is increasingly undermanned. Yeh's study of residents in public housing estates revealed that one in four households strongly indicated that the number of small scale traders in the housing estates is not enough to cater for all the households living in these estates (1972: 47 - 48). So the State does not allow the small scale trade sector to absorb more people even though it has the capacity to but it should consider replenishing it now instead of decimating it because it serves a useful function for both the trader and the consumer. In a previous

study I (1974) suggested that the less academically inclined and school drop outs be considered for small scale trade because they lack skills and paper qualifications required of most other occupations. But in 1975 the Ministry of Education took steps to lengthen the primary education of pupils who are less academically inclined to teach them some basic skills for employment in lower level manufacturing industries. The less educated have also become a reserve providing cheap and abundant labour to power the factories and also to provide complementary services and ancillary manufacturing in the process of Singapore's economic development. In other words all categories of people are prepared for the different types of jobs created by a complex, capitalist production system. All the indications are that small scale traders may be reduced to relics of Singapore's occupational past because her political and social institutions have been shaped to serve the needs of the capitalist mode of production. These processes constitute the dynamic of the situation of dependency in Singapore.

Footnotes

- 1 The following cities were studied: Singapore, Hong Kong, Manila, Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta, and the three provincial cities of Baguio, Malacca and Bandung.
- 2 Personal communication by bank official who attended the Hawkers Conference in Kuala Lumpur from 23 to 26 September 1975 which was jointly hosted by the Mayor of Kuala Lumpur and the International Development Research Centre.
- 3 By March 1978 there were only 8,700 traders plying in the streets (The Straits Times 18th March 1978: 8).
- 4 The Commissioner of Public Health wrote,

licensing priority will be accorded to those who are handicapped and those who are above the age of 40 years. There is already the problem of shortage of manpower in Singapore and all able-bodied citizens who are under 40 years of age will, therefore, be discouraged from becoming hawkers (Koh 1975: 5).
- 5 Currently there are signs that secret society elements have inadvertently been recruited from Malaysia in Singapore's drive for scarce labour.
- 6 Government officials helped to reorganize the four private bus companies into the Singapore Bus Services to improve the public transportation system.
- 7 The increases in licence fees in January 1978 was expected to increase the revenue to some \$5.7 million per annum, an increase of more than 100 per cent. In the meantime building costs have also escalated.

Conclusion

Singapore's economic structure is integrated into the international capitalist economy. Materials for industries, for consumer goods, and for trade are shipped in from all over the world. And to generate investment, wages are kept low and this in fact would not eradicate poverty but for the stringent family planning measures which enable the State to save and reinvest. Singapore's economic prosperity has been shaped by capitalist expansion but in the final analysis its chosen development path is inevitable; a situation it cannot evade because of the small size of the Island Republic and its lack of natural resources. In other words Singapore's strategy for economic development is predetermined by its position within Southeast Asia and with the world economic system. These external factors together with internal governmental forces determine the direction of growth. In this system we have previously seen that the capitalist powers require raw materials and cheap labour and in turn a market for its manufactures. So dependent on western capitalism, its labour is subordinate to metropolitan interests. Ironically even as Singapore is fostering diversification of its economy, it is centralizing its labour force. But more importantly this strategy has led to its economic success, private investment in production, a higher standard of living, general prosperity and minimum inflation. To this end the State regulates the relations of workers and employers and creates the conditions for a stable industrialization. But its involvement in the world economy is about to eliminate indigenous production and distribution through the substitution of capitalist techniques of modernization and capitalist goods: the industrial expansion is leading to the dispossession of the little businessman.

Roberts argued that State intervention in the economy is greater in the underdeveloped world than it was in the advanced world at the time of its economic development (1978: 132). This intervention is also of a qualitatively different kind in contemporary underdeveloped countries to that of the State in developed countries: the State in underdeveloped countries invests a major part of its funds directly in economic enterprise. As we have previously seen, in Singapore these range from works of economic infrastructure such as communications and housing to direct investment in industries such as shipbuilding. As the State has taken on the prime responsibility for sponsoring economic development, so too has the employment structure been shifted as it pursues industrial development, a change that Marxist writers would characterize as serving the interests of capitalists.

Using data from Latin American countries Roberts showed that State economic intervention creates the basis for the relatively dynamic relationship between the large and small scale sectors of the urban economy (1978: 133). So capital is reserved for the most profitable economic activities with little of it 'wasted' on services not closely connected with the large scale sector of production. In this developmental strategy, potential manpower for the small scale sector is displaced to the large scale sector of the economy. In other words the problem of developing Singapore's economy is less economic than political. Sufficient labour has to be secured for the expansion of industrialization and so various controls are necessary to secure such labour which curtailed the expansion of the tertiary sector, particularly small scale commodity trading. For these reasons writers like Buchanan have argued that Singapore's achievements have

been at the expense of integral and broadly based development, especially at the 'grass-roots' level of society and economy (1972: 104). The decline of small scale commodity traders increases dependence on modern marketing establishments even by the poorest classes which in turn raises the cost of living. This might increase economic misery rather than end it. Small scale traders are unable to do anything about their own situation as their representatives are only 'public relations officers'.

How has the urban ruling class, the PAP Government and its agencies been able to get away with all this? The answer lies in a combination of ineffective domestic opposition, the penetration and mobilization of grassroots organizations, the enactment of controls, and the fundamental fact that Singapore is dependent upon entrepot trade and industry. The vast majority of the populace is directly or indirectly dependent upon trade, industry, and urban services for their livelihood. Gamer (1972) had observed that in Singapore no Government, left, right, or centre, could survive politically if it seemed to be inhibiting trade and manufacturing. Hence even as the mass of Singaporean urban workers remained passive when the Government instituted several measures antagonistic to the workers without meeting effective resistance, so small scale commodity traders are virtually standing by and allowing the ruling elites to increase their control over the population. The State-made industrial working class has come to dominate the class structure which traditionally has been heavily tertiary. And what is of sociological significance is that the mass of Singapore's population including the poor man is deferring to the leadership of big businessmen and of the bureaucrats who carry out public projects with them. In similar vein Williams (1974) discusses the relationship between clientship relations and the neutralization

of political radicalism among Ibadan's poor. But in contrast, political stability has contributed to Singapore's economic development and the PAP has been able to deliver a higher standard of living to much of the population.

In Singapore the small scale economic sector is characterized by competitive capitalism present in small- and medium-sized firms; self-employment in a variety of activities such as the retail of pork, fish, vegetables and provisions; and family enterprise relying on the intensive exploitation of family members. It is not an expression of low standards of living, part of slum life, or an attempt to cope with poverty.

Marketplace entrepreneurship is based on developing organization through personal relationships and trust. Bonds of kinship, friendship and kow-kwan all establish enduring social relationships which in the market situation are advantageous as they ensure more predictable market conditions. These relationships operate to reduce fluctuations in supply and demand, avoid over-stocking, and reduce the possibility of having to sell under distress conditions. These strategies of social attachment limit competition, reduce risks, and are important elements in the dynamics of the small scale sector; and, those who operate within it are compelled to seek actively for new contacts to maintain and expand their businesses. In the marketplace personalistic relationships operate in the absence of contractual legal systems.

In the small scale economic sector traders are able to keep their children in subordinate positions within the family even after

marriage because both father and son/s have a common long term interest in increasing the value of their business. Hence parents who have something to offer are not rebelled against. But old age causes the father to lose authority as a result of the changed balance of family power. In the small scale sector age is the crucial source of change giving the young an ability for decision making and control of finances previously under the elders' control. And the loss of autonomy over business with age is concomitant with the loss of authority within the family. Paternal authority is not unique to the small scale sector. Wan's study of the business ideologies of Chinese managers of manufacturing firms in Singapore found that older, less educated, Chinese-stream managers expect their subordinates to be loyal, show respect to their superiors, and more importantly should not question the authority of their superiors (1976: 150). As for the superiors it is their responsibility to guide and look after their subordinates' work and general welfare, respectively. Wan also makes the point that industrial democracy in Chinese firms is not necessarily seen in terms of workers' joint decision making within the firm; it is revealed in the personal relationships and informal contacts which the paternalistic employers have with their subordinates and which give the subordinates a sense of importance within the firm. While there is evidence that paternal authority is declining in the large scale manufacturing sector with increasing numbers of western educated personnel filling managerial roles, the traditional values of respect and obedience to elders and a reciprocal sense of responsibility and obligations to one's son/s or coolies remains deeply entrenched in the small scale marketplace sector.

Traditional family forms among marketplace traders have acquired a new and vigorous content during Singapore's economic

development. Goode observed that wherever the economic system expands through industrialization, family patterns change; extended kinship ties weaken, lineage patterns dissolve, and a trend toward some form of the conjugal system generally begins to appear, that is the nuclear family becomes a more independent kinship unit (1963: 6). But for Singapore this generalization requires qualification. Citing Census figures for 1957, Kuo and Wong showed that the 'one family nucleus' households accounted for 70 per cent of the total number of households enumerated as compared to 22 per cent of households classified as 'more than one family nucleus' households (1979: 7). In other words the nuclear family was already the norm of family living before Singapore became industrialized. But the study of marketplace traders have shown that this occupational group is in fact divorced from the general population economically, politically, socially and religiously. So with regards to family patterns, extended households are characteristic of marketplace traders and the study of Bukit Timah marketplace traders is a study of the process of adaptation of traditional household patterns to social, economic and political changes over the past two decades.

The extended family of marketplace traders today is composed of nuclear families, extended by sons as well as by daughters, bound together by affectional ties on an equalitarian basis and functions to facilitate the achievement and mobility drives of its component member families and individuals. Such extended family relationships provide maximum economic resources and important lines of communication and socialization for the marketplace trader and his own domestic unit. In fact active patterns of kinship interaction are carried on between a relatively small and circumscribed group of relatives, both agnatic

and conjugal; in many instances almost exclusively between married offspring and members of their immediate family of orientation, particularly the parents of origin. The remainder of the kindred constitute what has been referred to as nominal relatives who remain peripheral and often of relatively insignificant consequence. In this situation the trader is able to draw material and/or emotional aid from such family members without involving burdensome obligations. But for the Bukit Timah marketplace trader kinship, real and fictive, remain important economic and social organizing principles. At a more general level any person who could be completely self-reliant in that he could attain his goals with no assistance from any other person, would tend not to maintain any given kinship relationship. But absence of self-reliance is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for wider kinship relationships to exist.

Participants in marketplace trade are skilful, innovative and hardworking, and a complex, ramifying network of credit balances bind them together. Small trade and business activities provide a training ground for enterprising persons who form a substantial potential reservoir of leaders for social and economic development. Although small scale traders are skilful participants in local-level politics, they have been unable to sustain protest or political organization enough to constitute a serious threat to government. The inability of small scale traders to form a pressure group is due to the tight control exerted by the State on political organizations; so, people are articulating their autonomy in terms of other principles of social organization like voluntary associations.

Voluntary organizations are at the heart of Bukit Timah's social structure. They secure the active participation of many

people and shoulder tasks for which they are better fitted. More important they provide for individual citizens who cannot fully exercise their powers in their day to day work or in politics, the chance to acquire for themselves personal participation in the affairs of the community. Douglas and Pedersen have shown that the basis of social organization may be coercion, which in fact is not particularly relevant to voluntary associations, or normative or utilitarian (1973: 6). Normative and utilitarian theories hold respectively that men join together because they share values and interests, and that men join together because they will benefit from associations. In other words normative theories see voluntary associations as facilitating gratification of such less tangible needs as social interaction, status preservation and self-realization through the arts and recreation. In contrast utilitarian theories define voluntary associations as instrumental and actively promoting in the broader political system the specialized and relatively tangible interests of their members. Normative and utilitarian explanations are not mutually exclusive. As the study of Bukit Timah voluntary associations has illustrated, instrumental groups may perform expressive functions and most associations regularly perform a mixture of functions, some expressive and some instrumental.

Sills in Kuo (1977: vi) argued that in small and technologically simple societies, the functions of voluntary associations consist mainly of the organization of recreation activities. In larger 'tribal' societies they often play an important role in government, and when division of labour increases further they tend to engage in pursuing or defending economic interests. As for societies undergoing urbanization and modernization, voluntary associations play an

important part in adapting traditional institutions and in integrating new social systems. Sills further argues that in western industrial societies that assert the doctrine of political pluralism and institutionalize conflict, voluntary associations can effect social change and influence and even dominate economic, political and social institutions. In the same vein other western writers view voluntary associations as constituting an important arena for democratic training (Douglas & Pedersen 1973; Kuo 1977; Morris 1955; Pennock & Chapman 1969). This viewpoint reflects the bias of western scholars to consider groups constructive and generally desirable. This pluralistic point sees an abundance of relatively autonomous groups makes for healthy, integrated socio-political processes. In the Singapore context, voluntary associations are indeed the only arenas for the demonstration of democratic principles; annual elections are held and every member has an equal chance of being elected to leadership positions. Voluntary associations are widespread and various but this does not mean that all the different types are of equal value or that those that meet the needs of one period are necessarily right for another. In a tightly controlled nation state they do not effect social change and least of all dominate economic, political or social institutions. They are not instruments for integration in an industrialized setting but are interest groups and organizations manipulated for individual ends as well as political ends by the State. Voluntary associations interpret the uncertainties of traders' economic and social position which are compatible with an active attempt to cope with rapid urbanization and the day to day problems of urban living. At the same time they are bodies that are manipulated to develop informal political organizations which in turn are used to enhance the power of the ruling party. Even as the colonial elite

co-opted the leadership of voluntary associations and used them as a medium of indirect rule, voluntary associations in Singapore presently expand the bureaucratic apparatus of control and play a vital role in maintaining authoritarian rule through the process of leadership cooptation. The different kinds of voluntary associations at Bukit Timah have adapted themselves to changing social, economic and political conditions; they have a dynamic relationship with the Singapore system of government.

The marketplace sector is further characterized by difficult entry, and high earnings. The opportunity for such high earnings is such that it is seen by participants as substantially more desirable than wage employment. Since the State regards small scale trading as contributing minimally to the general process of economic growth, it attempts to force out these activities as industrial employment is expanded. So the impact of the national political-economic forces upon marketplace trading has been profound: national as well as international economic and political pressures have shaped the array of local productive and distributive enterprises in Singapore.

In the short term the marketing population is allowed to exist but within controlled establishments which serve an important function not just of providing cheap goods and services but, more significantly, jobs for an aging and largely illiterate population. However the control of the issue of licences means that when these operators retire or die in twenty to thirty years, they will not be replaced. Young would-be small scale traders are being pushed into the industrial sector. And as the population is increasingly exposed to western style education, it becomes socialized into rejecting

opportunities outside the conventional framework of either a career in industry or bureaucracy. Like the Ghanaians studied by Hart, if to the illiterate Frafra migrant informal income opportunities offer a ladder out of poverty, to the educated youth with his eyes on conventional advancement, such employment may be both socially inferior and undesirable (1973: 68). Furthermore the most salient characteristic of wage employment in the eyes of the urban workers is not the absolute amount of income receipts but its reliability; in the case of informal employment, risks are involved and expected rewards highly variable. Wage employment is a source of relatively secure income but it is in small scale trading that the urban poor seek the possibility of a permanently raised standard of living. However in Singapore the long-term State policy is to make all resources available to the expansion of the formal, large scale sector only.

Singapore's economic prosperity is far from stable: the State cannot survive without Malaysia and Indonesia, and nor can it survive without western and Japanese investment. Singapore is a component of a wider system of international investment, production, management and trade whereby the critical investment decisions affecting the domestic economy are made within the framework of this system by interests outside Singapore and not within the framework solely of Singapore. So capital goes into Singapore freely but it can depart equally freely. As for labour resources wages may be kept low in the short run; but the labour shortage and increasing emphasis on skilled labour to man industries demanding higher levels of technology will cause wages to rise. In the long run wage increases may cause Singapore to become less attractive to foreign investors. The raising of a highly skilled labour force is a long process and currently

Singapore has to contend with a labour force structure made up of 62 per cent unskilled workers; that is, people with only primary education or none at all (The Straits Times 18th June 1979). Singapore's growth may also be constrained as energy supplies and energy crises constrain future technological development and make it increasingly difficult for Singapore to maintain the momentum of its economic successes as its dependent economy is so vulnerable to external influences. So its dependence on foreign capitalism may cause its fall if there is a withdrawal of these resources, a fall hitherto beyond the conception of its leaders. But these uncertainties aside capitalist development has given Singapore two decades of prosperous growth; a dependent economy is viable.

Postscript

When I was preparing a final draft of this thesis, the National Wages Council (NWC)¹ announced a wage increment guideline of some 20 per cent for Singapore workers to pave the way for Singapore's 'second industrial revolution' (The Straits Times 23rd June 1979). The restructuring of the Singapore economy attempts to hasten Singapore's transition to an industrial economy. One of the strategies involved is a high wage policy to encourage employers to upgrade their operations and cut the demand for unskilled labour. In this connection the NWC recommended a wage rise of \$32 plus 7 per cent, and also increased employers' contribution to the Central Provident Fund (a worker's pension fund) by an additional 4 per cent bringing this fund to a total of 16.5 per cent of workers' monthly wages. The second strategy is the expansion of technical and engineering manpower to meet the expected needs of high technology, skill intensive industries. The third is the design of incentives to attract high value-added industries from abroad and boost local manufacturing. The Minister for Trade and Industry, Mr Goh Chok Tong, argued that even if higher wages recommended by the NWC may hurt investors, as long as Singapore has political stability, is internally and regionally secure, has a hard working population, maintains an open social system, boasts of nice places for investors to stay in, and provides security of investment, foreign investors will keep coming in (The Straits Times 6th August 1979). Furthermore Singapore's ambassador to Japan, Mr Wee Mon Cheng, pointed out that even after the 20 per cent wage increment, Singapore's wages are still less than half of the Japanese pay scale (The Straits Times 7th August 1979). But as the director of the University of Singapore's School of Accountancy and Business Administration, Dr Lee Soo Ann, also pointed out, a high technology Singapore means a high dependence not only on raw materials, food and fuel, but

also on semi-finished goods and on services that used to be provided by Singaporeans themselves (The Straits Times 29th August 1979). So Singapore will become increasingly dependent on the rest of Southeast Asia and it will be in her interest to participate in the economic development of the whole region, invest more in facilities and infrastructure, so that Singapore does not become isolated from a region in which it is growing in dependence.

As for the relocation of the marketplaces in Bukit Timah, the Urban Redevelopment Authority annual report for 1978/79 disclosed that the \$26 million Anak Bukit Centre scheduled to be completed in 1982 will house retail, service and speciality shops, and eating stalls resettled from the present Beauty World Complex (The Straits Times 11th July 1979). The site of the Anak Bukit Centre had previously been used by traders for the burning of effigies of Chinese deities and religious paraphernalia at the end of Hungry Ghost festivals. The marketplaces BWM and BWTM will be separated out and resited at a public marketplace at Clementi Housing Estate some 3 kilometres away at the end of 1979 or beginning of 1980. Marketplace traders are apprehensive about the state of their future business but are at the same time taking measures to ensure their survival: they are intensifying kow-kwan ties and trust that these relationships will be maintained even after relocation. These ties are enhanced particularly among their wholesaling outlets in order to ensure the control over one section of the market. As for household consumers, these retail outlets are rapidly diminishing due to competition from the increasing numbers of larger establishments and more importantly, the resettlement of regular customers out of Bukit Timah Town.

Postscript

Footnotes

- 1 The National Wages Council (NWC), established in February 1972, is a tripartite advisory body representing the government, employers, and workers. Its main function is the formulation of general guidelines on wage policy. The NWC's recommendations, when accepted by the government, serve as a basis for negotiations between employers and employees or their unions. The recommendations are not binding but have thus far been fully implemented in the public sector. In the private sector recommendations are implemented fully, partially or not at all, varying from year to year, depending upon the different organizations.

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