

CHAPTER 3 OCCUPATION STATUS AND MOBILITY BETWEEN 1970 AND 1980

The previous Chapter examined the educational attainment of Chinese in Sabah. It is found that the educational attainment of the Chinese has increased from 1970 to 1980. This Chapter examines another determinant of Chinese social mobility, that is, the occupational status.

Overall, there are two major groups of occupations in this study, that is non-manual occupations (white collar jobs) and manual occupations (blue-collar jobs). The non-manual occupations include 'Professional and technical and related workers', 'Administrative and managerial workers', 'Clerical workers', and 'Sales

workers'; The manual occupations include 'Service workers', 'Production and related workers, transport equipment operators and labourers', 'Agricultural, animal husbandry and forestry workers, fishermen and hunters'. The occupational structural classification of the above mentioned is taken from Malaysia's Statistics Department.

In terms of occupational status, the social status of non-manual occupations is higher than manual occupations. This is because the non-manual occupations normally demand longer periods of education, training and use of the intellect at work. On the other hand, manual occupations need relatively a shorter period of education and training and the jobs demand more physical strength than mental work.

This chapter will compare the occupational status changes of the Chinese in three aspects. First, to compare the Chinese occupational status of 1970 and 1980. Second, to compare the occupation status of Chinese men and women. Third, to compare the occupation status of Chinese and Bumiputra in 1970 and 1980.

3.1 Occupational Mobility Of Sabahan Chinese From 1970 To 1980

The distribution of Chinese occupational groups in 1970 and 1980 is shown in Table 3.1. There are two main occupation categories, that is non-manual occupations and manual occupations. The first four occupational categories-- professional, administrative, clerical and sales -are non-manual occupations, and the remaining three occupational categories-- service, production, agriculture- are manual occupations.

From 1970 to 1980, there have been an increase in non-manual occupations among the Chinese. Its percentage increased 7.78% from 1970 to 1980. Meanwhile, for the manual occupations, the percentage of Chinese in manual occupations has dropped to 7.78% (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1
Percentage Distribution of Chinese Occupation in Sabah

Occupational	1970	1980	* P.D
Non Manual	43.29	51.07	7.78
Manual	56.71	48.93	-7.78
Total	100.00 (38,344)	100.00 (49,129)	

Source: Data for 1970 are from Chander, 1976, p.303-311; data for 1980 are from Khoo, 1983b, p.354-358.

Note: * P.D = Percentage Differences

The economic growth of Sabah and the higher education attained by Sabahans are reasons that brought about the increase of Chinese in non-manual occupations from 1970 to 1980.

The first reason is the growth of Sabah's economy. From 1970 to 1980, the GDP of the industry sector has increased almost 20 folds and the GDP of service sector has increased 4.3 folds (see Table 3.2). The economic growth has created many jobs opportunities. Hence, the non-manual occupations has increased from 26,454 in 1970 to 57,510 in 1980 (Khoo, 1983b, p.195).

Table 3.2

Sabah: Gross Domestic Product 1970-1980 (million ringgit)

	1970	1975	1980
Agriculture	406	750	1274.7
Industry	58	258	1148.7
Services	279	521	1207.4

Source: Pang, T.W., 1989, p.89

The second reason is the increasing higher educational attainment of the Sabahan Chinese. From 1970 to 1980, the education level of the Chinese has increased 6.64% in lower secondary level, 7.16% in upper secondary and 0.45% in Form Six and above level (see Table 2.3 of Chapter 2). With higher education levels, the chances of Chinese obtaining non-manual occupations have also increased.

3.2 Occupational Status Changes of Sabahan Chinese Gender

Both Chinese men and women show a percentage increase in non-manual occupations which indicates the increase of occupation upward mobility (Table 3.3). From 1970 to 1980, in the category of non-manual occupations, the Chinese men has increased its percentage from 40.40% to 44.19% and the Chinese women from 52.1% to 68.8%.

Comparing the percentage of Chinese men and women in non-manual occupations, the women is higher than men in both 1970 and 1980 (Table 3.4). In 1970, it is 40.40% for men and 52.10% for women; the gap between them is 11.70%. In 1980, it is 44.19% for men and 68.80% for women; the gap of both Chinese gender has become wider, that is from 11.70% in 1970 to 24.61% in 1980.

Table 3.3
Percentage Distribution of Occupation Among Chinese Men and Women in Sabah 1970-1980

Occupation	1970		1980	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Non Manual	40.40	52.10	44.19	68.80
Manual	59.60	47.90	55.81	31.20
Total	% 100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
	N 28,857	9,487	35,463	13,666

Source: Data for 1970 are from Chander, 1976, p.303-311; data for are from Khoo, 1983b, p.354-358.

A few reasons explain why there is a higher percentage of Chinese women than men in non-manual occupations. Among these reasons are higher educational attainment of women, higher non-manual job opportunities and women liberation movement.

First, the education level of Chinese women has increased faster than men in this period (Table 3.4). From 1970 to 1980, for the lower secondary and above category, the Chinese women has increased 14.44% whereas the men has only increased 2.97%. More Chinese women attained higher education, they are able to obtain more non-manual occupations than men.

Table 3.4

Educational Attainment of Chinese Men and Women
for Lower Secondary and above in Sabah from 1970
to 1980

Lower Secondary and above	Men (%)	Women (%)
1970	37.89	20.27
1980	40.86	34.71
% Increase	2.97	14.44

Source: Data for 1970 are from Chander, 1972,
p.149-152; data for 1980 are from Khoo, 1984,
p.248-256.

Secondly, the increase of job opportunities has also allowed Chinese women to obtain non-manual jobs. The total employment of non-manual jobs in Sabah is 26,484 in 1970 and 57,510 in 1980 (Khoo, 1983b, p.195). With these non-manual occupation opportunities available in the labour market, the Chinese women with

higher educational level stand better chances of getting non-manual occupations.

Thirdly, the global liberation movement of women or feminism has resulted in a higher percentage of Chinese women taking up non-manual occupations. The global women's movement has in one way or another affected the perceptual changes of Chinese women towards self, work, marriage, family and life. Modern women strive for equal treatment in job opportunities and promotion. They are inspired to obtain higher education and job status in order to gain financial independence, self-reliance and freedom.

Even though, the percentage of Chinese women in non-manual occupations is higher than men; it is found

that most Chinese women are in relatively lower ranking non-manual jobs, which provide limited career advancement opportunities. Table 3.5 shows that Chinese women constituted 78.8% of "medical and veterinary jobs" (mostly nurses and midwives), 59.4% of "teachers", 90.5% of "stenographers, typists and card punching operators", 54.8% of "book-keeping and cashiers". Whereas the percentage of Chinese women in high-ranking non-manual occupations is lower than that of men. It is shown that Chinese women constituted only 8.5% in "architects and engineers", 18.8% in "accountants and auditors", 9.5% in "managers (wholesale and retail trade)", and 0.6% in "working proprietors (wholesale and retail trade)".

Table 3.5

Non-Manual Occupational Distribution of Chinese Men and Chinese Women aged 10 years and above in Sabah, 1980

Occupation	Men	Women	Total	
	%	%	%	N
Architects, engineers and related technicians	91.5	8.5	100.00	948
Medical, veterinary and related workers	32.2	78.8	100.00	668
Accountants and auditors	81.2	18.8	100.00	282
Teachers	40.6	59.4	100.00	1,931
Managers	95.7	4.3	100.00	1,873
Clerical supervisors	82.7	17.3	100.00	220
Government executive officials	85.7	14.9	100.00	409
Stenographers, typists and card punching operator	9.3	90.7	100.00	767
Book-keepers, cashiers and related workers	45.2	54.8	100.00	1,578
Managers (wholesale and retail trade)	90.5	9.5	100.00	284
Working proprietors (wholesale and retail trade)	99.4	0.6	100.00	4,685

Source: Khoo, 1983b, p.354-358

3.3 Occupational Status Of Sabahan Chinese And Bumiputras From 1970 To 1980

Under the classification of non-manual and manual occupations, it is found that the percentage of Chinese in non-manual occupations is higher than Bumiputras in both 1970 and 1980. Table 3.6 shows that the percentage of Chinese is 35.66% higher than Bumiputra in non-manual occupations in 1970. The gap increased to 37.59% in 1980.

Table 3.6
Distribution of Occupation of Chinese and Bumiputras in Sabah 1970-1980

Occupation	1970		1980	
	Bumiputra	Chinese	Bumiputra	Chinese
Non-manual	7.63	43.29	13.48	51.07
Manual	92.37	56.71	86.52	48.93
Total %	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
N	129,584	38,344	240,096	49,129

Source: Pang, T.W., 1989, p.125

There are a few reasons for the higher proportion of Chinese in non-manual occupations than Bumiputras. Among these reasons are education level and geographical location.

In the aspect of education level, previous chapter shows that education level of Chinese is higher than that of Bumiputras (see Chapter Two). Table 3.7 shows that the percentage of the educated Chinese is 25.5% higher than Bumiputras in 1980. For 'Lower Secondary', the Chinese is 10.0% higher than Bumiputras; for 'Upper Secondary', they are is 15.7% higher than Bumiputras; for 'Form Six', they are is 1.7% higher than Bumiputras; for 'College or University', the Chinese is 4.0% higher than Bumiputras. With higher education level, the Chinese has more chances of getting non-manual occupations than Bumiputras.

Table 3.7
Percentage Distribution of Labor Force by Education Level
and Ethnic Groups, Sabah, 1981

Education Level	Bumiputra	Chinese
No Formal Education	<u>33.6</u>	<u>8.1</u>
Formal Education	<u>66.4</u>	<u>91.9</u>
Primary	36.7	30.8
Lower Secondary	20.0	30.0
Upper Secondary	8.6	24.3
Form Six	0.6	2.3
College/ University	0.5	4.5
Total	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>

Source: Khoo, 1987, p.150

The second reason for the higher percentage of Chinese in non-manual occupations than the Bumiputras is different geographical location. The Chinese who clusters mostly in urban areas has an edge in obtaining better school education, wider non-manual occupational opportunities as well as exposure to modernizing influences. Table 3.8 shows that the Chinese clustered around urban large areas (10,000 - 74,999 persons) has increased from 46.0% in 1970 to 47.0% in 1980. On the other hand, the Bumiputras are clustered around rural areas (below 999 persons). The Bumiputras who cluster around rural areas has reduced from 89.2% in 1970 to 80.4% in 1980. Being in rural areas, Bumiputras have relatively more difficulties gaining access to well-equipped school facilities, well-trained teachers, wide-range of reference books and white collar jobs opportunities.

Table 3.8

Rural and Urban Population of Sabahan Bumiputra
and Chinese 1970 and 1980

		Urban large	Urban small	Rural	Total
<u>1970</u>					
Bumiputra	N	34,263	16,945	424,702	475,910
	%	(7.2)	(3.6)	(89.2)	(100.0)
Chinese	N	63,712	17,103	57,697	138,512
	%	(46.0)	(12.3)	(41.7)	(100.0)
<u>1980</u>					
Bumiputra	N	117,675	37,262	633,929	788,866
	%	(4.9)	(4.7)	(80.4)	(100.0)
Chinese	N	72,258	14,841	66,882	153,981
	%	(47.0)	(9.6)	(43.4)	(100.0)

Source: Data for 1970 are from Chander, 1975, p.20;
data for 1980 are from Khoo, 1983a, p.93.

Note: Urban large = 10,000 - 74,999 population; urban
small = 1,000 - 9,999 population; rural = below 999
population.

The above discussion reveals that the percentage of Sabahan Chinese in non-manual occupations is higher than Bumiputras. Nevertheless, closer observation unveil that there is a higher growth rate of Bumiputras in non-manual occupations than Chinese from 1970 to 1980. Table 3.9 reveals that the growth rate of Bumiputras in non-manual occupations is 228% and the Chinese is 51% from 1970 to 1980. The growth rate of Bumiputras is about 4.5 times higher than Chinese during that period. With greater movement of Bumiputra to non-manual occupations than the Chinese, the social mobility of the Bumiputras is said to be higher than the Chinese.

Table 3.9

Growth rate of Occupation of Bumiputra and Chinese from 1970 to 1980

	Bumiputra			Chinese		
	1970	1980	G.R.	1970	1980	G.R.
Non-manual occupations	9,885	32,418	228%	16,598	25,092	51%
Manual occupations	119,699	207,678	74%	21,746	24,037	11%

Source: Khoo, 1983b, p.195

Note: G.R = Growth rate

The reasons for the higher growth rate of Bumiputras in non-manual occupations are partly due to the assistance of the government in their educational and occupational opportunities.

The government has provided vast educational opportunities for Bumiputras since the implementation of the New Economic Policy in 1970. As a result of

this, the number of Bumiputras who have attained secondary schools, college and university education has increased from a number which is lower than the Chinese in 1970 to a number higher than that in 1980 (Table 3.10). With higher educational level, more Bumiputras are able to get non-manual occupations.

Table 3.10
Education Level of Bumiputra and Chinese in Sabah
from 1970 to 1980

	Bumiputra		Chinese	
	1970	1980	1970	1980
No Education	321,801	435,638	43,397	43,026
Primary or Less	129,186	223,802	62,271	52,270
Lower Sec.	17,181	94,588	21,493	34,067
Upper Sec.	5,032	29,263	8,287	20,208
Form Six and above	2,710	4,952	3,118	4,162

Source: Data for 1970 are from Chander, 1976, p.167-168; data for 1980 are from Khoo, 1984, p.244-247 & 256-259.

Table 3.11

Number of Persons Employed in Government Sector of Bumiputras and Chinese in Sabah in 1980 (with organizations at least 20 employees)

	Number	Percentage
Bumiputra	14,567	73.6
Chinese	759	3.8
Indonesian	3,566	18.0
Other	890	4.6
Total	19,728	100.0

Source: Pang, T.W., 1989, p.124

Apart from educational opportunities, the government also provided many occupational opportunities to Bumiputras especially in the public sector. From 1970 to 1980, in the government agencies with at least 20 employees, it is found that a majority of the employees are Bumiputras. Table 3.11 shows that 33.6% of the public servants are Bumiputras and only 3.8% are

Chinese. With government assistance in job opportunities in the public sector, the percentage of Bumiputras in non-manual occupations have increased greatly as well.

3.5 Summary

From the above discussion, it is obvious that the occupational status of the Chinese has improved greatly FROM 1970 TO 1980. It is seen from their increased proportion in non-manual occupations. Several reasons are contributed to it, such as higher educational attainment and economic growth in Sabah. Hence, the social mobility of the Chinese in occupational aspects has experienced upward mobility. It is also discovered that the occupation mobility of Chinese women is higher than men; Bumiputra is higher than Chinese. For the former, the reasons are higher educational level, wider jobs opportunities, and women liberation movement. For

the latter, the main reasons are government assistance in Bumiputra's education and occupation opportunities.