

BOOK REVIEWS

PARENT-CHILD LAW IN SINGAPORE. By O.S. KHOO. [Singapore: Butterworths. 1984. xxii+223 pp. Softcover: S\$50]

THIS book is a comprehensive collection of the rules and the cases in the four areas of legitimacy, maintenance, guardianship and adoption within the parent-child relationship. There is no attempt to set the material presented within its social context. Nor has the author raised the underlying questions in these areas. There are several burning questions here. How far should the law intrude into a parent-child relationship? Is it possible to ensure that the intrusion will bring greater benefit than detriment to the child? Are we witnessing an emerging general theory of children's rights as parental rights become increasingly eclipsed by concern for the well-being of children? Ignoring these issues tends to make the treatment of the topic rather clinical.

It is also unfortunate that the author chose to leave to the last part of his book to raise all the changes brought by the sweeping family law reform exercise *vide* the Women's Charter (Amendment) Act of 1980, instead of the normal method of incorporating them and revising the parts of the book which so require revising. This tends to divide the book into its main body, where the law is at some date before the 1980 amendments became effective, and the update of the main body. The author has also not assisted the reader by indicating in the main body wherever a reference to the last part of the book becomes crucial because the law has been changed. This renders significant parts of the main body somewhat misleading and generally undermines the entire work.

All things said, though, this book is a welcome addition to Singapore legal literature. The author has done some painstaking research into the origins and the scope of the local statutory provisions and, wherever relevant, the English common law in the four areas concerned. The coverage is sufficiently deep to give a clear introduction to the rules and precedents in the areas discussed. At times the author has also brought his personal expertise to bear by referring to unreported decisions in the subordinate courts and by giving illuminating insights into how judicial officers view the various rules. It is from initial forays such as this that further study may spring.

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