



Singapore Spotlight

| Tom Benner

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“Sarong Party Girls”という小説がシンガポールで話題になっている。シンガポールの若い現代女性たちが主人公で、全て話し言葉のシンガポール英語 (Singlish) で書かれている。今のシンガポールが抱える問題を浮き彫りにした作品だという。

15) Sarong Party Girls

夜遊びをする若い女性たち

■ シンガポール特有の言葉

There's a current bestseller in Singapore that takes you on a comic romp through the city's dance clubs and night spots. But it's not all fun and games — it's also a growing-up tale that looks at how a group of young women balance the old-world values of their parents with the wealth and luxury they see all around them.

The novel, by Cheryl Lu-Lien Tan, is called “Sarong Party Girls.” This phrase is derogatory — it refers to women in Singapore who dress provocatively and who aspire to marry wealthy expatriates as a way to move up to more fashionable lifestyles.

The book centers on three characters — Jazzy, the narrator, and her friends Imo and Fann. They are aged 26 and 27, and are quite alarmed that another friend, Sher, has just gotten married — but to an average guy, as opposed to a rich guy with a fancy condo and swank lifestyle. The three remaining friends decide they are running out of time, and plot to meet single rich men who

are European or American and who can lift them up into a better class.

I won't ruin the ending for you.

The book is getting a lot of buzz, for two reasons.

First, the novel is written entirely in Singlish, the local vernacular that is universally frowned upon by proper Singaporeans, and the target of the government's “Speak Good English” campaign. It's how a lot of Singaporeans communicate on an everyday basis — but it is informal, and it is not the Queen's English. And so it is looked down upon.

Singlish uses lots of slang words. For example, the BBC once gave this example of a typical sentence in Singlish: “Wah this durian so shiok, best lah!” “Wah” sort of means “wow.” “Shiok” means “really good,” something that gives a feeling of pleasure and happiness. “Lah” is a word at the end of a sentence that sort of means “there you go” or “well, then.” (By the way, durians are so smelly that people aren't allowed to bring them on public

話題になっている小説の表紙



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著者のタンさん。ニューヨークを拠点に活躍するフード&ファッションジャーナリストだ

trains or buses.)

Also, Singlish cuts out needless words. Ask someone if they can do something, and the answer is likely to be a simple “can” or “cannot.” Ask someone if they'd like to have dinner and they might say, “Eat already.” You'll hear sentences like: “I go bus-stop wait for you.” You know exactly what the person is saying, but it's bad grammar, and you can't write a formal sentence that way.

■ 保守的な考えと現代的な考え

But improper language isn't the only reason people are talking about the book. The young women in the book don't give a favorable picture of Singapore.

The book — which the author describes as Jane Austen's “Emma” set in modern Asia — takes place in the underbelly of glitzy Singapore. It contrasts the

image of a rich, exclusive place with a less well off, less educated underclass.

The Sarong Party Girls have traditional families who want them to marry, settle down, and have children. They are caught between old-time values and modern Singaporean notions of glamour and success.

This is a common dilemma in a prosperous place like Singapore, which is rated one of the wealthiest countries in the world. Singaporeans are known for placing value on “the 5 C's”: cash, car, credit card, condominium, and country club. In that regard, the young women in the book are pretty typical.

Do they meet and marry rich men to become wealthy overnight? Or do they look beyond money for meaning in their lives?

What would you decide?

Tom Benner is a freelance journalist who moved to Singapore from Boston, U.S., in fall 2012. His recent journalism has appeared in Al Jazeera English, Global Post and Nikkei Asian Review.

KEYWORDS

sarong マレー人などが着ける腰布

comic おかしな、こっけいな

romp 浮かれ騒ぎ(後出 fun and games も同意)

derogatory 軽蔑的な

provocatively 刺激的に

aspire 切望する

expatriate (ここでは)駐在員

center on ～～を軸に展開する

narrator 語り手

(be) alarmed 驚いて

fancy condo 高級マンション

swank 派手な(後出 glitzy は華やかな、glamour は華々しさ)

plot 企てる

ruin the ending 結末をばらす

get a buzz 話題になる

vernacular 日常語、話し言葉

universally 一般に

frown upon ～～を良しとしない

“Speak Good English” campaign 2000年に開始された、標準英語を教える取り組み

Queen's English (ここでは) (英国の)純正英語

look down upon 見下す

slang word 俗語

improper 下品な、不適切な

favorable 有益な、好都合な

Jane Austen 英国の小説家

(1775～1817年)

underbelly 暗部

exclusive 高級な

well off 裕福な

underclass 下層階級の人々

notion 観念、考え方

prosperous 繁栄している

多読チャレンジ

Singlishとは? A シンガポールの正式な言語 B シンガポールの日常語 C シンガポールの女性が話す言葉

[本文 - 594 words]



MACHIGAI! © Tim Young

毎週掲載

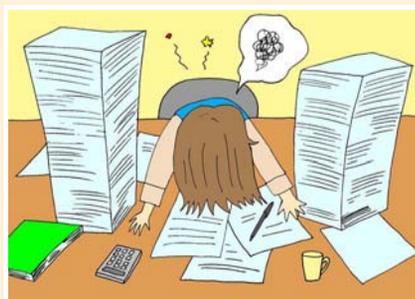


by Tim Young

彼女は毎日残業する。

✗ She overworks every day.

“Overwork” means 「過労」. It's certainly true that someone who works overtime every day is probably overworking, but still, “overworking” is not the same thing as “working overtime.”

○ She works overtime every day.

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米アイオワ州出身。イリノイ州オーガスタナ大学で英文学学士号取得。1989年から日本在住。現在はスカイプでマンツーマンの英語レッスンをするほか、高校でのALT(外国人英語指導助手)やポッドキャストの製作など幅広く活躍。Twitter (@machigai) でも日々つぶやいている。著書「I can't eat natto!」がアマゾンで発売中。



MACHIGAI Meter

How many of Tim's students made this mistake?



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