VOLUME 1, NUMBER 2, AUGUST 1986

SOJOURN
SOCIAL ISSUES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

GUEST EDITORS:  JAMILAH ARIFFIN AND WENDY SMITH

Introduction 131

Articles
The Exploitation of Women: An Overview  ROHANA ARIFFIN 133
Women Fiction Writers and Images of Women in Modern Malay Literature  UNGKU MAIMUNAH MOHD. TAHIR 155
Sex-Role Attitudes of Malaysian Women: Implications for Career Development and Counselling  ROHANY NASIR 172
Women, Divorce and Islam in Kedah  SHARIFAH ZALEHA SYED HASSAN 183
The Forgotten Contribution: Women and Development in Sabah  ABDUL SAMAD HADI 199

Research Notes and Comments
Women and Politics of the State  NORAINI ABDULLAH 213
The Rise and Demise of a Malay Woman Politician  SHAMSUL A.B. 220

Book Reviews 231
SOJOURN

Regional Advisory Board

Wilfredo Arce
Ateneo de Manila University
Philippines

Chandra Muzaffar
Aliran
Malaysia

Koentjaraningrat
University of Indonesia
Indonesia

Suthep Soonthornpasuch
Chiangmai University
Thailand

Tham Seong Chee
National University of Singapore
Singapore

International Corresponding Members

Hans-Dieter Evers
University of Bielefeld
West Germany

Mitsuo Nakamura
Chiba University
Japan

Virginia Matheson
Australian National University
Australia

Robert Taylor
SOAS
United Kingdom

Judith Nagata
York University
Canada

Paul Wheatley
University of Chicago
USA

Editorial Committee

Chairman
Kernial Singh Sandhu

Editors
Trinidad Osteria
Ananda Rajah
Sharon Siddique

Associate Editor
Pauline Khng

Committee Members
Ibrahim Saad
Pang Eng Fong
Somboon Suksamran

Manasse Malo
Shamsul A.B.
Leo Suryadinata

Ng Shui Meng
Jesucita Sodusta
On 15 and 16 April 1985, a Colloquium on Women's Studies in Malaysia, organized by the editors, was held at First Residential College, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur. The aim of the colloquium was to provide a forum to discuss the work of Malaysian scholars, mainly women, doing original research on topics relating to women in Malaysian society.

The study of the problems of "Third World Women" has been a major component of research undertaken by feminist scholars in Western academic circles, yet all too often the work of Third World women on women's problems in their own countries is ignored or not given sufficient recognition. Moreover, research by Western women in these countries is often biased by the researchers' own experiences of being women in the West. The focus of the colloquium was thus to redress these issues on a practical and theoretical level.

Nineteen contributors presented papers at the colloquium. They included fifteen Malaysian women scholars and two Malaysian men who had all done original research at a post-graduate level on women's issues in Malaysia. Two other participants, including one of the organizers, were Western women who had lived and done extensive research in Malaysia and had shown an awareness of and a sensitivity to the above-mentioned issues.

The nineteen contributions to the colloquium can be grouped around two research themes. The first theme centres on the experience of Malaysian women as wage labourers. Contributions focused in the main on issues relating to the New Economic Policy, in particular the export-oriented industrial strategy which, for the first time, created large-scale employment opportunities for women in the industrial sector. Individual papers dealt with such themes as the social context of female labour migration from rural areas; adjustment to urban life
and factory organization; the actual experiences of the industrial labour process, and the issue of how Malaysian women workers fare under Japanese management. These papers were complemented by papers which focused on historical studies of female labour force participation in Malaysia, and also in a more international perspective on the specificities of the Malaysian case. It is hoped that these papers can eventually be edited and published as a separate volume.

The second research theme forms the basis for the selection of papers which appear in this special focus issue of SOJOURN. It is hoped that this publication will provide the reader with an impression of what type of general issues are of interest to contemporary scholars interested in women's studies in Malaysia, and also how this interest is translated into concrete research.

Thus the papers which appear in this issue of SOJOURN are representative of the topical, theoretical and thematic interest of current research. Rohana Ariffin's contribution provides the reader with a critical overview of the relevance of Western feminist theoretical constructs to the Malaysian case. Ungku Maimunah Mohd. Tahir explores the place of women, as writers and subjects, in contemporary Malay literature. Rohany Nasir provides a comparative study of women in professional and more traditional careers. Sharifah Zaleha Syed Hassan deals with an important aspect of women's experience of Islam in Malaysia, while Abdul Samad Hadi's contribution shifts the focus from West to East Malaysia, and from the urban experience to a rural one. Finally, two contributors — Noraini Abdullah and Shamsul A.B. — focus on the theme of women in politics. The collection as a whole demonstrates the promising possibilities for Malaysian scholars to contribute to the evolution and development of an indigenous perspective on women's studies.

JAMILAH ARIFFIN
AND
WENDY SMITH

JAMILAH ARIFFIN, Ph.D., is Master, First Residential College, and Associate Professor, Faculty of Economics and Administration, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur.

WENDY SMITH is currently affiliated with the Department of Anthropology and Sociology, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi.