

literature on women's studies. We hope that future studies on women will be better organized, more coherent with depth and precision.

*Malaysian Women: Problems and Issues.* Edited by Evelyn Hong. Penang: Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP), 1983. 134 pp.

This book takes a more cohesive approach than the one reviewed above to highlight the problems of women in contemporary industrialized Malaysia. It questions the long-term consequences of the Malaysian Government's economic development strategies, and proposes some guidelines to alleviate future problems. It is a collection of ten selected papers presented at various seminars organized by CAP between 1979 and 1982. The papers are carefully arranged into four parts to give a scenario on the destiny of factory women from the rural working environment to the urban manufacturing sector.

Part I overviews the negative effects of national economic development strategy, especially on poor rural women. Evelyn Hong discusses the parallels and actual links between the experience of industrialization of Western women in the eighteenth century and Third World women in this century. According to Hong, Third World women have suffered more because of the compounded effects of colonialism and the programmes of United Nations' Development Decade (1960s–70s). Colonialism brought in a male-biased concept of sexual division of labour (reproduced by Western formal education) essential for cash crop cultivation and a market economy. Development planners inheriting colonial perceptions and values, thus designed programmes which bypassed women's needs and undervalued their potential and actual contributions. In effect, women have been systematically discriminated against and excluded from all levels of development participation – from planning to benefiting from development assistance. The UN's International Year of Women in 1975 put pressure on the governments of the UN member countries to integrate women into their development programmes. So far, such programmes are not only detached from the mainstream of socio-economic development, but they are also heavily oriented around home-bound activities. In this light, policy makers continue to undermine women's real needs

— the means to generate “food and income by their own work in agriculture or other activities” in order to feed and maintain their children (p. 21).

Lim Teck Ghee and Ng Sock Nge discuss the intensification of the hardship of poor women. Women among poor agricultural families spend 10–14 hours on domestic work in addition to working alongside men. While wives use their income to meet household needs, husbands use part of theirs for personal indulgence. Early marriages within the same social group and the lack of formal education become a self-perpetuating mechanism subverting women’s self-worth and the possibility of political participation (pp. 37–42). Meanwhile, growth-oriented development processes have accelerated environmental pollution and resource depletion by such activities as logging, mining, and agribusiness. This has deprived the rural poor of much of the forests and rivers for subsistence living. And women suffer more as it means longer distances and more hours to fetch water and collect fire wood (pp. 35–36).

With increasing misery among the rural poor and the thrust of new national economic development policies from 1970 onwards, more and more young but ill-equipped rural women are quickly responding to the demand for labour in labour-intensive, export-oriented industries, such as the electronics, garments, textiles, and food-processing industries (p. 50).

Part II highlights the condition of women in these factories. Jamilah Ariffin reviews the motivation and activities of multi-national corporations in recruiting rural female labour, triggering the exodus to urban centres. In her analysis of employment conditions, she discusses how the naïveté of rural girls are exploited by recruiting agents in drafting them into jobs that are insecure and by factory managers in subverting the girls’ group consciousness with various forms of socio-cultural manipulation. Tan Pek Leng describes the unsuccessful struggle of the Electrical Industry Workers Union (EIWU) to represent electronic workers. She deplores the fact that “the Registrar of Trade Unions and the courts of law are leading the battle to guarantee that the workers do not obtain representations by a union that is legitimately theirs” (p. 65). Thus by retaining foreign investors in the name of national interest, factory workers are denied legitimate unionization,

that will protect them from employers' malpractices and exploitation.

Unable to unionize and being constrained in various ways, women workers periodically break out into mass hysteria in factories. Raymond Lee reports that in actuality this phenomenon is a "safety valve" to vent internal conflicts and hostilities, but this is "rationalized" in terms of the supernatural. Mass hysteria also acts as a psychological pad to prevent direct confrontation between the workers and the factory managers, or family authority figures.

Part III focuses on the negative effects of the unhealthy working environments of factories, and of modern medicine on women's health. Khoo Hoong Eng attributes work hazards faced by women to physical, psychological, biological (germs in hospitals) and chemical factors (toxic and carcinogenic substances). The hazards, however, do not only affect women workers but extend to society at large (p. 35) as their consequences are passed on to the next generation (pp. 83-84). The author cautions that preventive measures should not take the form of discriminating against women by barring them from potentially hazardous work (which would constitute a social cost borne by women in general) but rather, they should support women's double burden through the enforcement of safe working conditions in addition to some adjustments in social structure, for example, affordable child-care facilities.

Evelyn Hong documents Western experiences on how modern medical practices have replaced traditional healers or "wise women", who provided a form of basic health care, and have systematically become a patriarchal tool for controlling women's body and mind. She extensively examines the variety of "depersonalized and dehumanized" forms of modern health care imposed on Malaysian women, especially in the realm of pregnancy and childbirth.

Part IV deals with the issue of violence against women. From her practical experience at the Women's Aid Organization in Kuala Lumpur, Charlotte Samuel discusses legal questions revolving around marital violence. In a paper on rape, S.K. Teoh provides a brief interpretation of legal codes on sexual offences, and an analysis of rape incidents as well as the psychological consequences experienced by rape victims.

The editor of the book is successful in bringing together ten well-

written and insightful papers, originally prepared for different seminars focusing on a variety of themes which, in this volume, reflect a range of important and related issues faced by a large section of Malaysian women, particularly the economically disadvantaged. The book forcefully informs its readers about the increasing negative aspects of economic policies. It also offers a comprehensive conceptual framework for the interpretation of the interrelatedness between external forces — colonialism and capitalist economic development — and the government, and between rural and urban socio-economic conditions with women as the central focus. The proposals outlined at the end of most of the papers are useful guidelines for further research as well as for formulating public policies. Although the book has an ambitious title, it deals only with some selected aspects of Malaysian women. There is almost no mention of ethnic heterogeneity, or of issues of religion, prostitution, etc. Nevertheless, the book is a valuable contribution to studies on Malaysian women and more generally to the literature on women's issues in Southeast Asia.

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