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# SOJOURN

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## PREFACE

Ethnic and religious factors have, in the last few decades, confounded many social analysts by refusing to disappear. The “liberal expectancy” among social analysts used to be that modernization would blur ethnic distinctions, achievement would replace ascription and particularistic criteria, and wide-ranging communication and education systems would homogenize populations. The “radical expectancy”, was that differences in religions, language, and culture would be swallowed up, perhaps even across national boundaries by emergent class consciousness. Instead, religion and ethnicity continue to cut across and envelope almost every facet of Southeast Asian life. Indeed, if anything, such divisions in many societies have become sharper, ethnic and religious interest groups more insistent, and opposition more politicized and strident. Much of this activity seems to be increasingly played on the urban stage. And this at a time when the pace of urbanization in Southeast Asia is increasing rapidly, to the extent that by the turn of the century cities like Manila, Bangkok, and Jakarta could have populations of more than ten million each. In these settings Southeast Asian ethnic, religious, and linguistic complexities are likely to be even more challenging than in the past.

With this in mind, the Institute in 1985 convened a meeting of senior Southeast Asian social scientists to discuss issues of social change in Southeast Asia, in order to identify firm areas of research and a sharper

focusing of such research and associated activities. The group were unanimous in their conclusion that it was "essential and desirable" to encourage the study of social issues in Southeast Asia.

To allow for proper planning and incremental research, the group felt that work in these areas could be most effectively developed within the structure and support of a programme, rather than as *ad hoc* projects. Accordingly, it was proposed there be established a programme of research to be known as "Social Issues in Southeast Asia" or SISEA. This programme would address itself to the nature, persistence, and impact of religions, ethnicity, urbanism, and population change in terms of their intrinsic dynamism and potential for societal conflict, co-existence or co-operation in the context of development, stability, and nation-building.

"Social Issues in Southeast Asia" (SISEA) was launched in 1986 with a founding grant from the Ford Foundation. Based at the Institute the programme is under the overall charge of the Director, Professor K.S. Sandhu. Dr Sharon Siddique, Senior Fellow of ISEAS, is the Co-ordinator. A Regional Advisory Committee was also established to advise and guide the programme. It was decided too that a regular periodical, *SOJOURN: Social Issues in Southeast Asia*, should be launched.

Of course the idea of having a journal that would specifically focus on issues of ethnicity, religion, urbanism, and population change is not new. It has been with the Institute for several years, including its first mooted in the form of a *Southeast Asia Ethnicity and Development Newsletter* in January 1977, and the publication of a *Southeast Asia Ethnicity and Development Directory of Scholars*. Now, with the experience of producing that *Newsletter* and the *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science* behind us, and the increasing cogency of the issues that the proposed journal would address itself to, we are all the more convinced that such a journal is timely.

To ensure proper production and control of quality, the Institute has assembled together a Regional Advisory Board, on which are represented established scholars from within Southeast Asia, a group of eminent International Corresponding Members, as well as an Editorial Committee that would be responsible for the day-to-day running of the journal.

We feel confident that *SOJOURN: Social Issues in Southeast Asia* will be viable and meet a vital professional need. Moreover, it would rationalize and complete the Institute's periodicals publication programme of three journals – *ASEAN Economic Bulletin*, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, and *SOJOURN: Social Issues in Southeast Asia* – serving the special requirements of each of the Institute's main fields of research in economics, politics and security, and ethnicity and development, respectively.

PROFESSOR K.S. SANDHU  
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Institute of Southeast Asian Studies