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Monograph no. 32

Women's work and women's roles

Economics and
everyday life in
Indonesia, Malaysia
and Singapore

Lenore Manderson
editor

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Lenore Manderson editor

Series editor Helen Hughes

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Abstract

Early observers of Southeast Asian societies frequently commented upon the varied and disparate nature of women's work, and upon the authority and power which resulted from women's active participation in the economy. Undoubtedly women in some situations enjoyed far fewer restrictions than did their counterparts in the homelands of their colonial rulers.

The authors of this monograph have examined the roles of women, past and present, in a variety of societies, in Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. The chapters deal with specific societies and situations, and no attempt has been made at a comprehensive overview of areas, ethnic origins, religious or social classes.

However, certain themes recur. One is that, since development and modernization began, women's contribution to society has been increasingly ignored and undervalued. Second, although industrialized development has provided opportunities for training and for earning money outside the village environment, the opportunities have largely been for men.

A third theme seems to be that, although many elite women have been able to take advantage of the opportunities generated by development, peasant women have almost always been disadvantaged. The chapters generally show that the official, Western-influenced, view of the woman's role as primarily that of wife and mother has constituted a loss for all women, and has entrenched attitudes which do not necessarily conform to the realities of women past or present.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Lenore Manderson

In April 1871, Mohamed Ibrahim set off on the first of five voyages on behalf of the Maharaja of Johore to document conditions in the states of the west coast of the Malay Peninsula. In Malacca, he noted that the Malays living upstream from the town 'lived by their own efforts and by the sweat of their brows, working their gardens, orchards and rice-fields, and growing all kinds of calladium tubers, vegetables, betel, sugar-cane, bananas, and so on':

Moreover, the Malays ... wear trousers, jackets, and sarongs that are worn and patched, both in the case of men and women, and all of them have money in varying degrees. They possess orchards, rice-fields, gardens, homesteads and land of their own, and they all have gold and diamonds. But they do not display their wealth, nor slacken their efforts under pretext of fatigue, but labour diligently every day, both men and women alike. I noticed that their tasks were divided between the men and the women ...

The women's work was as follows: scattering seed, planting and transplanting rice seedlings, plaiting, pounding, visiting, reaping rice, sweeping, looking after the children, cooking, sewing, embroidery, gathering up and plucking fruit, winnowing, sieving, carrying things under the arm and on the head, cutting with small implements, binding, whittling, banding, etc. (1975:28-9).

As a result of these observations, Ibrahim perhaps deserves recognition not merely as a chronicler of note, but as one of the first literate feminists in the region: he acknowledged and understood the varied and disparate nature of women's work, work often beyond quantification.¹ Women's activities - in the fields, in the home, in the community - all contributed to production; it took Western feminists another century to draw the same conclusions.

Whilst women's autonomy and authority as a result of their participation in the economy is implied rather than explicitly stated in Ibrahim's commentary, other commentators on Indonesian

and Malay life drew attention to their freedom. Thus, Swettenham noted that 'after marriage, a woman gets a considerable amount of freedom which she naturally values. In Perak a man, who tries to shut his womenkind up and prevent their intercourse with others... is looked upon as a jealous, ill-conditioned person' (1967:20). Further, Malay women enjoyed 'powers of intelligent conversation, quickness in repartee, a strong sense of humour and an instant appreciation of the real meaning of those hidden sayings which are hardly ever absent from their conversation' (ibid.). The accession of women to the throne in Aceh and Kelantan from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries² provides further evidence that, religious proscription notwithstanding, women in the islands and peninsula of Southeast Asia were perhaps not as oppressed as women in the homelands of their colonial rulers.

Little wonder then that later women scholars were attracted to the region: Margaret Mead in Bali from 1936 to 1938; Rosemary Firth in Kelantan in 1939-40; Judith Djamour in Singapore in 1949-50; Hildred Geertz in Java in 1953-54. These women (and their male colleagues) were struck by the participation of indigenous women in economic life, and the extent to which this afforded them autonomy, power and authority. Kartini's contrary portrait of women imprisoned, literally and metaphorically, seems peculiarly bound by class and region: for whilst peasant Javanese women were no less active agriculturalists and traders than their Malay sisters, elite women elsewhere controlled substantial wealth and ran business ventures (e.g. see Gullick 1958:85).

Given the active involvement of women in economics and everyday life, recent government approaches to the role of women appear confusing. Calls such as that by Sjarif Thajeb, Indonesian Minister for Education and Culture in 1975, to women to 'increase their participation in modernization and development in those fields appropriate to their nature and biology' (Perkumpulan Pemberantasan Tuberkulosa 1975:41), calls which emphasize women's roles as wives and mothers whilst ignoring the realities of women's lives, suggest bureaucratic myopia and/or an unwitting acceptance of Western values, the legacy perhaps of both colonialism and neo-colonialism regarding sex, behaviour and power.

These distinctions of gender — the cultural construction of maleness and femaleness — have served to exploit and oppress women in contemporary society. Women's access to formal political office, their opportunities for education and vocational training, their participation in the labour force, today are restricted because of assumptions made by both men and women regarding the interests and the capabilities of women. Women work no less and no less hard today than when Ibrahim made his observations, but increasingly their work has been obscured and undervalued. Both the patterning of oppression and the realms of autonomy and independence are the concerns of this book.

Institutions, theory and reality

Historical, political, economic, social and cultural factors singularly and severally affect the position of women in society and the extent to which they enjoy independence and control over their own lives. There is no chapter in this book, however, which attempts to weave together these threads and to offer an assessment of the status of women in Indonesia, Malaysia or Singapore. The status of women remains a nebulous and elusive concept, essentially unworkable, which serves to confuse rather than to enlighten the reality of women's lives. Moreover, as Barbara Rogers has argued, the status of women, used conventionally, ignores the variety of women's experiences and positions, including within the family and according to age and class. Further, she maintains that the concept of status 'dehumanizes and objectifies [women] ... allowing no concept of their autonomy and independent action' (Rogers 1980:30).

Here we are concerned with specificity rather than with generality. It is however useful, by way of introducing the substantive chapters of this volume, to examine generally some of the social and economic factors which touch on women's lives and shape their destiny.

Religion has proved to be a stumbling block for a number of commentators on women in Southeast Asia, in part owing to the assumed wholesale adoption of the religions in question, in part owing to normative statements regarding the role of women made by adherents themselves. Thus Chipp and Green, for example, claim that 'in Indonesia, the customary law associated with high female status has been lowered by Hindu and Islamic influence, and in Malaysia the strong influence of Islam has considerably lowered the status of women' (1980:106). Setting aside alternative arguments for the relatively higher status of women under Islam (such as Siti Zalikah 1979), such statements ignore the ways in which religion has been integrated into traditional beliefs and customary law. Both in Indonesia, where adherence to Islam in general is often more notional than real, and in the Malay Peninsula, where Islam apparently governs moral and everyday life, basic provisions of Islamic law, including those pertaining to inheritance, serve as guiding principles rather than enforceable prescriptions: land, for example, tends to be inherited on the basis of individual need and location of the holding or in accordance with *adat* (customary law) (Strange 1980:135; Willner 1980:184). Similarly, with respect to the other religions of the region — Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism — piety is not synonymous with blind dogmatism. In certain respects, of course, religion has been perceived by Indonesian and Malaysian women themselves as placing them in a position of disadvantage relative to men; this is clear with respect to their attitudes towards the marriage laws (Manderson 1980a:185-9; Soewondo 1977; Vreede-de Stuers 1976).

Whilst religion need not be a major factor affecting the position of women, kinship systems profoundly affect female autonomy and control. Blumberg, for example, suggests that kinship systems favouring matrilineal kin enhance the possibilities of female economic power (1976:20): kinship patterns in Malaysia and Indonesia support this statement. In the matrilineal societies of the Minangkabau of West Sumatra and the Malaysian states of Negri Sembilan and Malacca, women in theory and in fact enjoy considerable power and prestige. Elsewhere a bilateral kinship system operates, but here this system no less than matrilineality assures women continued kin support after marriage and control of capital (land, cash, jewellery and other valuables), providing them with a basis for decision-making authority. Among Malays in Singapore, Djamour reports that paternal kin are considered to be 'stronger' than maternal kin and enjoy higher status, but, in practice, for advice, practical and financial assistance, ritual purposes and friendship, maternal kin are the more important (1965:32-3; see also Tham 1979:91-3). Djamour suggests that the fact that a woman can always depend on her own kin for moral and material support is largely responsible for the degree of independence she shows in her conjugal relationships (1965:143). In a number of societies, such as Aceh, maternal kin ties are reinforced with uxorilocal and matrilocal residence, that is the husband resides in the wife's village and household. Even where matrilocality is not the rule, the importance of maternal kin is recognized legally as well as socially. Thus whilst Muslim divorce favours men in general, a woman may include in the *ta'alik* the conditional clauses of the marriage contract, the right to be divorced if the husband prevents her from meeting her parents freely or if he requests her to live far away from her kin (e.g. see Djamour 1965:111, 114). Amongst immigrant communities, however, patrilineality and patriarchy predominate, and within the family women are accorded little prestige or privilege.

Economics and everyday life

With few exceptions (see Chapter 4), marriage and motherhood make up the assumed vocation of all women, and their first duty is to their husband and children. But being a wife and mother is not, and is not considered to be, an exclusive role. Traditionally Malay and Indonesian women have played a vital economic role, undertaking a wide range of tasks which provided them with economic independence and thus considerable autonomy and power.

In a number of societies, the institutionalized absence of men for extended periods of time is premised on the ability of women to assume full responsibility for the subsistence of their families and the community at large. In many Sumatran societies, male absence from production is institutionalized in the form of *merantau*, whereby young men leave their natal village for a

period in order to seek their fortune: successful emigrants may later send for their families; others return to the village for permanent settlement. In Minangkabau and Batak society, the emigrants tend to be unmarried men, although young married men may also leave to seek their fortune. But in Aceh, a stronghold of Islam, married men spend much of their time away from the villages, earning cash to meet cash needs in the villages. Residence in this society, as noted above, is uxori-local. The women control and often own rice land as well as their houses; they undertake most subsistence agricultural labour and generally control the produce; and they are responsible for family affairs. Men therefore play a peripheral role economically and residentially (Tanner 1974:139; Siegel 1969: *passim*).

Traditional patterns of male migration and female control of the domestic economy are not confined to Sumatra, however. Amongst the Iban of Sarawak, younger husbands as well as bachelors undertake long journeys (*jalai*), often lasting several months and 'essential to the biography of any man who seeks social esteem' (Miles 1979:233): here the typical agricultural labour force per household comprises two women and one man, often an elder. And in Rotinese and Savunese society, women again undertake most of the fishing activities, gardening and pig-rearing, whilst herding falls to the very young and very old men, leaving the majority of adult men free to undertake a range of activities including leaving their island for extended periods. Men to the age of 30 or 40 'are allowed to wander and travel, gaining "experience", and involving themselves in a variety of catch-as-catch-can activities' (Fox 1977:56).

Elsewhere extended male absence is neither institutionalized nor common, but women remain integral to the peasant economy (and indeed to gathering-hunting economies in the region, see Endicott 1979). Whilst men typically prepare the land for rice and cut and repair field embankments and ditches to allow irrigation, women frequently are solely responsible for establishing and tending nurseries, transplanting seedlings, weeding the fields, harvesting the grain, winnowing and threshing the rice. Tasks associated with the production of other crops, both for cash and subsistence purposes, again are distributed on the basis of sex: in the production of rubber, for example, men may be the major tappers, women undertake the mangling, and men sell the sheets to the rubber dealers (Wilson 1967:73). The production of copra tends to be a family affair involving adults and children as well as men and women (Strange 1980:137); commercial vegetable production tends to fall to women as an extension of their production of vegetables for domestic use. Domestic animal husbandry and silviculture have also tended to be women's work, with the assistance of children. At the same time, as Mohamed Ibrahim noted in 1871, women undertake a variety of domestic duties: fetching water and firewood; laundry; the preparation of food for daily, commercial and ritual purposes; household cleaning; sewing; caring for children.

Even when women are involved in production primarily for subsistence purposes, any surplus may be traded. Further, women participate in a variety of other money-making activities: Firth (1966:30) includes 'the making and selling of snacks, betel- and vegetable-selling, thread-spinning and net-making, harvesting padi for wages, making clothes, net-making and gutting fish for the dried fish market, and also dealing in fresh, dried, and cooked fish'. Whilst large-scale trading may be undertaken by men working in informal consortiums to maximize gain (Dewey 1962:116), and whilst men may work as petty traders of particular items such as ice-cream, typically the traders of the region are women working on an individual basis for a small return. Moreover, women have not been excluded from trade as a result of capital penetration and structural changes to marketing. Village women on the east coast of the Malay Peninsula, for instance, still work as street hawkers but also predominate as shopkeepers, sell goods on consignment, and undertake other entrepreneurial activities: their ability to do so is based on a general belief in their superiority to men as financial managers and business dealers (Strange 1980:138-40). Of course trade is not always a
 ✕ lucrative business for the women involved; even so, it provides women with a regular income to meet immediate family needs and with a power base of sorts. Thus Stoler, writing on Java, comments that 'among poor households, the woman's earnings provide her with an important position *within* the household economy; among wealthier households, such earnings provide her with a material basis for social power' (1977:84, emphasis in the original).

↓ Regardless of their economic activities, women play a decisive role within the household, performing executive and managerial as well as labour functions. Women usually receive cash earned by their husbands and assume responsibility for its spending and saving, returning to the men only a limited amount for coffee and other sundry expenses. Since women receive male income, since they control their own property acquired both before and after marriage, and since they control their own income, they are able to exercise considerable power: Willner, for example, notes that Javanese women are involved in and often determine transactions and obligations with respect to land, marketing, wages and harvesting in addition to everyday household matters and the welfare and upbringing of their children (1980:186).³ Further, as noted above, women are assumed to be more adept than men at the management of money, and they may be in a stronger position to secure loans to allow for capital expansion (e.g. Strange 1980:140).

It should be stressed, however, that the above portrait of economic participation and patterns of authority and control relate to Malay and Indonesian women. There has been little research on women's work and domestic power and authority within either Indian or Chinese immigrant communities in Southeast Asia. Poor immigrant women worked in tin mines, on rubber estates, as

road labourers, in domestic service, and as prostitutes; but here wage earnings need not be synonymous with power and authority. Freedman's work amongst Chinese in Singapore indicates that women had little control over cash income and household budgeting, and little opportunity to escape the limitations of a strict patriarchy (1957:42). Aline Wong's recent work (1979a) again indicates that Singapore Chinese women working at home, that is not in paid employment, have a limited say only in decisions concerning themselves, household expenditure and other family matters: she suggests that the status of women within the family appears to be positively correlated to both female education and employment.

Moreover, whilst Malay and Indonesian women and men participate fairly equally in the public sphere in economic activities, women are far less visible in politics at a village and more recently at a national level (Manderson 1980a and b). Similarly they tend to play a subordinate public role to men in ritual occasions, although in both politics and ritual their behind-the-scenes roles are often critical. Tradition allows boys greater freedom than girls; and socialization is in accordance with expressed and perceived gender differences. Whilst women are involved with men in public economic life, men are far less involved in the private sphere, not only in terms of power and authority but also with respect to work. A man may take over tasks such as cooking when the woman is temporarily absent or ill and if there is no older daughter or nearby female kin to step into her shoes. Malay and Indonesian men tend to be loving and indulgent fathers. In general, however, men do only 'men's work', but women do both 'men's work' and 'women's work'.⁴

Ethnicity and class

It should be evident already that women are not a homogeneous group about whom we can draw generalizations regarding their social status. Ethnicity and class both serve to divide women no less than men and may affect profoundly the position of women within society and the possibility for change. As noted above, cultural institutions such as kinship systems and religion accord women status differentially and relegate to them a varying degree of power and autonomy. Moreover, for politico-historical reasons women of particular ethnic groups may be relatively disadvantaged within society at large. Thus Chinese and Indian women, particularly those of the working class, have been disadvantaged within Malaysian society whilst development plans isolated the Malay community as the prime target for economic assistance. The insensitivity of planners to the realities of women, regardless of class and ethnicity, suggests that women may not have gained even had plans prior to the present aimed at alleviating poverty irrespective of race: still, whilst there are formal and institutional means of support for individuals from particular ethnic groups only, then there is potentially a means by which

individual women of that ethnic group may take advantage to secure and improve their economic position. Further, access to prestigious occupations may be limited for women of particular ethnicity. And in addition, as Beverly Lindsay points out, whilst racism may not affect directly the everyday lives of women in the third world, still all women are affected indirectly: 'race and racism, which buttress many international economic and political negotiations, policies, and programs, influence the lives of women in politically sovereign nations' (Lindsay 1980:298).

Similarly, class provides status boundaries for women as well as men. Thus individual women in Malaysia and Indonesia have enjoyed freedom and power, politically and economically, as members of a small, wealthy, well-educated elite, not only by virtue of their access to men in authority (cf. Papanek 1976:56) but in their own right. In particular, independence gave to elite women many opportunities for personal advancement: during a period when there was a shortage of skilled personnel, the countries concerned could ill afford to discriminate on the basis of sex (Manderson 1980b:86). But their gains and advancements have not been for all women. As Wong points out, upper class women

belong to the elite structure which employs various institutionalized means to safeguard their own elite positions, barring both men and women from the lower rungs of the social ladder from further entry ... the few highly-educated women who succeed in making inroads into the small world of occupational elites may symbolize social *inequalities* rather than the achievement of sexual equality to the majority of women in the lower and working classes (Wong 1979b:183, emphasis in the original).

Further, elite women have been able to take advantage of opportunities which present with development and thereby to consolidate their class position. Thus elite Malay women run successful travel agencies, real estate firms, boutiques, hair-dressing salons, speciality shops, and so on, often concurrently with full-time professional employment and often with capital borrowed on favourable terms through government agencies. Poor women lack access to information and contacts to enable them to do likewise. I have pointed out above that poor women may enjoy considerable autonomy and authority because of their participation in economic life, but within their own class: their access to employment opportunities is limited and wage labour guarantees neither power nor privilege (cf. Blumberg 1976:20).

In addition, perceptions of the status of women differ across class and ethnicity. Sundanese women, for example, consider the involvement of educated women in trade to lower their status (Raharjo 1980:45); relatively well-off rural and urban

women who chose to be housewives consider their economic dependence to be a small price for the prestige which they enjoy in consequence (Hull 1976a; Strange 1980:132).

Development and change

Colonialism brought about a number of changes which influenced the lives of women economically and politically. Neo-colonialism and development continue to affect women's lives, although not uniformly.

Generally, as Boserup (1970:53-65) illustrates, the difference in labour productivity between the sexes increased under colonial rule, as men learnt new mechanized farming techniques; as formal schooling and extension courses made manifest gender differences, usually in line with European rather than indigenous norms; and as women lost their right to land through the formal registration of titles. Development plans, often conceived during the colonial period and nurtured after independence by local Western-educated elites and international aid agency officials, perpetuated these trends. According to Tinker (1976: 24), 'development has tended to put obstacles in women's way that frequently prevent them from maintaining what little economic independence they do have ... compared to men, women almost universally have lost as development has proceeded'.

Such generalizations are useful only as a starting point to assess the impact of colonialism and development on women in Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. Under Dutch rule in the colony of Indonesia and British rule in the Malay Peninsula and Singapore, elite women early had access to formal, including higher, education and were able to join elite men in prestigious professional and administrative positions. However, female education was closely tied to European perceptions of a suitable education for women (Manderson 1978) and hence the employment of women generally was confined to areas considered to be appropriate to their gender. Immediately after independence, there was little change in the education system or in the opportunities of employment for women in either Indonesia or Malaysia. More recently Kuo and Wong have suggested that in Singapore universal education, widening employment opportunities, and government encouragement of female labour force participation have led to changes to the advantage of women, including independence economically and within their families (Kuo and Wong 1979:10).

Whilst elite women have gained in certain respects during the colonial period and with development, working class and peasant women generally have been disadvantaged. But in other respects all women, regardless of class, have lost. European values regarding the roles of women, whereby women are considered subordinate to and dependent upon men, have been adopted and

incorporated into the education system and the workplace, compounding and reinforcing traditional notions of gender difference. The compliance of elite women with the articulation by (male) government leaders of gender difference and assumed female inferiority constituted a loss for all women, entrenching values and attitudes regarding the roles of women which do not necessarily conform to the realities of women in either the past or the present.

Specific instances of women's losses with modernization are manifold. In Negri Sembilan in Malaysia, matrilineal land holdings were recognized by the British administration where land was under cultivation. But whilst women retained their rights to padi and house compound land, they were alienated from land in fallow when registration of land ownership to ensure the continuation of inheritance rights was introduced. Subsequently, men were able to put this land to good use for cash crops (Swift 1963:276-7). Elsewhere, I have detailed the ways whereby women have either been ignored or considered to be of marginal concern to development policy initiators and planners (Manderson 1980b, 1979a): the direct effects of this are dealt with in a number of chapters below. And Ann Stoler's article is now a classic exposé of the effects of development on women in the region: she provides rich detail of the ways women have been affected adversely by development in both trade and agriculture, although she stresses at the same time that structural changes in the colonial and present economy have *not* increased sex-role differentiation; rather these changes have increased the scarcity and concentration of strategic resources, adversely affecting both poor women and poor men (Stoler 1977:89).

The penetration of foreign capital as much as mechanization has resulted in losses for women. In Java, for instance, the importation of Coca Cola and Australian ice-cream displaced local soft drink and ice-cream, manufactured predominantly by women (Tinker 1976:27-8). Recent initiatives to attract foreign capital, such as the inducements offered to transnational corporations by the Malaysian Government, have provided young women with employment but at a price: arduous and monotonous work in poor conditions for low wages (Ackerman 1980; Jamilah 1980; Lim 1978).⁵ Strange (1980: 133-4) has demonstrated that modern facilities and consumer items have increased rather than reduced domestic work: gravity-flow toilets, for instance, must be scrubbed; furniture must be dusted and aired. Willner also suggests that women's authority has declined with industrialization and the diversification of the labour force: 'When the sources of a man's income are far from the locus of his household, his wife tends to have less control over it' (1980:187).

The chapters below deal with women in both past and contemporary societies in Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. They neither cover the areas equally nor do they deal with all ethnic groups. Thus there are no chapters on women in East Malaysia and only one on Singapore; there are no chapters dealing with Indian immigrant women. They are not uniform in their perceptions of women in the region or necessarily in agreement with regard to the position of women in traditional or contemporary society. Yet themes, including some outlined above, echo from one chapter to the next.

The collection opens with Susan Abeyasekere's chapter, set in nineteenth-century Batavia (today, Jakarta). The chapter explores women's roles in the production of a distinctive Batavian urban culture. Through both sexual and economic relationships with members of other ethnic groups and classes, women provided the links between different cultural groups. This led to the development of cuisine, clothing, and artistic media which drew from the diversity of cultures within Batavia but which emerged as a new homogeneous form. Women's intermediary role was sustained until the end of the century, when improved communications and contact with the various home countries such as China and Europe led to the re-establishment of separateness, in which context women's new role was that of cultural guardian.

Margaret Bocquet-Siek's chapter explores the contradictions that emerged for one group of women who were historically part of this intermingling of cultures. Peranakan Chinese women in certain respects enjoyed the benefits of both Chinese and Javanese culture: the protection from the family provided in accordance with Confucian values and traditions; the relative freedom, both of mobility and of economic activity, and the relatively high status, of Javanese society. But access to Dutch education, and to Western knowledge also through Chinese language schools, encouraged women to question the constraints placed upon them, particularly with respect to marriage. This chapter documents to 1940 the debate concerning women's roles within Peranakan Chinese society and the gradual loosening of restrictions, for elite women especially, that occurred in this period.

Linda Connor focuses on a group of women in Bali, whose status derived from their occupation as healers and whose role within the economy was little affected during the colonial period and has continued despite the increased extension of Western health care services and medical knowledge. As in other areas of social and economic life, women's work in healing was (and is) circumscribed by ideas about gender; accordingly women have traditionally undertaken different healing work to men. But these ideas have changed with changes in the economy in the post-colonial period; such broad socio-economic changes have a critical impact on women's work and their workforce participation.

Ione Fett examines in historical perspective the position of women in Negri Sembilan, Malaysia, a society which maintains matrilineal law and thus formally grants to women considerable power. Changes in land tenure, following from the registration of land with the colonial government, are examined for the period 1900 to 1977. Perhaps surprisingly, women in 1977 collectively owned more land than in any other period. However, women's individual shares in the resource have declined, and in consequence women have increasingly lost their economic independence.

Susanna Price again documents the increasing economic marginality of women. In her chapter on women cloth-makers on the north coast of Java, she describes the changes in the sexual division of labour that have flowed from the introduction of technology. Changes have also occurred along class lines; accordingly, it is poor women especially who have been marginalized and left with the least remunerative and most menial tasks, whilst the village elite women as well as men have taken advantage of the technological changes to work in an entrepreneurial capacity. Kathy Robinson also considers the impact of industrialization on village life, although in this case the establishment of a mining company precipitated changes for both men and women. In Sulawesi, men have moved from agricultural work to wage labour for the nickel-mining company. Opportunity for wage labour for women is limited. Agricultural work has remained an option for many women, precisely because men have been attracted away from subsistence agriculture to industry. Other women have left the area in search of light industrial and service employment in urban areas, but for many there is little choice beyond domestic work.

Countries within the Asian region have, at least since the mid-1970s, recognized the processes of the marginalization of women with economic development and, in response, have implemented various remedial programs. Rosemary Barnard and Norma Sullivan are both concerned with programs designed to integrate women into the development process: in Rosemary Barnard's case in a rural area in northwest Malaysia; in Norma Sullivan's case in urban Java. Both chapters are critical of the programs, for they fail to take full account of the reality of women's lives and thus they offer skills which are often inappropriate to women's most pressing or perceived needs. In particular, the two chapters highlight the ideological premises upon which the programs have been developed. In Malaysia, it has been assumed that the household head is male; that authority rests with the household head; and that women's prime role is in the home, as a wife and mother. In reality women are often household heads; they contribute significantly to household incomes; and participate in the local economy as wage labour. Women's development programs, separate from those extended to men, offer a range of conventional skills, such as cooking and sewing, but the times

of the classes as well as the content ignore the needs of many of the women in the area. In Java, too, the key assumption is that women are wives and mothers first; any development program is delivered with this in mind. Norma Sullivan points out the role of upper and middle class women as well as men in formulating these programs. She provides details of two contrasting projects to argue her case: one, directed from above, which failed to achieve its purpose; the other, devised by the women themselves to meet immediate needs, which was successful. She underlines the importance for development program planners to understand actual on-the-ground situations, and to recognize the frequent gap between the ideal and reality, as a precondition for the success of formal initiatives aimed at integrating women into development.

Carlien Patricia Woodcroft-Lee's chapter is again concerned with the ideology of gender. She is concerned especially with the depiction of femininity in two major Muslim journals. In feature articles and in advice columns, a particular image of woman is produced which derives from Islam. Middle class women are presented as devoted wives and mothers, either with successful careers as well or actively engaged in community welfare work; pious and loyal to the nation; guardians of family morality and community purity. The journalists contributing to the magazines argue that Islam provides women with a separate but equal status; this chapter suggests that this is not necessarily the case.

Finally, Leslie O'Brien and Christine Inglis explore recent developments in the region: the increasing sexual division of labour with industrialization. Leslie O'Brien's chapter, which focuses on Peninsular Malaysia, offers a broad survey of women's position in the contemporary economy, and analyses the structural and ideological barriers to change. In particular, she highlights the differential access to education and training, which establishes the limits of women's participation in an increasingly specialized employment market. Christine Inglis is also concerned with specialization, notably the concentration of women within the teaching profession in Singapore. Over time, women have come to outnumber men as teachers, especially in primary schools. The Singapore Government's response has been to encourage men to re-enter teaching, but with limited success. Precisely because teaching is now 'woman's work', the profession enjoys little status in contrast to other jobs available to the middle class.

The clear message from these chapters is a depressing one: women have increasingly been marginalized and circumscribed in economic life; consistently they are seen in terms of idealized roles; the realities of their lives, especially if they are poor, are continually overlooked or ignored. Yet, at the same time, the chapters demonstrate the fact that women are social actors, participants in the processes of change as much as victims of

those processes. Thus they are able, as Norma Sullivan has illustrated, to take control to some extent. This suggests a future not necessarily as bleak as the chapters collectively might imply.

Notes

1. It would have been heartening to have located a woman rather than a man to nominate as first literate feminist in the region. Regrettably, whilst women learned to write when attending Koran classes, and whilst some women, mainly the daughters of immigrants, were already attending secular schools in the nineteenth century, they were not given the opportunity, like Ibrahim, to travel at court expense to document the conditions of their people. The first white woman to write about Malay society was Isabella Bird, also in 1871, but her consideration of women is fragmentary and her empathy with Malays is difficult to locate (Bird 1883). Kartini, of course, retains her pre-eminent position as the first woman in the region whose analysis of the position of women is available in published form (1964).
2. In Patani from 1584 to 1688, in Aceh from 1641 to 1699, in Ulu Kelantan from 1610 to 1671, and again in Kelantan from 1709 to 1716; see Manderson (1980a:25-6, 32).
3. Women's control over finances and authority within the home are dealt with in virtually all the ethnographies of the region: see, for example, Geertz (1961:123-5); Jay (1969:61-2, 87, 92); Koentjaraningrat (1960:104); Djamour (1965:41-2); Firth (1966:26-8); Tanner (1974:140, 144).
4. Rubbo makes this point with respect to women in rural Colombia. Whilst women do domestic work, 'women often do "men's work" as well, as agricultural day laborers and peasants. Men, however, rarely do "women's work"' (Rubbo 1975:338).
5. The Malaysian Government, for instance, has attracted Japanese electronic industries to Penang, with generous taxation concessions, free trade zones, the promise of cheap labour, and the assurance that labour will not be protected by unions within the industry.

Chapter 2

Women as cultural intermediaries in nineteenth-century Batavia

Susan Abeyasekere

The association of female with nature and male with culture, which Ortner examines as the cultural rationale for the universal subordination of women, tends to obscure women's critical roles also as custodians and transmitters of culture. First, as Ortner (1974:79-80) notes, women everywhere are responsible for child rearing and in this capacity are the primary socializers of children. The transfer of boys at an age of discretion from female to male care and socialization marks their passage from childhood to adulthood, but to argue that their education and initiation by men transforms them into fully human/cultural beings perhaps overemphasizes its significance. Men may indeed believe that their intervention transforms the natural child into a cultured adult, but the cultural patterning of humanness and maleness has already been laid down, much earlier, by mothers and women. Initiation into a male world is merely, to play on Lévi-Straussian analogy, the icing on the cake.

Beyond this, however, the identification of women with their biological functions and men with 'high culture' masks the role of women also as participants in the purveyors of culture in the adult world. In many cases, women facilitate and set the stage for the final male articulation of culture: the organization and preparation of ritual feasts, for example, are often the total responsibility of women; without their co-operation and skills, the festivities would not and could not occur. In addition, as Susan Abeyasekere illustrates below, women function as transmitters of culture among adults as well as to children.

In Southeast Asia as elsewhere, men, not women, have dominated 'high' or court culture - art, religion, literature, philosophy, etc. - but through marriage alliances and affinal ties women frequently acted as intermediaries between different cultures and were often the prime agents of acculturation. But not only high-born women fulfilled this role. As Susan Abeyasekere demonstrates, Batavian-born women as wives, mistresses, concubines, housekeepers, servants, nurses, cooks and slaves in European and immigrant Chinese households, and in independent capacity, served

as cultural intermediaries between the different ethnic groups in nineteenth-century Batavian society. Whilst the society was insulated from the outside world, their cultural role remained unchallenged.

Contemporary accounts of life in Batavia provide striking contrasts between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in terms of the reduction of ethnic diversity within the town and the emergence of new, specifically Batavian, cultural hybrids. This chapter aims to explain the conditions which made possible the greater cultural integration in nineteenth-century Batavia and in particular to evaluate the role of women in that process.

As the headquarters of the trading operations of the Dutch East India Company in the archipelago since 1619, Batavia had been built up by the Company from a mixture of imported peoples, after the original Sundanese inhabitants had been expelled. For a long time Sundanese were kept out of the town because of their hostility to the foreign interlopers, while the Dutch encouraged the immigration of Europeans and Chinese, admitted other foreign traders, recruited their army from all over the archipelago and beyond, and imported slaves to provide a workforce. Practising a policy of divide and rule, they tried to keep the different groups separate by designating officers to control each nationality in its own section of the town, and by proclaiming dress and other distinctions which enforced a strict social hierarchy. As a result, travellers' accounts of eighteenth-century Batavia describe a large number of ethnic groups in the town.¹ At the social apex, of course, were the Europeans, followed by other Christian groups, the *Mardijkers* and Native Christians. (The *Mardijkers* constituted a unique old Batavian group, being foreign Asian Christians converted by the Portuguese; many of them worked as soldiers for the Dutch. The Portuguese influence in early Batavia was so strong that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Portuguese was the town's *lingua franca*.) Next on the social ladder were the foreign Asian trading groups, the Chinese and 'Moors' (really Muslim Indians). The bulk of the population consisted of Indonesians, who were however divided into free and unfree and into their many distinct ethnic groups, the main ones being Javanese, Malays, Balinese, Buginese, Makassarese and Ambonese.

In the nineteenth century, contemporary accounts draw a much simplified picture of the population.² While Europeans were still the dominant minority, Native Christians and *Mardijkers* were not mentioned after the early nineteenth century. Chinese and Moors occupied the second most prestigious position, now accompanied by Arabs, who first appeared on the scene as traders in Batavia at the turn of the century (de Haan 1922:I, 486). The two lowest social rungs were still occupied by Indonesians, both

free and slave, but writers ceased to distinguish different groups amongst the 'natives', and in 1860, when slavery was finally abolished, the lowest level of the hierarchy disappeared. Moreover, the language of Batavia was established as Malay.

In accounting for the disappearance of the Native Christians and Mardijkers and the lack of differentiation within the Indonesian section of the population, an important factor was the relatively low level of immigration into Batavia from outside Java in the nineteenth century. In the seventeenth century and the first half of the eighteenth, the fairly rapid growth of the Batavian population was due to immigration, mainly from China and through slave importation. The high death rate in the unhealthy area of settlement in lower Batavia, near the coast, necessitated continuous replenishment of slaves. However, the slave trade had been abolished during the English interregnum, and Chinese immigration declined after the massacre of 1740, which was an over-reaction by the Europeans against illegal Chinese immigration (Milone 1966:195-7). Although the statistics are scarce and disputable, those available from different sources, listed in Table 2.1, support a picture of a city in which foreign population groups grew slowly during the century (except for the spurt in immigration by the small Arab group) while the Indonesian majority grew steadily, through immigration now from the environs of Batavia rather than from the outer islands. Although the East India Company had been reluctant to admit Javanese into the town, with the expansion in size of the settlement and the need for labour, Javanese communities were gradually incorporated into Batavia. The absence of sudden waves of immigration is important; in contrast with periods before and afterwards, in the nineteenth century Batavia was better able to absorb its immigrants, adapting them gradually to its evolving culture.

Several ethnic groups which ceased to be supplemented by immigration disappeared as separate entities. The Mardijkers seem to have merged with both the European and Indonesian groups; as Christians their women were acceptable as marriage partners by the Europeans, while many others, afflicted by poverty in the eighteenth century, found it too difficult to sustain a European life-style and were absorbed into the Indonesian majority. A similar fate befell the Native Christian population (Milone 1966: 174-87). Most Indonesian groups were characterized by acute sexual imbalance; some of them consisted mainly of men who had been recruited as soldiers, whereas the majority of slaves seem to have been women, probably because slaves were desired mainly as domestic servants. (For a breakdown of population according to sex, see Table 2.2.) In these circumstances sexual miscegenation was inevitable. As evidence of the decline of ethnic differentiation within the Batavian population, de Haan (1922:I, 475) gives examples of the breakdown of administrative efforts to separate the various Indonesian ethnic groups. Whereas in the seventeenth

century the Dutch had established distinct areas of the city (*wijks* for different ethnic groups, each with its own administrative head (*wijkmeester*), by the end of the eighteenth century this system had broken down, as instanced by the appointment in 1800 of a Javanese head over a so-called Balinese area. The whole system of administering the Indonesian population according to ethnic origin was abolished by Daendels in the early nineteenth century. Similarly the custom of organizing the Batavian militia along ethnic lines was abandoned in 1828 in favour of a geographical basis.

Table 2.1
Population of Batavia,^a 1815-95

	1815	1824	1828	1837	1844	1878	1888	1895
Europeans	2028	2810	2767	2687	2969	4427	7302	8553
Chinese	11854	12708	17587	18096	17207	23466	25579	26889
Arabs and Moors	437	601	756	569	565	890	1836	2955
Natives	18659	23108	29974	39685	38744	68822	64810	76169
Slaves	14239	5991	5290	1957	1365	-	-	-
Total	47217	45218	56374	62994	60850	97605	99527	114566

^a Batavia here, as throughout this paper, refers to the 'old' and 'new' parts of the nineteenth-century town: the *benedenstad* (the lower, northernmost section which is roughly what is now called Kota) and Weltevreden (the higher southern area around what is now Medan Merdeka), to which the Europeans moved at the end of the eighteenth century.

Sources: 1815: Raffles (1965:II, 246).

1824: C.S.W. Van Hogendorp, *Algemeen Jaarlijksch Verslag van de Staat der Residentie Batavia over 1824* (Algemeen Rijksarchief, Den Haag, Collectie Van Hogendorp, no.83), p.195.

1828, 1837, 1844: P. Bleeker, 'Bijdragen tot de Geneeskundige Topographie van Batavia', *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch Indie*, 1846:8(2), 449, 450, 456.

1878: *Koloniaal Verslag* (1880), Bijlage A.

1888: *Koloniaal Verslag* (1890), Bijlage A.

1895: *Regeeringsalmanak voor Nederlandsch Indie* (1900:1, 9).

What is particularly interesting about the new, more homogeneous Indonesian population is that it developed its own culture during the nineteenth century: the ethnic fusion resulted in the creation of a uniquely Batavian community which came to be called

Orang Betawi. These people spoke Batavian Malay – Malay heavily influenced by Balinese, Sundanese, Dutch, Chinese and Arabic – and were further characterized by their strongly Muslim nature, perhaps because of close relations with the small but prestigious Arab community and by contact with local Sundanese. The Orang Betawi developed their own cultural forms, including *Gambang Kromong*, a mixture of Chinese and Indonesian music, *Tanjidor*, a brass band in semi-European style, *Ondel-Ondel*, a procession of giant dolls, perhaps influenced by the Balinese, and Malay dances.³

Table 2.2
Population of Batavia, 1844

	Europeans	Chinese	Natives	Arabs	Slaves	Total
Men	1059	6598	17293	193	468	25611
Women	912	5539	12147	209	737	19544
Boys	529	2691	5160	85	111	8576
Girls	469	2379	4144	78	49	7119
Total	2969	17207	38744	565	1365	60850

Source: P. Bleeker, 'Bijdragen tot de Geneeskundige Topographie van Batavia', *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch Indie*, 1846, 8(2):456.

In this cultural hybridization amongst the Indonesians in Batavia, it is difficult to distinguish what was the particular contribution of women, although since the new culture emerged largely from a mixing of men and women of different ethnic groups, they must have played an important role.⁴ The significance of women is rather clearer in another area where one can detect a reduction of cultural polarity in Batavia: the so-called Indonesianization of the life of the Europeans and Chinese. This process, begun decades before, became a dominant feature of nineteenth-century Batavia. Much has already been written about the *Indische* (Indies-like) life-style, a creolized form of life in the Indies which has been described mainly in its upper-class European mode.⁵ It is well known that by the early nineteenth century, Europeans had forsaken the old Dutch-style town of lower Batavia, near the port, in favour of the healthier new district of Weltevreden further south, where the more well-to-do lived a relaxed, luxurious life in airy houses influenced by Javanese architecture, and modified their Dutch manners to eat *rijsttafel*, wear the *sarong* for informal occasions, take siestas, etc. This high *Indische* culture could be afforded by only a few Europeans and even fewer Chinese, Arabs and Indonesians who aped them. The European community in fact consisted predominantly of

Plate 2.1 Mixed family group, 1897: the head, a Dutch company representative, sits surrounded by his Chinese wife and their two daughters plus, amongst the other kindred, a son by a previous relationship with a Madurese housekeeper and a daughter by his first marriage with a European.

Plate 2.2 A *ronggeng* (street dancer and gamelan orchestra) visit a European house.

Source: R. Nieuwenhuys, *Tempo Doeloe: fotografische documenten uit het Oude Indie 1870-1914*, Amsterdam, 1961.

Eurasians, most of whom, as families of lower officials, soldiers and copyists, did not live in the mansions along the Molenvliet or around Koningsplein, but rather led a heavily Indonesianized life in the *kampongs* and barracks. These people could afford to buy few of the European imports which allowed the wealthy to support a more European way of eating, furnishing, etc., and although they clung to their European identity, they spoke Malay rather than Dutch.⁶ It was the Eurasians who popularized two cultural forms which had a wide following in Batavia: *Krontjong* (a form of singing Malay verses — often interlarded with Portuguese or Dutch — accompanied by Western musical instruments) and *Stamboel*, eclectic theatre where dramas borrowed from European, Middle Eastern, Indonesian and Chinese sources (amongst others!) were performed in Malay with frequent songs accompanied in a Western fashion (Manusama 1919 and 1922).

A rather similar picture is reflected in the Chinese community. Chinese officers, wealthy Dutch-appointed leaders of their group, were able to sustain the expensive religious and funeral festivities of their homelands, and to finance frequent Chinese theatrical performances. However, the day-to-day culture of *Peranakan* (Indies-born) Chinese, who made up the vast bulk of the Chinese population in Batavia, was intermingled with belief in Indonesian spirits, consultation of *dukuns* (Indonesian spirit-healers) and so on (Tjan Tjoe Som 1947-48). The Chinese language was no longer current amongst *Peranakan* Chinese, who used Batavian Chinese-Malay, a Malay influenced by Javanese, Dutch and Hokkien, in which some Chinese were publishing newspaper articles, verse and novels by the late nineteenth century (Kwee 1978). Certain cultural forms such as *Gambang Kromong* and *Tjokek* (a dance performed by a girl in Chinese dress accompanied by *Gambang Kromong*) were shared by both Indonesians and Chinese in Batavia (Budiaman 1979).

It is not difficult to detect the hand of women in the acculturation of Batavian Europeans and Chinese. The lack of women was particularly marked in these two immigrant groups; it seems the distances and hardships of travel, plus the unhealthiness of Batavia, made it difficult for women to emigrate. Population figures published in 1844 by the indefatigable amateur statistician Bleeker give the breakdown by sex and ethnic group as shown in Table 2.2. By the time those figures were recorded, sexual miscegenation between Chinese and European men with Indonesian women, necessitated by long-established sexual imbalance, had already gone so far that most of the people classified as European and Chinese were of mixed descent, and it was possible for most men to find partners within their own legally-defined population group. Already in the eighteenth century, travellers had commented on the un-European appearance and behaviour of wealthy Eurasian women in Batavia. The English, during their brief regime in Java, were shocked at what they saw as the adulteration of European society by Eurasian women. Lord

Minto remarked that they spoke little Dutch and had no accomplishments or refinements in manner and opinions, although he acknowledged their grace in their own dances (Hahn 1946:218). Mrs Raffles conscientiously strove to convert women away from the sarong and *kebaya* (favoured even by the wives of Councillors of State) to European fashions, and to inject her idea of elegance into the tiny circle of Batavian high society (van der Wall n.d.). In 1815 the English Major Thorn was able to comment approvingly: 'After the arrival of the English, the younger ladies, and those who mix much in society with them, adopted the fashionable habiliments of our fair countrywomen, and in their manner as well as dress they are improving wonderfully' (Thorn 1815:248).

However, Eurasian women continued to raise their children in an Indonesian atmosphere; those who could afford it allowed their children to be brought up in the care of Indonesian slaves and servants. It was always the women who set the tone of the mestizo culture: European men clung more closely to the Dutch model, since it was contact with the Dutch language and life-style which gave them status. This emerges clearly in the photographs and prints of the nineteenth century: almost invariably the European men are in Western dress, while the women often wear sarong and *kebaya*. If the family could afford it, European boys were given some European education, preferably in Holland; such education was not thought important for girls.

Presumably it was the strangeness, the Indonesianness, of Eurasians which produced the torrent of abuse poured out against them by Dutch writers in the nineteenth century. Eurasian women in particular are described by writers like Couperus and van Rees as promiscuous, selfish, cunning, lazy and superstitious — and also extremely sexually attractive.⁷ It is interesting to compare two equally critical views of marriage with Eurasian women. In 1827 Olivier was recommending that the speediest way for a young Dutchman to make his fortune in the Indies was to make a marriage of convenience with one of the Eurasian daughters of an influential and rich 'old hand'; the daughters of such a match would in turn prove valuable in forging new family connections (Olivier 1827:23-4). As an ironic reversal of this view, in 1900 Veth (1900:104) bemoaned the fact that most European men married Indies girls: although the men did it for love, he claimed, the girls married them purely with an eye to improving their status.⁸ Whatever the truth of the matter, Indies women were seen as failing to live up to the European standard as wives, and as intruding an alien element into European marriage.

A similar situation prevailed in the Chinese camp. Since the Chinese who emigrated to the Indies were not from the scholar class, their culture derived from Chinese folk culture which was adept at absorbing many and often contradictory influences (Kwee Kek Beng n.d.). In Batavia, where there were very few and poorly run classical Chinese schools, there was little to prevent

children of Chinese-Indonesian unions and their descendants from absorbing the Indonesianized Peranakan culture from their mothers, slaves and nurses. It is generally recognized that the traditional Chinese subordination of women was never successfully accomplished in Peranakan Chinese households; although women were kept in greater seclusion than in the Indonesian community, the custom of foot-binding never caught on, Peranakan daughters as well as sons inherited property, and some Peranakan women were held in public esteem in Batavian society (Salmon 1978:163-8). At the end of the eighteenth century the visiting Chinese Ong Tae Hae remarked that Chinese men in Java were very much afraid of their wives, who controlled all the affairs of the family (Ong Tae Hae 1849:8).

In the nineteenth century, marriage with Indonesian women was not the most common form of relationship for European and Chinese men: casual sexual encounters and concubinage seem to have been much more prevalent. For one thing, marriage between Christians and non-Christians was illegal until 1848. The keeping of *njais* or housekeepers was accepted in both European and Chinese communities. Although the liaison was unmentionable in polite Batavian society, unofficially it was recognized that since many young European males (especially those in the army) could not afford to marry a European woman, it was preferable for a man to lead a healthier, more settled life with a *njai* than for him to indulge in heavy drinking parties with his bachelor friends, accompanied by frequent visits to brothels. Moreover, in this way he could learn good Malay, which was essential for commercial and official intercourse in Batavia (Olivier 1827:14-15). Such Indonesian women in established relationships could be very influential in introducing their masters to Indonesian practices. At the same time, they acted as cultural brokers back into the Indonesian society also. Evidence reveals that *njais* acquired wealth and status through their association with Europeans and Chinese;⁹ for these and other reasons they were often influential in Indonesian society, so that even if they were unable to marry their foreign masters, and were obliged to leave service when the latter went home, married elsewhere, or dismissed them for bearing unwanted children, they could usually set up in business on their own and/or find husbands amongst other groups in which they could introduce the new tastes they had acquired.¹⁰ This may account for some of the Chinese and European cultural influences in the Indonesian group; for example Gambang Kromong, Krontjong and Stamboel were popular amongst Indonesians as well as Chinese and Eurasians, and European and Chinese architecture made an impact on simple Betawi houses. An aristocratic Javanese visitor to Batavia in 1865 considered the Indonesian Batavians to have been infected with foreign customs, such as sitting on chairs and eating at tables (Sastradarma 1865/1979:55-6).

Apart from sexual relations, it was necessary for well-to-do Chinese and European households to seek servants and slaves

outside their own population groups. It seems likely that the domestic social influence of these people was large, especially that of women servants who held strategic positions as nursemaids, cooks and seamstresses. They were able to influence the upbringing of children, the kind of food eaten and the clothes worn by the family. In wealthy European families it was considered essential to have a cook who could prepare both European and Indonesian dishes; it was in the nineteenth century that *rijsttafel* became the accepted daily meal (Ido 1939:11). Many European novels and memoirs attest to the close relations between European children in Batavia and their female Indonesian nurses and servants, who spoke to them in Malay, taught them Indonesian folk tales and songs and generally brought them up in the only way they knew how. The habitual nineteenth-century neglect of children by their parents in wealthy households left them open to deep Indonesian influence counteracted by little formal schooling. Apart from the children, relations between European adults and their servants also seem to have resulted in cultural exchange, to take a positive view of an exploitative situation. Some travellers describe the popularity of Indonesian massage, administered by skilled female servants or slaves in European households (Olivier 1827:140-1). It was common for European masters to have sexual relations with female slaves and servants, resulting in Eurasian children. Sometimes these children were legally recognized by their fathers, carrying further Indonesian influence into the European community, but more often it seems they were raised in the *kampongs*, clinging to their vestige of European prestige-by-descent.¹¹

The integrating role of women can best be seen if one examines the life of women across ethnic groups: there are striking similarities. Most notably, almost all Batavian women spoke Malay as their first language; relatively few European women (legally so classified) and almost none in the Chinese group spoke Dutch or Chinese, although their Malay was interspersed with words from these languages. Then again, almost all of them wore the sarong and kebaya. True, there were distinctive variations on this Indonesian dress form: European women and *njais* tended to wear lace-trimmed white kebaya; those of the *Peranakan* women had long points and the batik of their sarong was differently patterned and coloured; Betawi women wore longer, coloured kebaya.¹² There is plenty of evidence too that women all had habits which were regarded by foreigners as Indonesian: frequent bathing, chewing *sireh*, gambling at Chinese cards, consulting *dukun*, use of *jamu* (medicinal herbs), and belief in *guna-guna* (black magic). For instance, Dutch newspapers reported disapprovingly that an Indo-European (Eurasian) woman daily admitted native, Chinese and Indo-European women to her house to play *kwatjekie* (Chinese cards), and that a native woman fortune-teller was thronged with female native, Chinese and European clients (*Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, 14 April 1890 and *Java-Bode*, 11 September 1880). During the English interregnum,

a correspondent to the *Java Government Gazette* (20 February 1813) criticized the prevalence of gambling amongst European ladies, one of whom asked in a spirited reply (27 February 1813) what else they should do when the men went out at night to all-male card parties. There are numerous accounts of the attraction felt by women in European and Chinese households towards Indonesian society. De Haan (1922:II, 145) refers to a newspaper report in 1832 that a large number of European *Indische* women in Batavia preferred to sleep on the floor amongst slave women and children rather than in a bed. A moral tale is told by Veth (1900:105) about a young Dutchman who married an *Indische* girl; proving Veth's general argument that Eurasian women do not really care for Dutchmen, she disregarded her husband's wishes in consulting a *dukun*, playing cards with native women and finally having an affair with an Indo-European officer.

Since women made up almost half the Batavian population, clearly cultural integration had gone a long way in the town; at the least, Indonesian influences had pervaded domestic life across the ethnic spectrum. It could be argued that in European and Chinese communities, the foreign men were of marginal significance domestically; certainly Breton de Nijs, in his colourful memories of a Batavian Eurasian family (1954), gives the impression that *totok* (pure-blood) European husbands never really belonged to households dominated by Eurasian women close to the Indonesian world.

Even outside the domestic scene, social and cultural mixing was marked in nineteenth-century Batavia. Indonesians and Europeans participated in Chinese religious festivals and in gambling intended by the authorities only for the Chinese. For instance, at *Tjapgomeh* (Chinese New Year), Indonesians joined in the festivities, which included a range of entertainments; in 1884, besides the usual Chinese processions of *liong*, *barongsay*, etc., there was a Eurasian *dangsoe* (old Portuguese-style dance) performer, twenty or thirty Malay *dendang* (singing) groups, Arab *gamboes* (six-string lute), and *krontjong* played by Eurasians (*Bintang Barat*, 9 February 1884). Similarly, at the Chinese *Reboetan* festival in Pasar Baroe in 1875, there were Malay amusements like *Wayang Golek* and *Topeng Dalang*, and in the evening at the Chinese *Wayang Macao* performance, Europeans were present (*Bintang Barat*, 14 August 1875). A European traveller (van Doren 1851:97) reported in 1851 that Eurasians were very fond of Chinese *wayang* (theatre); they wandered around all night eating Indonesian snacks of *kemelo*, sugar cane, *katjang-goreng* and *kwee-kwee*. Close relations between Chinese and European elites were fostered by the inauguration in 1809 of the Opium Farm, a method of tax-farming which worked to the mutual benefit of Chinese entrepreneurs, the colonial finances, and high-living colonial civil servants who were dependent on indirect Chinese bribes, usually offered in the form of gifts on festive occasions.¹³ As a sign of this collaboration, wealthy Chinese and Europeans

liked to offer entertainment of all types to their mixed visitors. At the marriage of a Chinese couple in 1886, for instance, the feasting which went on for six days included illuminations and fireworks, Chinese wayang, Javanese *tandak* dancing and European music by the militia band (*Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, 23 April 1886). Europeans commonly invited Indonesian *ronggeng* dancers to their parties (Strehler 1833 and Nagel 1829:40). The wealthiest and most hospitable Eurasian Batavian, Augustijn Michiels, held sumptuous parties in which European music alternated with a Chinese orchestra and a Javanese *gamelan*, and the evening concluded with a *tandak* dance opened by the host, in Javanese dress, partnering one of his many beautiful slave girls (Ido 1939:81-2). Admittedly Michiels, who died in 1833, was an unusual man, but even later in the century when European society became more Europe-oriented, Europeans still could and did enjoy local culture. When *Komedie Stamboel* first appeared in the 1890s it had an enormous success amongst poorer Eurasians, and even wealthier Europeans appreciated it: a favourable review of a Malay Stamboel performance of *Hamlet* was published by a Dutch paper in 1900 (*Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, 26 June 1900), explaining that the music was played mainly on native instruments, while arias and duets were accompanied by violin, flute, cello and trumpet, ending with a 'fine *tableau vivant*'. It seems likely that women, as the most mobile group in this society, facilitated the spreading of cultural forms into different ethnic groups. Certainly they were prominent as public performers. Unlike in China where female roles were usually taken by eunuchs, in Batavia Chinese wayang was performed entirely by girls, and *ronggeng* and *tjokek* were public dances for women; women also featured in *topeng* dances and *stamboel*, and joined in improvising verses in *krontjong* competitions. When seeking to explain the way hybrid cultural forms flourished in nineteenth-century Batavia, it should be remembered that at that time there was little imported entertainment available to compete with the home-grown variety.

What has been argued so far should not be regarded as postulating a trend towards ultimate cultural integration in Batavian society. As the size of the Chinese and European population groups grew, they became increasingly self-sufficient, making exogamy and thus further acculturation less necessary. Above all, the distinctions of religion and status proved strong barriers against ultimate ethnic amalgamation. Official Dutch policy still enforced divisive regulations such as the prohibition (until 1848) of marriage between Christian and non-Christian, rules for distinctive dress by the main population groups, and different legal rights for different groups. The colonial society was strongly hierarchical; everyone was aware of the superior status of the European group, and the inferiority of the Indonesians, with the Chinese and Arabs taking an intermediate position. Daily incidents highlighted these distinctions; for instance, Europeans, especially soldiers, frequently harassed Indonesian and Chinese inferiors, and even within the European

group there was resentment between Eurasian and totok men because of their unequal competition for employment and European women. Although they might like to mix socially with Indonesian women, women belonging to the Chinese and European groups wished to retain their social superiority and above all to marry their children within their own group. The blurring of cultures which occurred did not shake the roots of the colonial social hierarchy: although able to move up and down the ladder more easily than men, women had no power to affect its political and economic foundations. Indeed, socially mobile women were as apt to suffer as to benefit from mobility in a system where the rules were set by the European elite: the misfortunes of discarded njais and their unrecognized illegitimate Eurasian children have been amply documented in nineteenth-century fiction, largely by sympathetic European women writers (Taylor 1977).

At the start of this chapter, Batavia's relative cultural homogeneity in the nineteenth century was contrasted with the greater diversity of the eighteenth. To conclude, one could draw other comparisons with the twentieth. Changes occurring in the outside world from the late nineteenth century onwards opened up Batavia to new and disturbing influences. Improved communications and larger numbers of immigrants from China and Europe increased the segregation of those groups as they became more conscious of having a distinct and superior ethnic identity. Batavian Chinese and Europeans were thus influenced by current racist and nationalist ideas in their homelands, and found it easier to keep abreast of home news, views and fashions. The founding of many new and reputable Chinese and European schools strengthened the special culture of those population groups. As an indication of their new relationship with other population groups, the colonial elite adopted the Ethical Policy, which, at the same time as it recognized the need to devote more attention to the needs of Indonesians, distinguished more sharply between the European and Indonesian cultures, and initiated a series of political and legal moves against the 'predatory' Chinese. With these changes, heavy criticism came to be levelled at women for 'watering down' the home culture; distinctions between those who lived according to the 'pure' culture and those who had 'gone native' began to be uncomfortable sources of division within Chinese and European communities. Reforms were attempted in child-rearing, food habits, religious customs, and so on. Couperus, revisiting Batavia in 1922 after a twenty-year absence from his place of upbringing, observed with regret a trend to Europeanize life: as an example he noted that whereas rijsttafel had been the almost standard lunch for Europeans, it had become fashionable to despise it as unhygienic and 'Indian' — so it was replaced by *boeuf braise*, sausages with curly kale and cabinet pudding (Couperus 1924:141). At the same time, Indonesians were also becoming more nationalistic; the importance of women as guardians of the culture was emphasized, and Indonesian mistresses or njais of Chinese or Europeans were regarded as traitors. This drawing apart and

division within different ethnic groups was accompanied by a greater influx of Sundanese and Javanese into Batavia; when that influx became a flood after World War I, the Orang Betawi were swamped. Jakarta culture was further fragmented, awaiting a new fusion.

In contrast with the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, therefore, nineteenth-century Batavia takes on the image of a social idyll, in which a relatively small, isolated society of different ethnic groups was able to pursue its own cultural forms in peace, undisturbed by major economic and political upheavals or great waves of immigration. In such a society women were able to play a vital role as cultural intermediaries, helping to shape a distinctive Batavian culture with ethnic variants.

Notes

1. Prominent examples of such accounts include Valentijn (1724-26 and 1782). The classic work on Batavia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is de Haan (1922).
2. As examples here, Olivier (1827-30), Hogendorp (1830), van Doren (1851) and Weitzell (1860).
3. On Betawi culture, see Budiaman (1979).
4. Within the Betawi community, however, the position of women was, rather surprisingly, more subordinate than elsewhere in Java. Milone (1966:252-3) has suggested this may have been an assertive reaction by Betawi men to the exploitation of women in a female-scarce society as well as a reaction against the way in which some Indonesian women used their power as a scarce resource to achieve positions of social superiority.
5. See for example Milone (1967), van der Kroef (1954: part 1) and Taylor (1978).
6. Victor Ido (pseudonym of Hans van der Wall), himself a Eurasian, has sympathetically portrayed the life-style of kampong Eurasians in Batavia in *De Paupers* (1912).
7. For example, Couperus (1921) and van Rees (1881) — see the story 'Een Sinjo-Klerk'. The portrayal of women in colonial literature is discussed in Taylor (1974).
8. This change in attitude towards the advantages of marrying Indies girls may also enforce the point argued by Jean Taylor (1978) that during the nineteenth century the power of colonial families waned as laws excluded members of Indies families from high-ranking government positions.

9. The slave register of 1816 shows that 134 njais in Batavia owned 272 slaves (Lyst der Slaven te Batavia 1816, Arsip Nasional, Jakarta, Varia 219). Occasional reports in *Java-Bode* in the 1850s and later show that these women held land and houses which came up for auction.
10. The classic story of a Batavia njai is *Njai Dasima*, recounting what is purported to be a true tale of the murder of a njai in 1813. One version of this tale is the verse-novel of O.S. Tjiang (1897). According to this story, the beauty and wealth of an Englishman's njai tempt a Betawi man to win her away from her master — and later to murder her. In a novel by F.C. Wilsen (1873), a European buys his njai a house before he leaves her to marry; she is then able to set up in business and to marry an Indonesian haji who is attracted by her wealth.
11. van Marle (1951-52:491) estimated that in the period 1861-1900 in the whole of the Indies, 1830 children of non-European mothers were recognized by their European fathers and thus legally became Europeans. Hans van der Wall has described the life of a resentful, non-recognized Eurasian in *De Paria van Glodok* (1921).
12. Note that in Tjiang's *Njai Dasima* (1897), when the njai married a Betawi, she was obliged to change her white kebaya, symbol of njai-dom.
13. See Rush (1977: ch.5). I am indebted to John Butcher for drawing my attention to this point.

Chapter 3

The Peranakan Chinese woman at a crossroad

Margaret Bocquet-Siek

In the previous chapter, we saw that with improved communications and increasing migration to Indonesia from both China and Europe, the relative cultural homogeneity of nineteenth-century Batavia began to break down. Ethnic groups stressed instead their cultural identity and distinctiveness. Women were criticized for 'watering down' their home culture, and were charged with guardianship of that culture.

But improved communications and increased migration also led to a questioning of the traditional roles of women. Kartini's analysis of the situation of elite Javanese women, for example, followed from her contact with liberal Dutch men and women; it was with their encouragement that she established schools for girls of her class. Exposure to Western ideas similarly affected Indonesian Chinese society. Peranakan Chinese women as well as men gained access to formal schooling, and in consequence began to question their traditional roles of wife and mother. By the late 1930s, many such women found that they were straying uneasily between the security of tradition and the promises of 'emancipation'.

In the following chapter, Margaret Bocquet-Siek examines the social and educational changes which generated confusion for many Peranakan Chinese women. The women of her chapter are, in effect, the daughters and grand-daughters of Abeyasekere's cultural intermediaries.

The Peranakan Chinese of Java have long been recognized as a specific group of people. After a centuries-long association with the indigenous Javanese they display in the early twentieth century a culture where elements of Chinese and Javanese culture are inextricably mixed.¹

Dutch colonial policies, particularly those relating to legal status, had divided the population of Indonesia into three separate groups. Restrictive legislation also left little opportunity for those population groups to mingle socially, so

that, by the twentieth century, the three groups, that is, the European, the Foreign Orientals and the indigenous population, had developed as three different entities alongside each other.

Culturally the Peranakan Chinese had adopted the Javanese way of life to a considerable degree. It has been observed that by the twentieth century the Peranakan Chinese spoke the local languages as well as Malay but did not know Chinese; they had also adopted many elements of the indigenous cuisine, style of dress and social customs. Where they had remained predominantly Chinese seemed to be in the realm of religious beliefs and world-view. Although more common in the past, by the twentieth century conversion to Islam was rare and most of the Peranakan Chinese adhered to a mixture of traditional Confucianism, Buddhist-Taoist beliefs and Javanese ritual practices and superstitions.

From an economic point of view the Peranakan Chinese were generally more affluent than the indigenous population. Under Dutch rule they had been accorded a higher social status than the average Javanese and had been allowed and given facilities to develop into a commercial and trading minority. Up to the end of the century they were politically indifferent.

The political awakening of the Peranakan Chinese came about the turn of the century. The change in the perception the Peranakan Chinese had of their own particular status in the colony was primarily caused by three factors: (i) the growing nationalist spirit in China, which reached the Chinese of Java around that time; (ii) a great influx of new Chinese immigrants into Java from mainland China, which changed the Peranakan Chinese environment by introducing a greater sense of 'Chineseness'; and (iii) the consequences of the Ethical Policy which the Dutch Government applied to the indigenous population from the early 1900s onwards (Suryadinata 1976).

An important result of this combination of events was a considerable expansion of education within the Chinese community of Java.

Early Peranakan Chinese education

Education organized along Western lines only came to the Peranakan Chinese of Java in the twentieth century.

The earlier migrants usually had come from the lower socio-economic classes in China. They were in the main poor farmers, artisans or small traders. In the society of the Indies they had little incentive or opportunity to study the Chinese classics which formed the basic steps towards social success in China. Moreover, this knowledge would have been of very little use to them in the plural society of the Indies. Respect for the written

word, however, was ingrained in the Chinese and did not leave them in their new homeland, and so, whenever their fortunes turned, the richer migrants would hire a teacher from China to teach their children; often several families would contribute to the cost of maintaining one teacher.

Although the Dutch Government in 1848 had started to provide in a small way some formal education to the Dutch, Eurasians and indigenous children, no such attempt was made for the Chinese population, the Dutch Government being of the opinion that the Chinese were foreigners and that therefore the Dutch were not responsible for their welfare. As late as 1896 Peranakan Chinese children from wealthy families were only reluctantly admitted to a Dutch government school whenever there were vacancies. Therefore, to obtain an education of some sort, the Peranakan Chinese in the Indies had to provide their own. Gradually there developed a private school system, where Peranakan Chinese children were taught the Chinese classics by rote, using the Hokkien language as medium of instruction, since the majority of Peranakan Chinese were of Hokkien extraction. One such school was the Beng Seng Sie Wan in Batavia in the 1770s. In 1899 there were around 217 schools of this kind in Java with over 4000 pupils. This type of education, based on the mere memorizing of classical Chinese texts without any understanding, was obviously both useless and irrelevant to the future of the Peranakan Chinese pupils. Many of the teachers seemed to have little understanding themselves of what they taught. This was not surprising since at that time successful scholars would not have left China (Suryadinata 1978; *Onderwijs Tionghoa di Indonesia*, Sin Po Jubileum Number 1910-1935).

By 1900 a need was felt to establish new schools where the curriculum and teaching methods would be more similar to those of Western schools. When the Dutch Government persisted in its indifference, a group of Peranakan Chinese leaders, inspired by growing nationalist feelings, established the *Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan* (Chinese Association, hereafter THHK) in 1900. Initially the aim of the THHK was to promote Confucianism and Chinese culture, but later it became principally an educational institution which was the driving force in founding Chinese schools, first in Java and later also in the other islands. The medium of instruction in these modern Chinese schools was not Hokkien but *Tjeng Im* or *Kuo Yu* (the National Language). The THHK schools became very popular with the Peranakan Chinese. The first THHK school was opened in Batavia in 1901; in 1908 the number had grown to 54, and by 1935 there were reported to be 450 THHK schools spread over the archipelago with an estimated 45,000 pupils (Nio Joe Lan 1940).

The rapid growth of the THHK schools alarmed the Dutch Government, in particular since in these schools English and not Dutch was taught as the principal foreign language. The choice was obvious. If Peranakan Chinese children wished to continue

their education in China, Hong Kong or Singapore, they would have to know English. Furthermore, English was more useful than Dutch since many Peranakan Chinese businessmen had commercial relations with Hong Kong and Singapore.

In 1908 the Dutch Government opened the first Dutch-Chinese primary school (HCS) in Batavia to counteract the influence of Chinese nationalism which rapidly spread through the THHK schools. The medium of instruction was Dutch and the curriculum similar to that of the European primary schools. Later, graduates from these HCS were admitted into Dutch secondary schools which linked up with the universities in Holland. From the beginning the HCS attracted a large number of Peranakan Chinese who saw in a Dutch education a means towards social and economic success for their children. The Dutch school system, however, remained an elitist system since high tuition fees and a means test prevented lower income Peranakan Chinese from enrolling their children in these schools (van der Wal 1963). Nevertheless, in 1939, over 25,000 Peranakan Chinese children were recorded as attending HCS, approximately another 3900 were following into Dutch secondary schools and more than 1800 were in vocational or commercial Dutch schools (*Statistical Pocketbook of Indonesia* 1941:22, 24).

Thus the Peranakan Chinese youth of the twenties and thirties were exposed to Western culture through two different channels, namely the Dutch and the English-Chinese school systems. From the start, however, the influence of the Dutch system was more pronounced. In the Dutch schools the Peranakan Chinese children were taught according to a purely Dutch syllabus, often by Dutch teachers recruited from Holland.

In THHK schools, Chinese civilization and Chinese language were still taught alongside Western culture and English. Moreover, the majority of teachers were Chinese. The pupils from THHK schools thus learned about Western ideas which were already coloured by the perceptions of their Chinese teachers. Initially many of these teachers were recruited from China, Hong Kong or Singapore.

The traditional role and status of the Peranakan Chinese woman²

The combination of Chinese and Javanese elements in Peranakan Chinese culture in Java was also discernible in the status that Peranakan Chinese women had and the role they were supposed to play in this society.

The earliest Chinese migrations consisted only of males. Chinese women did not migrate in appreciable numbers until the turn of this century. As a result, many Chinese men took indigenous women as their wives (Raffles 1965: I, 74). Later, when the

Peranakan Chinese community had stabilized, new arrivals would marry the daughters of established Peranakan Chinese families, although the practice of intermarriage with indigenous women continued until the twentieth century.

Since the practice of settling overseas and thus leaving behind the graves of one's ancestors was considered a serious breach of filial piety, it is safe to postulate that most migrants originated from the lower classes who were forced by economic circumstances to leave their homeland (Ta Chen 1967:6-17). In consequence the cultural practices they brought with them were consistent with their working class status. It follows that the indigenous women they married could only come from the lower classes of indigenous society, with few exceptions. Thus the Peranakan Chinese culture which came into being contained many elements peculiar to the lower classes of both Chinese and Javanese societies.

Following Chinese tradition, Chinese fathers would concentrate more on the education of their sons, leaving the upbringing of their daughters to their indigenous or Peranakan Chinese wives. In the event of their returning to China only sons would follow their fathers, while the wives and daughters were usually left behind to 'mind the shop'. As a result, women would display a stronger Javanese outlook than the men, so that in the traditional female domain more Javanese cultural traits were preserved. The Peranakan Chinese woman became more Javanese than the Peranakan Chinese man. This difference could be observed in matters like dress and hair-style.

Peranakan Chinese women wore *sarong* and *kebaya*, the usual dress of the indigenous women. The difference lay in the choice of colours and patterns of the sarong and the embroidery with which the kebaya was decorated. Peranakan Chinese men, however, never adopted the dress style of the Javanese men, preferring to wear the pyjama-style trousers and loose-fitting shirt of the Chinese working man. In the nineteenth century the trousers were sometimes made of *batik* material similar to the sarong of their wives. Many Peranakan Chinese women continued to wear the sarong-kebaya combination through the first half of the twentieth century, when the men had already adopted Western-style clothes.

Peranakan Chinese women wore their long hair coiled into a bun, after the fashion of the indigenous women, but Peranakan Chinese men did not cut off their queues until the first decade of the century, not realizing that the queue was actually a badge of servility imposed by the Manchu ruler on the Han Chinese. Once outside the jurisdiction of the Chinese empire they were under no obligation to wear a queue, yet this had become the distinguishing mark of the Chinese male, and it was only after the overthrow of the Manchu emperor that the Peranakan Chinese abolished this custom.

Plate 3.1 The first Peranakan Chinese girls attending a Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan School in Batavia, posing with Kang You Wei on his visit to Java in 1903. The girls were dressed in typical Peranakan Chinese dress - colourful sarongs and white kebaya. The kebaya were decorated with lace and had a higher neckline than Indonesian style kebaya. All girls wore their hair long and in a bun.

Plate 3.2 Girls from a Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan School in Batavia in 1925 performing a dance on the occasion of a commemoration celebrating the 25th jubilee of the establishment of the Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan Schools in Batavia. The girls wore a combination of western-style skirt and Chinese-style jacket. They still wore their hair long and coiled in a bun.

Plate 3.3 The first Chinese girl guides in Batavia on the occasion of their official installation on 10 October 1928. They were dressed in a complete girl guide uniform and all had their hair bobbed.

Source: Nio Joe Lan (1940).

吧城中華會館學校雙十節女童車成立攝影

Eating habits, too, were different: while men ate with chopsticks or spoon, many women ate with their fingers the indigenous way.

The crippling custom of foot-binding which had stunted womanhood in China for so many centuries was fortunately never adopted in the Indies, presumably because the Javanese mothers never knew how to bind the feet but also because in Indies society this custom had neither aesthetic nor social value (Lang 1968: 45-6). However, Peranakan Chinese girls had their teeth filed before marriage and many also chewed sirih leaves and betel nut, a custom taken from their indigenous grandmothers or mothers.

Indigenous traits predominated in all those matters which were of most concern to the women, in their dress and hair-style, in the cuisine, and rituals particularly connected with birth and marriage, in superstitions and taboos related to a woman's work in the home, in beauty care, and in the rearing of children. On the other hand, Chinese culture was most clearly discernible in attitudes towards the world outside the home, in business methods, in the preference for certain occupations, in biases towards those in authority, and in the esteem with which formal education was regarded.

The status of women and the role they played could not be divorced from the degree of importance the community attached to the family system.

The Chinese migrants in Java and their descendants continued to practise ancestor worship, which was one of the major factors which had shaped the Chinese family system. In ancestor worship only sons could perform the necessary rituals which would ensure the souls of the departed peace and comfort in the hereafter. It was the sons who forged and maintained the link between past, present and future generations, between the temporal and the supernatural worlds. A family without sons would literally cease to exist, not only on earth but also in the nether world, because without the obligatory rituals the neglected souls would turn into 'hungry ghosts' (Lang 1968:18-19). Thus the most important task of the Chinese woman was to bear sons, the more the better. And the highest status she could achieve was to become the mother of successful sons.

Although this concept was accepted in Peranakan Chinese society, its impact was softened by Javanese tradition which did not recognize ancestor worship in the form that the Chinese practised. While in China the birth of daughters was often regarded as a calamity, particularly in times of economic distress, in Java the birth of daughters did not cause such alarm as long as there were sons to carry on the family name. It might also be that in Java the Peranakan Chinese did not need to suffer the terrible economic hardship which could hit the poor in China.

Olga Lang (1968:46-7) in her famous work on the Chinese family pointed out that girls were not much of an economic or emotional asset to their families, since with their bound feet they could not do arduous work like boys, and were to leave the family after their marriage. This was not the case with the Peranakan Chinese women in Java. In many Peranakan Chinese households the women worked alongside their husbands, serving the customers in their shops, while the men and their sons took care of buying new stock for the business or attended to other work outside.

In Java the women had a tradition of conducting their own small businesses, a custom which has prevailed until the present day. The making and selling of batik, for instance, had traditionally been the business of women. This tradition was carried on by the Peranakan Chinese women, many of whom earned their own income by selling homemade cakes, accepting sewing work or selling batik and kebaya. The peddling of jewellery, which sometimes could be worth hundreds of guilders, was one of the most profitable if risky businesses which were mainly conducted by women. In the same way the important role of professional matchmaker was also a woman's job. There was no stigma attached to earning money this way. Thus the Peranakan Chinese women, if they chose, did not have to be totally dependent on their husbands.

The bilateral family system, prevalent in Java, was also acceptable to many Peranakan Chinese, although the paternal line would still be considered the more important component. This prevented the daughter from becoming totally lost to her family after her marriage. It also prevented daughters becoming totally dependent upon and subservient to their mothers-in-law as was the case in China. In fact, many aged, widowed mothers preferred to live with their own married daughters than with their married sons.

The position of the wife would be even stronger if it was the husband who moved into her father's household. This usually happened if a man, owning his own business or workshop, felt attracted towards one of his employees who displayed both zeal and talent and offered him the hand of his daughter. In this way he not only assured his daughter of a good provider, but also himself of a good employee. For a young man without means, this was an opportunity to better himself, since he would later inherit at least part of the business. In such cases the man had to live with his in-laws.³

Ultimately, however, Peranakan Chinese society, like other Asian societies, remained a male-dominated society, and with the reverence accorded to age the greatest influence and power was usually held by the oldest male member in the family. Nevertheless, his wife would have a position which could not be ignored.

The ultimate goal of the Peranakan Chinese girl was to get married and have children; her education was geared to grooming her for her future roles of wife and mother. In well-to-do families a host of servants, mostly indigenous, took care of the heavy household chores. (In fact, most families would have at least one servant in the Indies.) In such families a young girl was not expected to soil her dainty hands with housecleaning, washing, or ironing clothes. But she would have to learn sewing and embroidery to perfection, and master all the mysteries of the Indies culinary art, which contained elements of both the Chinese and Javanese cuisines. The most important task, however, was for her to learn the preparation of those particular dishes which formed an integral part of the ceremonies connected with ancestor worship. This was an elaborate affair, following fixed procedures and surrounded by certain taboos. She would also have to know the correct arrangement of the family altar, where these dishes would be placed according to a definite pattern. These matters could not be left in the hands of indigenous servants who were not members of the family. Her reputation in these matters would be an important measure of her eligibility as a bride.

As in China and also in Java, marriage at that time was totally an affair of the family and not of the young couple. In the choice of her future husband the girl usually had no say. And for that matter, neither had the young man. Even in the 1930s there were still cases where the bride and groom met face to face for the first time on their wedding day. Since in this society marriage was the ultimate goal of practically every woman's life, a girl's future was bleak, if nobody, for one reason or another, asked for her hand. It also blemished the family honour to have to keep an unmarried daughter in the home.

Perhaps the most important of the conditions for a girl to be eligible as a bride was to be a virgin. The virginity of a girl was her most precious possession which should be relinquished only to her lawful husband. To preserve their chastity, girls in well-to-do families were protected from outside contact from the time of their first menstruation. Parents went to great lengths to prevent their young daughters having contact, however remote, with any males who were not direct relatives of the girl. Of course, this was not totally possible in poorer families, but the more well-to-do and the socially important families guarded their daughters' movements very closely. Physical contact with any male, even their own father and brothers, was frowned upon.

It was in this respect that the double standard between male and female was greatest. While it was not uncommon for young men to have sexual relations before marriage, the same was unthinkable for the girls. After her marriage a wife was supposed to be totally faithful to her husband. Her behaviour was to be such that not a shadow of suspicion could be attached to her. Even a show of intimacy towards her own husband would have been

considered bad manners. 'Husband and wife in bed, but guests outside the bedroom', went a Chinese saying of that time. Divorce was very much frowned upon and so was the remarriage of widows, but not of widowers.⁴

This great emphasis on a woman's chastity, which came close to becoming a cult, was derived from Chinese Confucianist culture, since in Javanese society attitudes towards divorce and remarriage were much more relaxed: indeed, the divorce and remarriage rate among indigenous women in Java had always been high.

Divorce was rare in Peranakan Chinese society, but among the well-to-do polygyny seemed to be more common. Many Peranakan Chinese men would find their secondary wives among the poorer Peranakan Chinese girls or among the indigenous women. In fact, many a young man, who financially was not yet able to ask for the hand of a Chinese girl would live with a Javanese woman as his mistress, since liaisons of this kind did not require the financial outlay necessary for holding a wedding. The custom of keeping indigenous female household servants certainly facilitated this kind of association. Children from such issues would not always be recognized, although the family would often discreetly find a place to send the mistress and her child. Often the woman was compensated financially, but then sent away before the child was born. Yet in some cases the liaisons could become real marriages.

To prevent a young man contracting liaisons with girls who were much below his station, wealthy families would marry off their children at a young age, 18 to 20 years for a young man and 16 to 17 for a young girl. It was said that these early marriages, arranged by the parents and contracted before the couple was emotionally mature, were responsible for many men taking a second wife when they were middle-aged. Since divorce was rare, the position of the first wife was usually secure.

From May 1919, when the Dutch Government established the Civil Registry, Peranakan Chinese were legally obliged to register their births, marriages and deaths in the same way as the Europeans and Christian Indonesians. This law gave the Peranakan Chinese wife and her legitimate children even greater protection from being disowned. Because only the legitimate wife and her children had the right to inherit the husband's property, mistresses and their offspring, unless legally adopted by the father, were excluded from the inheritance. Yet this law meant that illegitimate daughters were now worse off than before, since another colonial law forbade the adoption of girls (Fromberg 1926:288-93). According to traditional Chinese law, any children, boys or girls, could be taken into the family. This colonial anomaly was not corrected until the end of Dutch rule.

In traditional Peranakan Chinese families girls did not normally receive a formal school education. In exceptional cases

enlightened fathers might hire Dutch or Eurasian ladies to teach their daughters the basics of literacy and numeracy.

The Peranakan Chinese woman in many ways derived the best from the two worlds in which she lived. She was entitled to the protection of her family, in line with Confucian traditions. Yet owing to the influence of Javanese society she was relatively freer in her movements and had a higher status in the home than the average woman in China.

She enjoyed the greatest freedom when she was a little child, but would lose this freedom of movement from the time of her first menstruation until her marriage. After her marriage, depending on her husband's position and outlook, she would be able to move freely in a limited circle. Her most important role was that of an obedient daughter-in-law, a faithful wife and loving mother. However, if necessary, she could help augment the family income. She would enjoy the highest status in the family when she could bear sons and, when these sons had grown up, when they had achieved positions in society and had themselves been suitably married.

The emancipation of the Peranakan Chinese woman

Exposure to Western ideas which expounded such radically different values from those accepted by Peranakan Chinese society was to bring great changes to the lives of many Peranakan Chinese women.

It was mostly the Dutch education system, introduced in 1908, which first brought these ideas to the Peranakan Chinese youth, because the purely Dutch syllabus transmitted not only modern Western learning but also Western values and ethics. Yet, although the influence of Western ideas was profound in certain sections of Peranakan Chinese society, in the time before World War II emancipation reached only a very small proportion of Peranakan Chinese women. For the great majority the change was much slower and much more gradual. Therefore, wide variations in the degree of modernization developed in Peranakan Chinese society in general and among its women in particular. Dutch government schools were up to the end of colonial rule open only to the wealthy. There were also private schools run by missionaries and lay individuals. The missionary schools in particular had contributed significantly to the spread of education among the girls. Despite the popularity of the Dutch schools among the Peranakan Chinese, nearly twice as many children went to the cheaper and less exclusive THHK schools. These children would still be exposed to a great degree of traditional Chinese culture alongside the Western scientific knowledge that was taught to them. Although Western ideas would come through, the change in outlook occurred at a slower pace with graduates of these schools.

However, roughly 50 per cent of Peranakan Chinese children did not receive any Western education at all. Many of these went to Malay-language schools to be taught the rudiments of reading, writing and arithmetic; others would not attend school at all — since primary education was neither free nor compulsory in those days — and among these many were girls from the poorer section (*Onderwijs Tionghoa di Indonesia*). The only glimpse these young people might have of Western life-styles would be the Hollywood films which were popular at the time.

The following figures on the literacy of Peranakan Chinese youth according to the 1930 census speak for themselves. In Java and Madura, 47.5 per cent of Peranakan Chinese males and 16 per cent of Peranakan Chinese females were literate, a total of 33.3 per cent (in absolute numbers: 194,106 Chinese). But if taken over the whole of Indonesia only 28.9 per cent of Peranakan Chinese were literate; with 39.5 per cent of them males and 12.4 per cent females. In the whole of Indonesia only 11.7 per cent of all Peranakan Chinese were able to write Dutch. If on the basis of the above figures one assumes that the ratio of literacy between males and females was roughly 3 to 1, only about 4 per cent of Peranakan Chinese women would know Dutch (*Statistical Pocketbook* 1941:26-7).⁵ This essay deals mainly with this small group of women who, nevertheless, introduced changes which would ultimately be followed by the rest of their sisters.

It could be said in general that, up to the Japanese occupation in 1942, the modernization process of the Dutch educated Peranakan Chinese women went through three phases:

1. a phase of achieving more and further education;
2. a phase of acquiring freedom in the choice of one's spouse;
3. a phase of obtaining equal rights with the men in determining their own life-style.

Each phase was more difficult to achieve than the next. It took the trauma of war and the upheaval which came in the wake of the Indonesian revolution for the Peranakan Chinese woman to achieve the last goal.

The struggle for further education

In 1903 the THHK opened a school for girls and, when the Dutch Government established the HCS, girls were accepted from the start. But the number of girls who were allowed by their parents to go to these primary schools remained small for many years, in comparison to the boys who were sent in growing numbers to get an education. It was even more difficult for girls to

obtain further education in secondary schools, especially since less than 10 per cent of the total number of Peranakan Chinese went on to get a secondary education, either in Dutch or Chinese-English schools. In 1939, 25,876 children attended Western elementary schools; in the same year there were only 3928 pupils in Dutch secondary schools (*Statistical Pocketbook* 1941:22-4). In 1935, the daily *Sin Po* held a survey on THHK schools over the whole archipelago. Out of the reported 450 schools, 259 answered the survey, so the figures published understated the real situation. In this survey the 259 schools reported a total enrolment of 29,187 children, of whom 10,198 were girls. The same survey showed only 1251 pupils attending Chinese secondary schools, among whom 383 were girls (*Onderwijs Tionghoa di Indonesia*). Even if the numbers of girls grew steadily over the years, secondary schooling for them was, by the time colonial rule ended in 1942, still far from general.

In the early years girls would be taken from school as soon as they entered puberty, whether they had finished the course or not. Later this attitude was relaxed, so that more and more girls were allowed to finish at least 6 or 7 years of primary schooling. The objections of parents against keeping their daughters for many years in school were based on the fear that too much education might lessen their chances of getting married. 'Men don't like clever wives' was the general opinion among the older generation. Keeping the girls in school after the onset of puberty might also increase their chances of coming into contact with 'undesirable' elements, which might damage their reputations. Another reason for keeping their daughters away from school was the thought that this was a waste of money anyway. The girls would be getting married, and it was not their duty to be the provider of the family. 'Girls need not earn money'; therefore they did not need to study such subjects as history and geography. Whatever they needed to know as future housewives could be taught at home. The staunchest upholders of traditional attitudes were actually the older women, who had never attended school themselves.

It was in fact the modernization process among the younger male generation itself which would ultimately pave the way for the girls to obtain further education. In the middle twenties more and more young men, themselves Western-educated and fighting against the impositions of tradition upon their lives, made it clear that they preferred an educated wife. Launching themselves into careers other than carrying on the family business, these young men wished for wives who would speak or at least understand Dutch or English, who were familiar with Western ways, and would not embarrass them with their ignorance if they were taken out by their husbands into society. This in itself was another symptom of the influence of Western education. It was also argued that more advanced education would also make the girls better wives and mothers, since they would learn about the modern ways of child care and the maintaining of hygiene to improve the health of their families.

No thought yet was given to the possibility that the girls might wish to educate themselves in order to improve their own position and enrich their own lives. Even in the late thirties, when primary and secondary school education was much more common than previously, the main goal in a girl's life remained service in the marital home.

The desire to choose one's own spouse

Within traditional Peranakan Chinese society the welfare of the family was a concern of paramount importance to which the private desires and wishes of the individual were sacrificed. The head of the family had the duty to maintain the standards and the status of his family and to achieve this he had the power to impose his will over the other members of the family. Those who suffered most under this system were the younger members, in particular the younger girls.

Marriage was one of the ways to strengthen or raise the family's position in society. An advantageous match for one's child was something every parent hoped for. This view on marriage was diametrically opposed to the Western idea that a marriage should be contracted for the personal happiness of the individual couple, and that it should be surrounded with the aura of love and romance.

The desire of the young to choose their own marriage partners was therefore perhaps more difficult to achieve than the right to further studies. It could always be argued that a good education could be put to use for the welfare of the whole family. In fact, many old-fashioned parents readily sent their sons to Dutch schools and even universities in the hope that the education they received would eventually benefit the whole family. Even in the case of girls this argument carried some strength. But parents did not readily trust their children's ability and wisdom to select a suitable partner for themselves.

Young people should accept marriage as a fact; something which they can not elude. Marriage is like fate. Young people should acquiesce and accept their parents' choice. Taken this way, the couple would adjust to each other and would lead a satisfactory life together,

wrote an author in the *Sin Po Weekly* of December 1934. Yet another in the same journal remarked,

What is modern love? It is like a pot filled with hot water. It soon cools down. But in traditional marriage love is like a pot filled with cold water, which one puts to the boil. The longer one waits, the hotter it becomes.

Moreover, to be able to choose one's own marriage partner would mean more intimate contact between young men and women than was considered proper. For girls to associate freely with young men to whom they were not even engaged would definitely be against the Confucian norms of a woman's chastity. Actually, the first step towards achieving some freedom of choice in marriage was to make the parents agree that engaged couples could meet and talk some time before the wedding day.

Influenced by Western thought the youth of the twenties and thirties strove to assert their individuality and many clashes occurred between parents and their sons and daughters on this issue. These differences in opinion eroded another traditional Chinese concept, namely that of 'filial piety'. Of all the Confucian doctrines there were only two which survived in Peranakan Chinese society. One was the concept of a woman's chastity and the other was the doctrine of filial piety. The fear of incurring public disapproval by being 'unfilial' had caused generations of Peranakan Chinese children to bow to their parents' wishes, however disadvantageous these might be personally.

The Peranakan Chinese had kept tenaciously to these two doctrines, long after these were relinquished in China itself under the onslaught of Westernization. This could have been the instinctive reaction of a community which felt that only in total unity within itself could its existence be preserved in a strange and sometimes hostile environment.

The expansion of education continued, however, and it brought in its wake increasing measures of freedom of movement. Youth organizations provided a venue for young men and young women to meet. And although parental consent remained of utmost importance in Peranakan Chinese marriages, within one generation the freedom to choose one's own spouse was within grasp of the Western-educated youth.

The struggle for equal rights

Slavery has not been abolished in our society. The women still have no rights; they are not free; they remain sources of slave labour. The woman lives within the constricting boundaries of the parental and marital home. In each case she is denied a place in society and the opportunity to live a full life is withheld from her. The woman is furtively hidden behind the man, the lord of creation. There are passions in her, which she is not allowed to show, not allowed to give free reign to. From childhood she is taught to sham her feelings and from the beginning it is instilled in her that the goal in her life must be to lure a man into marriage. The woman is after all dependent and only in marriage lies her salvation....

These harsh words about the condition of the Peranakan Chinese woman were written from Holland in June 1936.⁶

The fetters which bound a Peranakan Chinese girl to the home were forged to preserve her purity. Ultimately this notion was derived from the concept that sexually the woman could only belong to one man, that is the man who took her as wife (or concubine). In exchange for granting these exclusive rights to her body the wife was entitled to her husband's protection. This concept was probably evolved to eliminate the risk that the wife would pass off illegitimate sons as his own, since only true sons could perform the rituals of ancestor worship to ensure their deceased father's existence in the supernatural world. This notion was considered so crucial that the first reason for divorce or concubinage would be the failure of the wife to bear sons. As the sage Mencius said, 'There are three things which are unfilial and the worst of them is to have no posterity'.

As was mentioned earlier, in Peranakan Chinese society the position of the wife was not as low as that of the wife in China. Nevertheless, the restrictions placed on the woman for the sake of satisfying either a future or present husband caused many frustrations. To be able to lead a freer life, the Peranakan Chinese woman needed first of all to break these bonds and create new standards by which to measure her worth in the family.

It was inevitable that once she had enjoyed an education the young woman would want to practise her new skills to earn money and gain financial independence. But working outside the home continued to be unacceptable for the girls of good standing for a long time after they were allowed to go to school, excepting only those occupations which were actually an extension of their work at home and which even their mothers and grandmothers were allowed to do on a more modest scale. Dressmaking and selling cakes were the regular standbys for the girls to gain some financial independence. In the late twenties and thirties boutiques, courses in sewing and embroidery and cookery schools opened one after another, led by graduates of domestic science schools. These activities were usually carried out at home, so that the girls, while earning money, need not leave the protection of the home. To work in offices, restaurants or shops, where the girls would have to come into contact with strange men, was frowned upon for a long time. In April 1927 for instance the Peranakan Chinese *Sin Po Weekly* criticized two Chinese ladies for applying for a job with the BPM, a European firm, where they would have to associate with uncouth *sinjos* (Eurasian boys) whose standing usually left very much to be desired.

The only public career a young woman was allowed to follow was to become a schoolteacher. In the 1930s more and more girls were enrolled in the Dutch Teacher Training College. And with the shortage of places in Dutch government primary schools, trained

female teachers were known to have opened private HCS or kindergartens. It could of course be argued that, however professional, the role of schoolteacher was still seen as an extension of the role of mother. The public consensus was that married women should not work unless their husbands were unable to support the family through sickness or other calamities. In this respect the Peranakan Chinese woman who wished to combine a career with marriage received little encouragement from the men. The role of provider was the duty and prerogative of the husband, who, because of the money he brought home, was indisputably the master of the house and the head of the family. A husband would feel his status threatened if the wife worked. It would have meant that he was unable to carry out his duty as provider of his family. As soon as she married, the woman's duty was to care for her family. Still, many women who had built up a thriving business in dress-making or baking would not necessarily give it up after marriage. The availability of cheap household help made this possible.

At the end of colonial rule many of the restrictions of fifty years before were relaxed, if not totally abolished. Women were allowed to appear in public places without embarrassment, although it was still considered more proper if they did not go out alone, especially after dark. They could join organizations, although few were elected to leadership positions. They were allowed to participate in some sports and young girls were not confined in the house any longer while waiting for a suitor.

However, compared to her European sisters of the same period, the life of the Peranakan Chinese woman of the thirties was still restricted. Marriage remained the ultimate goal, and great pressure was put on the independent-minded woman who wanted to strike it out alone in life, to abandon the idea. Even to postpone marriage to a more mature age was considered wrong. A woman past twenty-five who was neither married nor engaged easily became the target of gossip. Even women who in the 1920s had been agitating for more education and a free choice in marriage, in the 1930s advocated the safety of the marital home rather than the vicissitudes of a career.

The difficulty for the Peranakan Chinese woman in this respect was compounded by the fact that colonial society itself provided no safeguards should she fail in her aims. There was no significant government support, no social security benefits for the unemployed or aged. The woman who dared to break away from her family to pursue her personal ambitions on her own would face a very hard existence in the event of failure.

Within the institution of marriage itself, there was a desire on the part of the woman radically to alter the double standard still applying in sexual mores. Once she was allowed to marry out of love, the idea of polygyny became more and more repugnant and unacceptable. Her traditionally brought-up mother

might acquiesce in her father's interest in other women, but the Western-educated wife did not wish to tolerate her husband's extra-marital adventures. The monogamous marriage based on mutual love was the ideal projected by Western literature and social code, and this was what the Western-educated girl had come to expect of her own marriage.

In traditional marriages a wife might even feel relieved if her husband looked for sexual diversions elsewhere, in particular if she had already borne him a number of children and was reluctant to have more. In traditional society, where marriage was a duty, society did not consider the wife at fault if her husband took a concubine. As his first wife she remained assured of her status in the family. She might feel personally hurt, but as long as the husband did not completely abandon her, which rarely happened, she remained the cornerstone of her family and was considered such by society.

On the other hand, the modern educated woman, who had married the man of her choice, felt herself defrauded of her ideals if the husband strayed. She might also feel that society would look upon her as incapable of keeping her husband's interest and being a lesser woman than her rival.

In the middle 1930s articles in women's magazines, like *Isteri* and the women's sections in *Sin Po Weekly*, would often dwell upon the injustice done to the wife in this manner.

Men are by nature polygamous, while women are monogamous, and unfaithfulness is inborn in them... If you want to change a man's nature, you might as well ask God to change the whole of Nature... Men and women are not created the same; although this is unfair women cannot have the same freedom as men because it is the woman's task to safeguard the next generation....

What made the incidence of unfaithfulness more difficult to bear for the modern woman was also the fact that now her rival could easily come from her own circle. In her mother's time the mistresses or concubines usually came from a lower social class, since men and women of the same circle hardly ever had the opportunity to mix socially. In traditional society, to become the concubine of a rich man could mean a step upwards on the social ladder for the family of the concubine. In many cases there was no love involved on the side of the young girl thus chosen; she would often find herself forced by her parents to agree to a liaison with a much older man she did not like. To refuse would be unfilial. In such a case, it was easier for the traditional wife to accept the fact of her husband's liaison, since she would always be superior in class and social position to the mistress.

Compared to that of Europeans and Indonesians, the divorce rate among the Peranakan Chinese remained low, but within Peranakan Chinese society itself the incidence of divorce grew as wives refused to accept a situation they abhorred and insisted that the same standards of behaviour should be applied to both men and women.

Another bone of contention was the relationship between the husband and his own family. Under the influence of Western literature the modern Peranakan Chinese woman had come to regard the strong family ties which bound her husband to his parents as detrimental to her marriage. She might resent that her husband would use part of his salary to support his parents or spend too much time with them. 'I am married to my husband and not to his family': this thought, which would have been unthinkable in the traditional Peranakan Chinese family, gained more and more ground among the Western-educated women.

On the other hand, Peranakan Chinese men saw this urge towards equality in marriage as pure selfishness on the part of the modern woman. Here is what 'S' wrote in an article on marriage and divorce in June 1939 in the *Sin Po Weekly*:

The modern Chinese woman, as a child of these individualistic times, in general puts her 'individual self' much too much to the fore. She asks too much for herself: adoration, comfort, no household chores, few children, a comfortable villa, glamorous clothes, with a husband who puts her on a pedestal and spends all his money and energy exclusively on her and NOT on his parents or younger brothers and sisters. And if her husband fails in her expectations, then she feels ignored, neglected, disappointed and unhappy. The quarrels that ensue would finally drive the husband out of the home to look for consolation elsewhere. Who then is to blame?

The same writer conceded, however, that a man partly had himself to blame for this sorry situation, since 'he has fed her egoism by his excessive adoration of her before and during their period of engagement'. The writer finally urged the Western-oriented Chinese youth to forsake their glorification of materialistic individualism, to adopt a more realistic approach to marriage, and to rely more on the guidance of their level-headed parents in their choice of a marriage partner.

The effects of emancipation

Emancipation proved to be a mixed blessing. Conflicting values and attitudes taught at school and in the home often generated confusion in the minds of young women as to the role which they were expected to play in a society where traditional

Asian ethics and Western mores equally exerted their influence. The Western-educated young woman often became alienated from her parents who could not understand the problems which their children faced in confronting this conflict. Thus a young Peranakan Chinese woman in the *Sin Po Weekly* in 1936 wrote:

I know that both the Chinese and Western civilizations contain elements which one should avoid. Even in an education where one is concerned with only one culture, modern notions could create conflict between the older and younger generation. How much worse is the situation than with us, where two civilizations with diametrically opposed principles clash. We, the younger generation, are like pioneers left to search for the right path without a guide.

The Dutch Government provided a modern Western education, but a modern Westernized society, where the ideas inculcated by this education could be brought to fruition, failed to materialize. In this situation the women suffered more than the men, because not only did they wish for more radical changes in their lives than the men did, but their outlets were also fewer. Denied the careers or occupations where they could put their new-found skills to good use, the women easily became frustrated.

The Peranakan Chinese society itself as a whole was, in the thirties, still in search of its identity and its rightful place in Indies society. To many Peranakan Chinese men, the problems of improving their legal status and upholding their economic position in the face of growing competition from other social groups were infinitely more pressing than the demands of the women for more personal freedom. Unfortunately the Peranakan Chinese women had then not yet reached the point where they could effectively assist the men in solving these weighty problems. Indeed, compared to the emancipated Indonesian woman, who from the start had involved herself with the independence movement alongside the Indonesian man, the Peranakan Chinese woman generally remained passive and indifferent to political and economic problems. Her concern did not go beyond the social field. This fact was deplored by the editor of *Isteri*, an influential Peranakan Chinese woman's monthly, who wrote in the editorial of January 1940 that the Chinese woman lacked the burning spirit and lofty ideals which drove the emancipated Indonesian woman to strive for the good of her country and her race. The peculiar 'in-between' situation in which the Peranakan Chinese society found itself at the time was certainly partly responsible for this.

For the many Peranakan Chinese women who did not belong to the educated elite, the relaxing of their bonds would only come after the war, which accomplished in a few years what decades of protest and procrastination had been unable to achieve.

Notes

1. There exists a number of books and articles on the general history of the Indonesian Chinese. See, for instance Skinner (1963) and for a select bibliography on the Indonesian Chinese, Coppel (1976).
2. There are few studies on Peranakan Chinese women. This chapter is primarily based on information derived from interviews with elderly Peranakan Chinese men and women in Indonesia, and from numerous articles and short stories in *Sin Po Weekly* 1923-42 and *Isteri* 1935-40.
3. This was particularly common among newly arrived migrants without kin of their own. For these men it was much easier to move into their Peranakan wives' homes than to set up a household of their own. This custom has also been observed in Singapore (Freedman 1957:122-3).
4. Legal divorce was not necessary before May 1919, i.e. the date when the Civil Registry was established. The repudiated wife usually went back to her parental home. In the cases of registered marriages after 1919 divorce had to go through court.
5. It is difficult to know the exact number of Peranakan Chinese living at any time in Indonesia, since censuses did not make a distinction between China-born or Totok Chinese and Peranakan Chinese. The 1930 census recorded 462,000 Indonesian-born Chinese in Java and Madura. We can safely assume that the majority of these were Peranakan Chinese (*Statistical Pocket-book* 1941:11; Table 16). In the same census a total of 1,233,000 Chinese were recorded for the whole of Indonesia. The total population in Indonesia at the time was 60,727,000.
6. The author signed the letter in which this complaint was written with the name of 'King', which could be either a man's or woman's name. From the feelings expressed, however, it seems to have been written by an educated Peranakan Chinese woman who has managed to go to Holland to continue her studies (*Sin Po Weekly*, June 1936).

Chapter 4

Healing as women's work in Bali

Linda H. Connor

Dutch education in Indonesia and British education in Malaya and Singapore provided elite women in particular with the training and skills to undertake a variety of new occupations, albeit occupations closely associated with the traditional roles of women. But other women continued to earn a living in traditional women's occupations, and were little affected by the social and economic impact of colonialism.

*Throughout the region, women have played key roles as healers; and they have continued to do so despite the extension of Western medical and health services and an increasing number of formally trained nurses and midwives. Malay and Indonesian women, for example, in the past and in contemporary society, act as midwives (*bidan*, *dukun*) to supervise pregnancy, parturition and confinement, and preside over women's and infants' rituals including virginity testing prior to marriage, hair-cutting ceremonies of infants, and female circumcision. In addition, women work as traditional masseurs (*tukang urut*); prepare and prescribe herbal mixtures for prophylactic and therapeutic purposes; provide family planning advice including the procurement of abortion with herbs or massage; and act as a repository of folk health and nutrition knowledge and beliefs. Other women work as spirit mediums and trance experts, mediating between the natural and supernatural worlds on behalf of their clients.*

In Bali, although men dominate prestigious healing occupations, hundreds of women work as midwives, masseurs and spirit mediums. In the following chapter, Linda Connor compares the healing roles practised by women with those of men. She argues that women's healing roles are an extension of other types of women's work, and must be understood in the light of prevailing cultural ideologies about gender. She points out that beliefs and values about gender have been modified in response to socio-economic changes affecting women's participation in the workforce; this has direct implications for women health practitioners.

The number of traditional healers (*balian*) working in Bali totals several thousand at least. In the South-Central district

(*kabupaten*) where I worked between 1976 and 1978, between 250 and 300 practitioners were publicly acknowledged and working for some form of remuneration in a population of 151,000.¹ Of these, approximately 25-30 per cent were female;² in my estimation this percentage reflects the proportion of female healers on the island as a whole.

Healing is an economically rewarding occupation in Bali where the majority of the agrarian population can no longer provide most of its subsistence needs from cultivation. Members of farming families have increasingly diversified into a variety of income earning activities, mostly labour intensive and involving little investment of cash resources. For women, economic diversification is not such a radical transformation of their traditional income earning activities as it is for men. Stoler, commenting on the division of labour by sex in neighbouring Java, writes:

Rural women from small landholdings and landless households have been traditionally involved in alternate income-producing activities outside of rice cultivation. It is men, in fact, who have a smaller set of viable alternatives to agricultural labor. Women are, in a sense, better equipped to deal with the situation of increasing landlessness and can manipulate a more familiar set of options (1977:88).

These conditions also prevail in Bali, and provide the rationale for this chapter. I address the issue of why relatively few women compared to men work as healers. To answer this question, I examine the effects on male and female labour of social and economic conditions which have transformed Balinese society over the last century. I relate the differences in healing as men's and women's work to political and economic relations between sexes and between classes in Bali and investigate how ideological constructions of gender bear upon the practice of healing as women's work. My conclusion refers to the consequences of healing as a vocation for female status and influence in rural Balinese society.

Bali is a small island in the Indonesian archipelago with a population of approximately 2½ million. It has long been a fertile region of wet-rice agriculture, with nearly two-thirds of the population engaged in some cultivation, and over 80 per cent of these in wet-rice production (Bendesa and Sukarsa 1980: 40).³

Whilst Bali had for several centuries been on the periphery of Dutch mercantile enterprise in the archipelago, it was only in the middle of the nineteenth century that the North Balinese

harbour region of Singaraja came under direct colonial control, with the densely populated South-Central region being subjugated, not without considerable resistance, at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Before this time, the Balinese polity was of a structure and scale similar to many of the precolonial states of Southeast Asia: an unstable configuration of small kingdoms with *rajas* and their courts supported by the produce and labour of peasant cultivators, expropriated by enforced tribute and corvee (see Geertz 1980:45ff.). The population at the end of the nineteenth century was perhaps no higher than 900,000 and average holdings of irrigated land have been estimated at one hectare (see Poffenberger and Zurbuchen 1980:31), more than enough to support a family of five or six. Both men, and, to a lesser extent, women, participated in wet-rice cultivation, whilst internal markets were almost exclusively run by women. Women were responsible for the larger part of domestic labour: child-rearing and housework.

The Netherlands East Indies Government did little to disrupt these patterns. Most households could still satisfy their needs from agricultural production, and the penetration of colonial commercial capital only gradually began to transform Balinese society. The peasant household economy remained largely intact, except that surpluses supported the Dutch as well as Balinese officials (including some of the *rajas*) who worked for the colonial administration.

Dutch colonialism did not effect such a radical transformation of the indigenous economy as it did in other parts of Indonesia. Bali was preserved with a status redolent of a huge native reservation: a testimonial to the benevolence of imperial rule. The island was largely untouched by the plantation economy which transformed productive relations in the rest of the colony. However, indigenous rulers were politically subjugated and became auxiliaries of the colonial state. The Dutch reorganized the traditional administrative system, rationalizing tax collection and corvee enforcement. The Netherlands East Indies authorities eliminated expression of the formal ties of ritual and military service between subjects and lords because of the obvious threat to colonial authority. This imbued the surviving relations of land tenancy between cultivators and lords with a greater political significance, and gave the system in retrospect a feudal aspect (Geertz 1980:65ff.).

Towards the end of Dutch rule, in the 1930s, land was still plentiful in relation to population. Since that time, a doubling of the population and the intensified participation of the Indonesian economy in international capitalism have given rise to a situation where the majority of agricultural producers cannot subsist solely off their small parcels of land (0.3

hectare for owner/cultivators, 0.2 for tenants; Poffenberger and Zurbuchen 1980:12). This is despite (and possibly because of) new rice technology and agricultural intensification programs.

In South-Central Bali, where the bulk of the population resides, in 1977 71 per cent of wet-rice land was planted in new rice (cited in Poffenberger and Zurbuchen 1980:13). New rice technology (where the crop is unsuitable for storage, unlike the old strains) has transformed the staple into a cash crop, and has made producers dependent on suppliers of mechanized rice hullers, hybrid seed, petrochemical fertilizers, chemical insecticides, pesticides and fungicides. None of these products is produced within local agricultural communities (as were the requirements of traditional rice cultivation), many are not produced in Bali, and some, such as the mechanized rice hullers, are only produced overseas. As well, the introduction of new rice technology brings proportionally greater benefits to larger landowners; others compete on disadvantageous terms for the necessary credit, and may be forced out of production (see Stoler 1977; Collier 1978). Moreover, a range of income earning activities associated with traditional rice production are eliminated altogether. According to one estimate, 'The introduction of Japanese small rice millers (hullers) in rural Java has caused 1 million rural women to lose 4 months opportunities in a year (125 million working hours)' (Sayogyo, cited in Poffenberger and Zurbuchen 1980:17).

Whilst the capitalization of wet-rice cultivation may improve gross yields (and even this is debatable - see Poffenberger and Zurbuchen 1980:14-15, and Scott 1976:15ff.), it also contributes to the impoverishment of a so far undefined proportion of the peasantry, and promotes gross differences in access to strategic resources within the peasantry.⁴

The processes I have outlined above are part of the transformations which began with the introduction of Dutch commercial capital into Balinese society. Kate Young, analysing the effects of this form of capital penetration on traditional modes of production writes:

It is closely tied to the demands of industrial capital and in its search for new outlets for the products of industry it may undercut local domestic industries or destroy whole branches of production in competition with industrial capital. In so doing, it sets free the erstwhile producers' labour-time for investment in other activities. If such activities are absent locally, this free labour time becomes expressed as the actual redundancy of individual labourers. In other words, a relative surplus population has been created (1978:127-8).

In Bali, as in Java, the most dramatic transformation of production relations in the last few decades has been through the introduction of new rice technology. However, similar changes have occurred where the introduction of industrially produced manufactured goods has eliminated traditional productive activities (for a discussion of this point see Dewey 1962:202-3). Some home industries, for which there are no commodity import substitutes, have survived, and in Bali especially a few have been regenerated by the tourist market. But the primary impact of the penetration of commercial capital has been to stimulate economic diversification unaccompanied by industrial development which would provide employment for otherwise redundant labour.

There have been high hopes for tourism as a source of jobs, as there is very little industrial development on the island. However, these hopes have not been fulfilled: in 1976 less than one per cent of the labour force was directly employed in the tourist industry, with an indeterminate number of people (probably not more than a few per cent) engaged in occupations (transport, construction, trade and services) which have developed partly in response to tourism (Bendesa and Sukarsa 1980:33ff.). And few studies take into account the number of jobs which may have been lost through tourism, for example, by hotel managements; or by the rationalization of rural food suppliers' distribution systems which has decimated the number of middlemen and women.

In order to survive, members of peasant families have to supplement or replace customary subsistence activities with a number of alternative occupations which draw them into relations of petty commodity production and exchange. These jobs typically are labour intensive, require little investment of scarce cash resources, provide few opportunities for capital accumulation, and return very small profits. Poffenberger and Zurbuchen, in a study of village economics in Bali, describe the situation as follows:

Because of the continuously shrinking farmland holdings, many village families have begun striving after any small income available through trade, service, or labour, which might spin off from the modern macro-economic system. These jobs occur in a wide variety of forms, and are taken by men, women or children. The occupations tend to be characterized by their labour intensiveness, small capital requirements, a need for individual entrepreneurship, and irregularity and flexibility of working hours. The only prerequisite for the existence of such jobs is that they be marginally productive (1980:34-5).

Women have always been the most active participants in non-cultivation income earning activities, primarily agricultural wage labour, market trade and home industries, and this continues to be the case today. Stoler, for example, describes the trading

activities of peasant women in a central Javanese village to meet the households' subsistence needs:

Almost 40 percent of the adult women were engaged in some form of trade, and probably another 30 percent had traded at some point in their lives... Small traders...are usually women from landless and small landholding households...they can neither withhold their earnings from the household economy nor accumulate enough capital to increase their trading activities (1977:83-4).

Dewey's data (1962) on Javanese peasant markets also accord with the above picture. In Bali, too, internal marketing and associated home industries have generally been in the hands of women.

The overall picture is that since the end of World War II and Indonesian Independence, an ever larger proportion of the Balinese agricultural population has been transformed into a surplus labour force which is still tied to rural communities and which has been made redundant by changes in the local, national and international economy. The problem is exacerbated by the low mobility of the population, which resides on an island and firmly adheres to a religion which is not in any degree portable. The response to this has been a process of occupational diversification in which people are prepared to invest large amounts of the most abundant resource, labour, for miniscule profits. The increasing monetization of the economy in the last few decades has facilitated the flow of goods and services which makes these jobs possible. Wage labour barely provides a living wage for the worker, let alone dependants. The reproduction of the labour force is not supported by capital as it is in advanced industrial societies, but is subsidized by the subsistence level in rural communities to which workers are therefore tied. These communities perform the functions of social security which capitalism always avoids in colonial and neo-colonial contexts. The surplus labour force thereby provides a cheap labour reserve for international capitalism.

Even the most superficial acquaintance with Bali confirms the oft-repeated assertion that much of the social and cultural life of the participants in Balinese Hinduism (about 95 per cent of the population of the island) revolves around ritual events, from the cremation extravaganzas of the rajas to the simplest household ceremonies. An indeterminate (but undoubtedly large) proportion of Balinese labour and resources goes into meeting the demands of religious observance. There are a large number of Balinese in consecrated vocations, who occupy key positions in the organization of ritual — temple caretaker priests, Brahmanic high priests, puppeteer-priests, offering experts, and

traditional healers. These vocations, as well as being of high status, are important income earning occupations for their practitioners. In the following discussion, I consider healing as an economic activity for Balinese peasants.

Amongst the gentry (*triwangsa*) and to a lesser extent outside this stratum, many literate practitioners (*balian usada*) specialize in reading, transcribing and interpreting archaic Javanese-Balinese texts about medicine, magic and mysticism.⁶ These experts dispense advice, medicines and charms. Some incorporate divining into their repertoire; others specialize in this art. Clients seek information about matters such as auspicious days for initiating important ritual activities, discerning the identity of thieves or locating lost property.

Most baliens are illiterate in the classical texts, and are not members of the gentry. Non-literate baliens include male and female midwives, spirit mediums, masseurs and bonesetters. As well there are numerous practitioners who traffic in charms and rituals to render the body invulnerable to both physical and magical attack, who peddle love potions, and who sell protective amulets with accompanying ceremonial prescriptions for almost any purpose. Some practitioners in the latter category are of shady or dubious reputation. Baliens' areas of competence are not mutually exclusive: any one practitioner may perform a variety of the above functions.

The generic appellation *balian* indicates that Balinese perceive a common function amongst the array of practitioners I have mentioned: mediation between the realms of 'darkness' (*peteng* - the domain of supernatural activity) and 'light' (*lemah* - everyday life). There are mythological validations for the skills and practices associated with being a *balian*, and practitioners often claim their knowledge is inherited from forebears (see Weck 1976:7ff., 27ff.).

For a person to acquiesce in his or her reputation as a *balian* is to lay claim to public recognition as a person with *sakti* - a concept which can be translated as 'mystical power' or 'spiritual power'. Human fate is conceived by Balinese as intertwined with deities, ancestors and demons which populate the religious pantheon, a fusion of indigenous Malay beliefs and Hindu influences which first reached the island via East Javanese kingdoms over a thousand years ago. The possession of *sakti* equips baliens to intervene with the supernatural world on behalf of clients. The ministrations of baliens, whilst not always directed to the physical health of the clients, are in the broadest sense therapeutic.⁷

A consecration ceremony (*matelah*) during the initial stages of a *balian's* career is a public declaration that the person is available as a practitioner. Recruitment may be by scholarly

training, inherited skills, or divine inspiration to the calling, or any combination of these. The nature of recruitment is to some extent associated with the sex and social status of the practitioner. Only men have access to the medical manuscripts, and a disproportionately large number of literate practitioners originate from the gentry, who traditionally dominated classical literacy.

Baliens living in rural Balinese communities regard themselves primarily as 'farmers' or 'peasants' (*petani*). In a survey by medical students of baliens practising in six subdistricts (*kecamatan*) of Bali, 72 per cent of respondents stated their main occupation (*pekerjaan pokok*) as 'farmer' (Fakultas Kedokteran Un. Ud. 1978). This reflects a primary cultural identification rather than the source of most income.

Balianship is typical of many peasant income earning activities in that it requires no formal education in the modern school system, and no capital establishment costs. Baliens depend on a pre-existing demand for their services. It is doubtful whether the establishment of at least one health clinic in every subdistrict of Bali (achieved in the latter years of the 1970s) has affected client demand: many of the most important services baliens offer as healers are not embraced by modern medicine; the clinics are effective in the treatment of only a limited range of health problems; and many clients do not have access to the clinics, because of distance and/or cost factors.⁸

In terms of flexibility of payment, and absolute cost to the client, baliens generally compare favourably with clinic and other modern medical costs.⁹ Baliens' reliance on traditional rural social networks for clients places constraints on the sort of economic relations they become involved in. All but the most renowned baliens have a similar range of living standards to that of other members of the peasantry, and because of this balianship may be only one of a number of income earning activities in which members of a household engage. For some the income earned as healers is almost negligible; for others it provides the bulk of the household's subsistence needs. In the latter cases, the practitioner is often located near to a market or administrative centre. Access problems for clients are less, and the balian may be at the node of a greater number of social networks from which clients are drawn.

Baliens establish their clientele on a personalistic basis, by utilizing pre-existing networks which they extend and multiply over time. The structure of these networks depends on the type of practice the balian engages in, and the nature of his or her recruitment. These factors in turn are associated with the different roles of men and women in economic production and domestic labour. The characteristics of healing as men's work and women's work must be contrasted, to understand their differential participation in the vocation.

One of the questions which the data I present raise is the relative historical position of male and female baliangs. Has the economic significance of the vocation increased over the last century, with the decreasing role of cultivation in peasant subsistence? Has the proportion of men and women working as healers changed? Unfortunately there is little historical evidence with which to answer these questions. The earliest systematic studies of healers date from the 1930s, and indicate that baliangs were operating in much the same way, for similar forms of remuneration, 40 years ago. However, I know of no statistical estimates of the numbers of baliangs practising on the island in those decades, nor of their distribution amongst the various skills of the vocation. The pre-colonial evidence is even more scanty. Court chronicles make reference to baliangs only as they are directly concerned in royal affairs. Most of the practitioners referred to are literate specialists, and all, as far as I know, are male. This lack of evidence tells us very little except that it appears women in the nineteenth century were excluded from medical literacy as they are today. The historical invisibility of women healers says most about their peripheral position to the concerns of court chroniclers, reflecting the situation of women in general. The only references to non-literate practitioners in the medical manuscripts consistently denigrate their skills, warning the aspiring *baliang usada* not to heed the words or actions of these practitioners (e.g. see Weck 1976:17, 20).

In Bali a moderately successful practice as a healer may be financially more rewarding than the small-scale peddling on which many peasant women rely as their main source of income. The advantage of peddling however is that it can be accommodated to the demands of child-rearing and housework, for which women conventionally hold primary responsibility. Most women in rural hamlets live in an extended family houseyard where young children can be minded by aunts, older siblings and grandmothers for the hours the mother is away from the home. Some mothers take very young babies to market with them. Families of women with permanent food stalls not far from the houseyard virtually move into the stall, eating and often sleeping there as well. Peddling, which involves very little investment of cash resources, can be put aside for the demands of household crises, preparations for major rituals, or the opportunity to earn income more lucratively, for instance in the harvest season.

Men are excluded (or exclude themselves) from most small-scale peddling by social convention which assigns this activity to women, reinforced by the low profitability of this occupational range compared to other jobs available, such as wage labour and driving. Men, largely excluded by convention from domestic labour and child-rearing, have greater flexibility in seeking more lucrative employment, which may take them away from the home for most of the day, or even days at a time.

Healing places demands on practitioners which prevent many women from considering it as an option. Clients come to the house of a balian with no forewarning, and cannot be turned away, except with good reason such as illness or ritual pollution. Midwives may be called out at any time of the day or night, for long periods, to attend clients. Spirit mediums on auspicious days may hold seven to nine seances, each lasting half an hour to 1½ hours. Work as a masseur is physically exhausting, and some masseurs of high reputation may work from dawn to dusk, in response to client demand. It is generally considered unethical to turn clients away without good reason.

For women, the earning of income has to be accommodated to other activities to maximize the reproduction of labour within the family. Given these considerations, it is doubtful whether, for many women, especially married women with children, work as a healer would satisfy their demands as an economically viable occupation. The same considerations of decreased flexibility do not operate to constrain men's participation as healers.

Where women do have successful practices as healers, in the majority of cases (69 per cent) I recorded, they are unmarried, childless or older widows with grown-up children at the outset of their careers. Older women have daughters, daughters-in-law, nieces and grandchildren to take over housework tasks. For single women, continuation in the calling may mean that they do not marry at all. Where the woman chooses not to marry her enhanced status and income compensate for failure to conform to high normative values placed on female reproduction.

The woman balian may be prevented from marrying against her own will, because if she is successful the family may be reluctant to lose the income she brings into the household. Most commoner women do not marry within their own patrilineal descent group¹⁰ so that the products of their labour are mostly lost to their family of origin after marriage, when they go to live patrivoril locally. Even in cases where a woman marries a patrilineal parallel cousin, thus keeping her income within the kin group, her own husband has more claim on the woman's resources than her parents.

One woman, now the most successful medium in the district, was a victim of these circumstances in her youth. She is now about 55, receives clients from all over the island, and earns a cash income which is probably the equivalent of a high-ranking district official, that is between Rp.50,000 and Rp.80,000 a month. The woman has been practising since early adolescence, after a visionary experience which indicated her fitness for the calling and an expensive consecration ceremony. Twice she attempted to marry, eloping with the men of her choice who were fellow hamlet residents but not members of her descent group. Each time she was chased and brought back home by her father,

although in one case he was too late and the marriage had been consummated.¹¹ When the woman's father died, she married her patrilateral parallel first cousin, but he died after three years and there were no children of the marriage. Both she and her neighbours interpreted this history to me as a series of signs that her guardian deity never intended her to marry.

Other people who may have a vested interest in a balian's career are those who encourage him or her to embark on the career, and perform the consecration ceremonies. These people, commonly local customary officials or temple priests, accrue prestige from a close association with a successful balian, and also a flow-on of resources. They are likely to oppose any move, such as marriage in the case of a woman, which would upset the status quo.

Many successful male balians, especially the ones who practise as literate specialists in the medical texts, inherit not only these manuscripts from their forebears, but also a stable clientele of families in surrounding hamlets who have been consulting them for generations. These practitioners are the most numerous (48 per cent of all balians in the subdistrict where I lived) and it is exclusively a male occupation. The reasons women are excluded from literacy can be related to marriage, residence and descent patterns discussed above. As most women of commoner status do not marry their patrilateral parallel cousin, any investment which is made in women's education by training as a literate balian is considered wasted by virtue of the likelihood that they will marry outside their immediate kin group. This is reflected in the phrase which is commonly used to refer to women who have married out, that they are 'thrown away' (*makutang*). As the texts from which literate balians study are in themselves sacred, and receptacles of spiritual power (*sakti*), it is unthinkable that they should be in the charge of females, with whom they would probably be lost forever. There is also the fear of competition should strangers gain access to the knowledge in the texts.

In the precolonial state, the possibility of members of a descent group building up a reputation as balians (or any other sort of specialist) and thus a stable clientele, was related in the cases of highest repute to royal patronage and all the rewards this would bring. It is probable, however, that this long-term patronage was mostly confined to gentry families, and in the case of the rajas, usually to families of high priests who also had skills as healers. There is no evidence that women healers ever were the recipients of this sort of patronage, and the possibility of women's dispersal through marriage militated against it.

One category of balians, the *balian kebal*, attracts an almost exclusively male clientele. Their procedures, referred

to as *kemasukan kekuatan* — the 'introduction of strength' — are designed to protect clients against sorcery and physical violence. An atmosphere of secrecy and anonymity surrounds their work, and they often charge extremely high prices for their services (from Rp.2000 to Rp.30,000, the latter almost a whole month's income for a young schoolteacher or government official).

Balian kebal are typically middle-aged men who have had some experience of life outside of rural areas. They may have served in the armed forces, or else have worked as itinerant traders, casual labourers or boat hands on inter-island shipping. These experiences render them a little more sophisticated than many of their fellow villagers. Most speak fluent Indonesian, and have little difficulty in mixing with Indonesians from other areas of the archipelago. Their clients too reflect the cultural diversity within the country. Clients are typically males in modern occupations whose work requires a high degree of horizontal mobility. Many come from outside Bali. In catering to this clientele, balian kebal base their practices not only on Balinese magic, but on variants of pan-Indonesian mystical beliefs (*kebatinan*) and on traditional martial arts (*silat*).

There are many reasons why women do not participate in this sort of practice. The hours worked do not accommodate well to housework and child-rearing routines. Women rarely have the sorts of experiences outside of rural areas which would enable them to gain the necessary knowledge of Indonesian and of other cultures in the archipelago with which they could accommodate their practices to the diversity of clients. The labour of single women can be more readily deployed in their household and local hamlet than can that of their brothers.¹² However, most salient in this case are the ideological constraints on women operating as balian kebal, which I discuss in the next section of my chapter.

Changing economic and social conditions in urban areas and centres of tourism allow balians to operate in a different way. Practitioners can benefit from better transport and general access to draw on a more mobile, anonymous and affluent clientele. There is more opportunity for inexperienced balians or even charlatans to give fewer services and charge higher prices. Nowhere are these trends more obvious than in the case of the women who give rub-downs to tourists at Kuta Beach. Masseurs in the villages look on these womens' skills with scorn, saying that what they do is 'not proper massage'. The women charge high prices (Rp.1000-2000, \$A1.50-\$A3.00) for a twenty-minute rub-down, considered very superficial and expensive by the standards of Balinese clients. The fact that these women are not consecrated as balians and have no reputation as such in their own communities is more than compensated for by the prices they can demand of their clients. Moreover the work can be

integrated with domestic routines once the daily pattern of tourists' activities is known. One woman I followed up over several years consistently supported a crippled husband, the husband's mother and four school-age children solely from income earned as a masseuse on Kuta Beach. Depending on the tourist season, she earns about Rp.40,000-100,000 per month.

Thus in context of a wealthy, transient and non-Balinese clientele, with different expectations of the transaction, there is a change in the nature of the service offered. This is also happening to a lesser extent with Indonesian clients in urban areas. It remains to be seen what the long-term effects on the services balians are offering will be, and this will have to be considered in relation to the growth in modern medical services.

Women are excluded from the most stable form of traditional balianship (the literate specialists who inherit the vocation from a senior male relative) and from the most remunerative (the balian kebal who peddle powerful spells and rituals). In general the categories of healing work open to women, for the reasons discussed above, are those which are less stable, physically the hardest work and sometimes less remunerative (midwives, spirit mediums and masseurs). Of course, the best balians in any category can make a good living with stable numbers of clients, but these are few. For many rural women healing compares unfavourably with the other main option, peddling in local markets. The hard work involved in healing, and the inflexible hours, make the remuneration, which may not be high in many cases, compare unfavourably to the returns from peddling. In the next section, I examine the ideological construction of gender in Balinese culture in relation to the constraints on healing as women's work which I have outlined above.

Women's sexuality and reproductive functions are powerful and polluting. There are many contexts in which pollution restrictions apply to regulate the ritual participation of adherents to Balinese religion, but by far the most frequent are those which apply to women when they are menstruating or as a consequence of childbirth. Women are prohibited from entering any sanctified space, including family temples and the shrine houses from which many balians operate. Nor may they engage in any ritual activity, under threat of divine curse and subsequent misfortune to themselves and their families. As balians are consecrated practitioners, not unlike temple priests, female balians are prevented from practising at least three days of every month, while they are menstruating,¹³ plus a longer period after the birth of a child - 42 days to 3 months, depending on local custom. This can be a source of inconvenience to clients who may come from a long distance away without previous notification, only to find the balian ritually impure. It is also a

constraint on women's earning capacity which does not apply in most other female income earning activities.¹⁴

The cultural evaluation of women's social position reinforces female commitment to marriage and sexual relations, although somewhat contradictory ideals do coexist. On the one hand, sexual relations (and the consequences of sexual relations, childbirth) are polluting and to be strictly regulated. Sexual abstinence is lauded as a means of conserving spiritual power (sakti) in consecrated persons (or those aspiring to consecration) of either sex. On the other hand, sexual profligacy in men is a sign of the possession of sakti (see Anderson 1972:9-10 for a discussion of related ideas in Java). Visual representations of hell depict childless women being suckled by caterpillars, and subjected to other hell torments. In everyday life there is pressure (jokes, advice) exerted on youths and girls in late adolescence to find themselves a spouse. Childless women in particular are openly pitied. Whilst some cultural ideals do endorse female asceticism in association with spiritual aspirations, the emphasis is more strongly placed on female participation in marriage and reproduction.

The reading of sacred manuscripts is a sanctified pursuit which may only be undertaken by those free of ritual pollution and preferably after practising sexual abstinence. This may be one reason why women are excluded from studying medical and most other manuscripts. The only category of women who have access to classical texts are the unmarried daughters of high-ranking gentry families for whom there are no spouses of appropriate status. Many of these women function as offering consultants at all major ceremonies. It is interesting to note that of all females these are most likely to be literate, and also the least likely to disperse their skills through marrying out. They transmit their knowledge to patrilineal nieces, as the chances of these women finding spouses in high-ranking groups is much lower than for other women (owing to female hypergamy).

The difficulties which many women healers have in resolving the contradictions between practice in a consecrated vocation and the pressure to be married can be illustrated by an account of one woman's situation. She is a spirit medium and a masseuse, who was married with three young children when she began her practice. She was widowed some years later. She told me that she was ashamed to marry again although there had been many offers. This was because she felt it was inappropriate for a consecrated woman who already had children to appear to be seeking sexual contact again.

A further impediment which this woman saw to her remarriage was that she would have to live virilocally and this would make it ritually difficult to move her shrine house (sanctified spaces in Bali are firmly localized). She also mentioned the practical

consideration that her clients would not know where to find her. Also, marriage for women is formally a severing with the deities of their descent group, as it is the father's descent group membership which is transmitted to the children. For this woman, her guardian deity in the practice of her calling is the founder of her descent group; thus it would be a severe dislocation in the likely event of her marrying a man from another descent group.

In some of the villages in the mountainous area of the district where I worked, the incompatibility of female sexuality and practice in a consecrated profession receives recognition in the customary laws (*adat*) which regulate the election of pre-pubertal girls to the office of temple *balian*s. The girls are responsible for the consecration of certain categories of temple offerings, and in certain villages function as temple mediums. They are elected (by another medium in trance) at public seances, usually around the age of five or six, and are disqualified from office at puberty or marriage, depending on village custom. In some villages these young *balian*s are prohibited from ever marrying. If a pregnancy occurs they are immediately disqualified from practice and no other sanctions are applied.

A far greater degree of ambivalence about female sexuality than male is represented in the symbols of Balinese Hindu cosmology. The power of females to use their sexuality for destructive as well as progenitive ends is portrayed in the symbolism of women as earth mother and as deity of the underworld. In mythology this is embodied dramatically in images of Rangda, a terrifyingly ugly witch with pendulous breasts and long tongue, who is a manifestation of the female deity of destruction and death, Durga.¹⁵

The power, *sakti*, which *balian*s draw upon in their ministrations is essentially ambivalent, and may be used for good or evil ends.¹⁶ As women's powers are culturally defined in a far more dangerous fashion than men's, a woman who publicly practises as a *balian* and thus manipulates *sakti* lays herself open to possible accusations of being a witch. Whilst men can peddle dangerous spells and charms in the *kemasukkan kekuatan* rituals without too much social disapprobation, it would be much more dangerous for women to operate as *balian kebal*. It would also be inappropriate as the rituals of these practitioners celebrate and reinforce a male virility from which females are excluded.

Covert accusations of witchcraft are more frequently directed at women than men, particularly at widows. Witches are believed to wander the roads at night in female form, looking for newborn victims. This makes it particularly difficult for female midwives to operate at night without a shadow being cast over their activities. It does not stop them going out, however, in the company of someone else.

A large minority, perhaps even half of traditional midwives in Bali, are male.¹⁷ The ideological constructions of gender which bear upon these men's performance of their calling are contradictory. Many women expressed to me their preference for female rather than male attendants at the birth of their children. It was not in keeping with their notions of propriety that a male should deliver the child. On the other hand, they asserted that it was easier for men to get around to clients in the middle of the night. Women asserted that men had greater bodily energy (*bayu*) with which to ward off evil influences on the roads at night, and at the actual birth which is held to attract demons and witches. But it is likely that in the future these beliefs will have to accommodate to the practices of increasingly large numbers of government-trained midwives who are exclusively female. Their selection is in accordance with the sexual division of labour in modern medicine, which assigns the midwife's function to women whilst the higher status attendants at births are the doctors who are usually male. These midwives have been trained in modern medical methods of delivery, and are active in communicating alternative childbirth practices to the traditional practitioners and their clients. For instance, they have been largely successful in inducing women to give birth on beds rather than on the floor, despite the widespread belief that the lower position avails the mother of the protection and assistance of the earth goddess (*Ibu Pertiwi*). Women still resist, however, the government-trained midwives' endorsement of internal examinations, a practice which is also eschewed by traditional midwives.

Consecration as a healer closes off a number of occupations as too polluting. Most importantly for women, consecration sanctifies the human head as the ritually purest part of the body and the seat of the deity which inspires the healer in her calling. For women, this is particularly significant as it discourages them from carrying anything on their heads, which is the way small-scale pedlars transport their goods.

Some healers, a small minority, do not accept cash payment for their services. The prohibition is usually handed down through several generations of healers, or is revealed in a trance pronouncement or vision. This restriction has some disadvantages, although payment can still be made in kind or labour. It is possibly compensated for by the enhancement of status for someone who is too sanctified to handle cash.

The ideological construction of gender in Balinese culture which I examined above largely militates against women practising as baliangs, and one may well ask the question: 'Why do so many women operate as healers, given the cultural pressures operating against their involvement?' In justification of my original conceptualization of the problem, I conclude by emphasizing processes in Balinese society which promote women's participation in consecrated vocations such as healing, and by drawing attention to

the flexibility of many of the beliefs and values constraining women's participation in this sphere.

Religious concerns and ritual events pervade the organization of everyday life in Bali to a degree unparalleled in most other societies. Balinese defer to consecrated persons, for the expertise which they bring to the performance of religious activity. Most are addressed by the elevated title 'Jero'. In circumscribed ritual contexts, balians and priests exercise control over the allocation of labour and resources. This may translate into a more diffuse form of influence in the running of local community affairs. Consecrated persons are likely to be consulted in the formal lobbying which goes on prior to hamlet and village assembly meetings.¹⁸ Spirit mediums at public seances have the opportunity to mediate between deities and humans in matters of importance for local communities, such as the election of new temple priests and determination of the structure and scale of forthcoming temple ceremonies. The ideology of possession absolves them from any personal responsibility for outcomes in these contexts. Consecration in one vocation, such as healing, facilitates the adoption of other consecrated vocations, such as that of temple priest. The proliferation of a practitioner's functions in this way also may strengthen the influence that person has in local politics.

The attribution of high status to consecrated practitioners cuts across gender. However, it has a differential meaning for men and women in terms of other opportunities they have to exert influence in the local political arena. For women, opportunities for political participation are few and consecration is one means not only of obtaining a voice in extra-domestic affairs but of influencing the outcome.

It is apparent from some of the data presented above that beliefs and values about gender are modified in response to socio-economic changes affecting women's participation in the workforce. Massage has been redefined as a secular vocation when practised on tourists at Kuta Beach. Government-trained midwives have successfully challenged some (but not all) of the beliefs pertaining to childbirth practices. Modern midwifery has been redefined as an exclusively female occupation in conformity with the sexual division of labour in medical practice, and in accord with traditional values endorsing the appropriateness of women attending women during childbirth. In this context, secular considerations have triumphed over the beliefs about witchcraft and female vulnerability which may obstruct women's participation as midwives. Contradictions within ideological constructions of gender may facilitate adaptations to changing socio-economic conditions as beliefs and values assume a different saliency in relation to practice.

Acknowledgments

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Notes

1. Biro Pusat Statistik, Survey Sosial Penduduk, September 1976.
2. This percentage is not constant across the various sub-categories of balianship, but this is discussed later in the chapter.
3. The authors do not give any indication of the proportions of owners to sharecroppers.
4. On this point, Collier, examining studies of the capitalization of agriculture in Java, writes:

It is interesting to use the results of the Agro-Economic Survey's research on *20 Villages in Java Between 1969-1974* to examine the green revolution in Java. In these 20 villages, rice production has experienced evolutionary changes that substantially reduce employment, that simplify labor relationships, and that sharply limit the sharing of the rice harvest with landless laborers. These studies in Java suggest that what has been occurring in the rural villages has a potential for social conflict, pauperization, and politerization (1978:39-40).

5. Stoler, writing of Java, notes that certain activities in agricultural wage labour, market trade, handicraft production, and mixed garden cultivation for sale and consumption are in part gender specific. However, she notes that 'the amount of time men and women spend in each, the scale of their activities, and the combination of activities they engage in reflect the demands of each particular household economy' (1977:79-80).
6. The manuscripts consist of inscribed palm-leaves (*lontar* or *rortal* - *Borassus flabelliformis* - after the tree of the same name) which have been dried, treated and bound.

7. For example, in my observations of trance seances, I found that 49 per cent of clients' problems were of a sort that would be considered treatable by modern medicine.
8. Even midwives, the category of government-trained healer most likely to displace traditional practitioners because of replication of the functions of the latter, cannot meet the client demand, and women therefore still rely heavily on the services of traditional healers. Primary health care training programs for traditional midwives, male and female, have been instituted all over the island since the mid-1970s.
9. There are exceptions, discussed below, amongst baliens practising in towns and tourist areas.
10. For a discussion of marriage patterns, see Geertz and Geertz (1975:94ff.) and Boon (1977:119ff.).
11. It is extremely unusual for the parents to retrieve the girl after it is obvious that the marriage has been consummated.
12. The other option commonly open to adolescent girls is domestic service in a nearby town. This is a much more sheltered work environment than that experienced by unmarried youths.
13. After three days, although the flow of blood may continue, the woman bathes and washes her hair, and the blood is not considered polluting.
14. This constraint does apply in the case of female offering experts (*tukang banten*) as women in a state of ritual pollution cannot make offerings.
15. The best discussion of the witch figure in Bali and its implications for female gender identity occurs in Bateson and Mead (1942).
16. Sakti is manipulated by baliens practising the destructive magic of the left (*pengiwa*, from *kiwa* - 'left'), and those practising the beneficial magic of the right (*penengenan*, from *tengen* - 'right'). It should be noted here that, whilst in Indian Hindu cosmology sakti is a female power which can be harnessed by men, this idea only persists in the classical literary culture of Java and Bali (e.g. in Old Javanese texts such as the *Pararaton*). Balinese do not conceptualize sakti as being the prerogative of one sex rather than the other.
17. In the district where I worked about 40 per cent of midwives were male. As far as I know, there are no statistical data for the whole of Bali.

18. For a discussion of local politics, see Hobart (1975).

Chapter 5

Land ownership in Negri Sembilan, 1900-1977

Ione Fett

Under matrilineal adat (customary law) of the Minangkabau of West Sumatra and parts of the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia, women traditionally have controlled both resources and production. Land ownership and lineage affiliation are simply part of this complex, whereby women affect and effect power within the minor lineage, the extended family, and the nuclear family (Tanner 1974:143). Changes introduced during the colonial period with respect to land title, however, have disrupted traditional land holdings and, in consequence, the position of women within the subsistence economy and society.

Ione Fett provides us below with a comprehensive analysis of changes in land tenure from the turn of the century in the Malaysian state of Negri Sembilan. These changes commenced with the Perak General Land Regulations of 1879, the provisions of which resulted in confusion for both the landholders and the administration. Subsequent legislation, however, had dramatic effect. Ione Fett demonstrates that, whilst women collectively actually own more land today than at any other time this century, individual shares have declined. As a result, she concludes that women's economic independence is being whittled away and their position within the economy has thus become increasingly marginal.

This chapter is about changes in the ownership of various categories of land in a part of West Malaysia which is subject to three distinct systems of land law. In effect, a British system of formal registration of titles and of dispute settlement through secular courts has been superimposed upon the pre-existing Islamic system, and in this part of Malaysia, also upon a parallel system of matrilineal customary law. Ideally, and often in practice, the three systems apply in different social situations and complement each other. Quite often they conflict, or the relationships between them are at least problematic: that is a field of study in its own right. Here I am concerned with one end product: the ownership of land in this legal context.

I will first locate the area under study, give a brief history of the area, and a summary account of the matrilineal customary law, or *adat*, as it impinges upon land tenure. This will be followed by an outline of the British legislation that was superimposed on the *adat*. Then I will say something about the research methods, and present the data so derived.

The area of study

When Maxwell became the British Resident in Selangor in 1889, as part of the process of tidying up the system of land tenure, he divided the State of Selangor into Districts, and the Districts into subdivisions called *mukim*. The same process was later applied to the State of Negri Sembilan. The District with which I am concerned is Kuala Pilah, and within that District, the *mukim* called Serting Ulu. *Mukim Serting Ulu* is shaped like a comma upside down, and my data refer to the wide southern part (Maps 5.1-5.3).

The *mukim* is a subdivision used primarily for land registration purposes. The boundaries on maps are sometimes uncertain, and the concept had no social meaning for the Malays with whom I was living. For present purposes I calculated the area of *Mukim Serting Ulu* to be 73,607 acres (29,443 hectares),* which is 4.5 per cent of the area of the State of Negri Sembilan.

Not all of *Mukim Serting Ulu* was relevant to the study. Much of it is unpopulated forest; part was subdivided into small lots (under 10 acres) not taken up at the time of study; some such lots were reserved for mosques, schools, buffalo grazing grounds and other public purposes, and some were owned by Chinese and Indian Malaysians. A further small fraction of the whole was divided into plantation and other lots more than 10 acres in size, the records of which are held in the State and District Land Offices. The local office in which I worked, at Bahau, about 25 km west of the city of Kuala Pilah, like other local offices, held records only of lots under 10 acres, which aggregated 3630 acres. The remainder of the *mukim* was about 70,000 acres (my estimate) (see Table 5.1).

So *Mukim Serting Ulu* was 4.5 per cent of the area of the State, and my data concern the 4.4 per cent of the *mukim* in Malay ownership. The data cannot therefore claim to be statistically representative of all small land holdings in the State, although they may be.

*Areas of land in this chapter are given in acres, rather than hectares, as most of the data are historical.

Map 5.1 West Malaysia

Map 5.2 Location of Mukim Serting Ulu in the State of Negri Sembilan

Map 5.3 Mukim Serting Ulu

Table 5.1
Summary of land in Mukim Serting Ulu

	No. of lots	Acres
Forest reserves	3	63,080.6
Other reserves	22	271.6
Untitled lots ^a	988	6,448.1
Not Malay reservation	57	176.9
	<u>1,070</u>	<u>69,977.2</u>
Customary land	95	242.8
Malay grants	255	984.5
Other titled lots ^b	856	2,402.3
	<u>1,206</u>	<u>3,629.6</u>
Mukim total calculated	2,276	73,606.8

^aNo owners registered; lots not taken up; lots larger than 10 acres.

^bMalay owners registered; mostly Malay Reservation.

History

As Swift has observed, the State of Negri Sembilan has attracted a great deal of anthropological attention because of the matrilineal social organization of its original Malay inhabitants (Swift 1965:1). Present-day Malays here are largely descended from immigrants from Minangkabau in Western Sumatra, who crossed the Straits during the sixteenth century and later. They settled to a life of subsistence agriculture on the lands adjoining the waterways by which they are held by some to have penetrated to the interior. These Minangkabau immigrants brought with them their political organization into a system of matrilineal clans; the system of customary law, the *adat perpatih*, associated with that organization; and their own language.

In the traditional system, each clan had a head, or *lembaga*, who was chosen for life from each of the three or four sub-clans in turn. Land ownership was ultimately vested in the clan and under the lembaga's control. During the nineteenth century population increase was slight enough to be accommodated by clearing and occupying a further portion of unclaimed land adjoining any existing settlement. These immigrants readily assimilated with the indigenous Malay population, and formed a loose association of nine states under an hereditary ruler (Lim 1977:3). Living usually in relatively remote areas protected them from exposure to many direct consequences of a feudal political system, and was of similar value when the British presence eventuated in the nineteenth century.

The system of customary law brought from Minangkabau includes a complex set of rules relating to land ownership and transmission. This is largely embodied in a corpus of proverb-like statements called *perbilangan* which includes rules of interpersonal conduct, exhortations to proper behaviour, and reasons why these are good and sound guides to conduct which should be followed. This is an oral tradition, of many allegories and parables, which has left room for interpretation not only by English translators and expositors, but also by the Malays themselves. Much of it is alive today, and is highly valued by those who hold it.

This adat classifies property as acquired or ancestral. Land acquired by clearing, or as at present, by purchase, may become 'ancestral' and be so endorsed in the Land Register, but some ambiguity exists as to the conditions under which this occurs. Hooker, for example, states that 'All titles which refer to land owned by a female member of any clan are endorsed with the words "customary land" (1972:56; 1976:66). But in the land records used in the present study, there were many lots owned by female clan members which were not so endorsed; those which were endorsed had invariably been transmitted among women for a number of generations; and endorsement was not initiated by the land officers, as Hooker implies. Local informants were independently and unanimously of the opinion that land could become 'ancestral' only after inheritance by women, and in the female line, over two generations; and upon application. This view was also held by the land officer. The occupants of one local lot (a widowed grandmother, her three daughters, so far two granddaughters, and two daughters' husbands) were planning and looking forward to achieving endorsement of their land when the granddaughters became of marriageable age. The adults had no doubt that their application would succeed automatically. The daughters' brothers, who worked elsewhere and visited home, were in accord with both the conditions and the decision to apply for endorsement: they would accompany their sisters to the Land Office to support the application. At the same time, there were other families in Kg Bukit Kelulut whose land was also eligible on these terms, who had not decided to seek endorsement, and did not envisage endorsement without their consent and application. Land endorsed 'customary' may only be alienated by permission of the lembaga, normally granted only for certain traditional purposes. The lembaga of the clan to which I was affiliated said he would only grant such permission to finance a pilgrimage to Mecca. Members of the owners' own clan must be given first right of refusal before land can be offered for sale on a wider market.

Rubber land, on the contrary, was seen as a marketable commodity. Women acquired title to it by purchase, often financed by, and/or in shares with, husbands and male family members. It was seen as a means to financial security,

especially highly valued by women who tapped for others for cash income.

The British first attempted control of land through the Perak General Land Regulations of 1879. These were superseded by another set in 1885, and these in turn by the Sungei Ujong Order in Council of 1887. This last provided for 999-year leases and for grants in perpetuity, and applied to land which had been or would be taken up after the Malay States were brought under British protection. Existing native holdings were mostly in remote areas beyond administrative control and were at this time left alone: only visible ones, near tin mines or towns, were affected. Immigration from Sumatra and other Malay States continued, people simply occupying new land and using and transmitting the old, free of administrative intervention.

These Regulations were brought to cover Negri Sembilan in a series of Acts of which the first was the Negri Sembilan Land Enactment of 1897. It was intended to convert all existing Malay holdings into registered leaseholds, but was not effective because, first, the work of surveying and issuing leases for even newly developed areas was more than the existing officials could cope with; and second, because the conversion to leasehold had as its main objective, according to Wong, the increasing of government revenue from the Malay peasants (Wong 1975:72). From the Malay point of view, their people, who had been peacefully carrying on subsistence agriculture autonomously for generations, suddenly found themselves being taxed for no apparent reason. They confronted the attempt with strong opposition which in some places had to be suppressed by force. In so far as registration of native holdings was carried out, it was reduced to a matter of compiling lists of occupiers liable to pay rent, and was, in Wong's words, 'a mass of confusion'.

It was in response to this situation that Maxwell, in 1889, set himself to identify the sources of confusion, and then to divide the States, beginning with Selangor, into Districts and Mukims. He caused to be recorded all lands under occupation: identifying their owners, settling disputes about boundaries and describing each title. He compiled rent rolls showing the locality of every occupied plot by reference to a serial number, its area, the rent due, and the name of the person liable to pay it.

It was Maxwell who created the distinction in law between customary land (native holdings brought under the leasehold system) and waste land, which was everything else and belonged to the State (Wong 1975:71ff.). This was the inauguration of arguments about the legal definition of customary land and the nature of legal entitlements to it, which led to successive legislative attempts at clarification in Negri Sembilan, and which continue to this day.

The adat, or customary law, was potentially a flexible system of ideas in which disagreements were settled by consensus reached through discussion among the parties concerned. It did not have to conform to any constant legal definition, only to what was deemed custom; and it sufficed that, within limits, all parties were content. It was the attempt to crystallize the adat in British-type legislation that created the need for successive legislative acts — and for numerous lawyers to sort them all out when the systems of law were in conflict.

So we have the Negri Sembilan Land Enactment of 1897. This was re-enacted with variations in 1903, became the Customary Tenure Enactment of 1909, and was repealed and replaced by the Customary Tenure Enactment of 1926. This Act was still in force in 1973, although not without subsequent amendments. The amendments were largely consequent upon the 1913 Malay Reservation Enactment which prohibited certain designated areas from passing into the hands of non-Malays. Before this Act, much land was passing from Malays to Chinese and Indians as the Malays gradually learned to see land as a saleable commodity, rather than as an essential source of subsistence.

Map 5.4, based on the years in which titles were first registered, shows the historical movement from earliest settlement along rivers, followed by the occupation of lots along newly built main roads, to selection of 'inland' subdivisions thereafter.

Research method

The activities that Maxwell engaged in constituted in effect the establishment of the system of Torrens titles which is still in use and which provides the records of land ownership and transmission I was permitted to use for this research. The local records of Mukim Seriting Ulu yielded 1206 lots of under 10 acres of which Malay ownership had been registered, the first in 1902, with various numbers annually thereafter to the end of 1976. They totalled 3629.6 acres as shown in Table 5.1.

The ownership histories of all these lots were copied in the Land Office and typed up in the kampong, each lot on a separate page. This enabled their sorting by hand into categories for counting and for statistical analysis; and also permitted further enquiry about particular lots. All transmissions of title were dated. There was no *prima facie* reason to suppose that recent ones did not reflect true ownership, and enquiries which could discreetly be made supported this supposition. In a very few cases the most recent transmission date was too far in the past to be recording a living owner. In some of them, neighbours were able to tell me that the recorded owner had in fact died, and also to identify the present owners and their relationship

Map 5.4 Years of first registration of titles (see Map 5.3 for location of sections)

to the deceased. As for reasons of confidentiality not all out-of-date records could be amended in this way (the geographical area was small and local knowledge formidable), the Land Register records were accepted as definitive. These cases were too small in number significantly to affect statistical outcomes.

It was possible from these records to calculate the acreage owned at any point in time by men and by women, and also to calculate the acre equivalent of a stated share when lots were owned by more than one person. 'Ownership' in this leasehold context means right to occupy subject to stated conditions, and liability to pay the rent.

The other documentary source used was a set of subdivision maps of the mukim, showing lot numbers and lot sizes. From these was derived the composite map of the mukim, of which the southern part is shown in Map 5.4. By relating the Land Register records to individual lots on this map, one could determine the order in which different parts of the area were settled, and also patterns of use. It was from these sources also that the total area of the mukim was calculated, and its boundaries delineated (areas subject to correction).

Analysis

As well as determining male and female equity in land year by year, these data, related to the subdivision maps, enabled the generation of a picture of expanding settlement (Map 5.4). But time and sex of owner are only two of a number of criteria by which land may be categorized. The others used in this paper are:

1. Legal status. That is whether land has been declared customary, or is Malay Reservation, or is eligible for sale on the open market (to non-Malays).
2. Designated use. Rent payable is a function of the use to which land is to be put, and titles are endorsed accordingly. The positive categories are riceland, homestead land, rubber, and orchard and homestead. Rubber land is subject to higher rent than are the subsistence categories, and because of this and local geographical conditions, actual use may vary from that specified. I was not able to check the actual use of all lots and have therefore adhered to that recorded, even when I knew the actual use was not that specified. In analysing the data I have collapsed all these categories into two: rubber land, used for cash income; and subsistence land, which includes all the others. Their distribution is shown in detail in Map 5.5.
3. Geographical location. While the categories based on legal status, use, and ownership by each sex, cut across each

Map 5.5 Designated land in use in 1977 (see Map 5.3 for location of sections)

other, there is a partial coincidence of the time titles were first registered and their geographical location, which is of course consistent with the social history of the area.

The matrilineal adat is still a force in everyday life in Negri Sembilan, but opinions vary as to its extent and the fields in which it operates. Clan membership is still a significant source of identification and loyalty in inter-personal relations; but few people could list all twelve clans in the district. Most people knew what a sub-clan, or perut, was, but had difficulty in saying anything about those of their own clan. In everyday life matrilineal kinship was apparent in the welcome accorded little girls, in plans for the later transference of property, and in explanations for the residence of particular people in particular places despite a number of exceptions.

One can interpret these and other such data very readily to support a thesis that the force of adat is declining; or one that it is enduring with its earlier strength, depending on the researcher's predisposition. I hoped in searching the land records to establish one objective indication of its vitality or otherwise.

As Malaysia is becoming increasingly industrialized, and the earlier colonial economy is fast giving way to a capitalist one, the demands for wage labour, cash income and education are also increasing. My census of the kampong in which I was living showed that it was young men who tended to receive family priority in education who went away, with older men, to earn income. It was my expectation that the other economic resource, land, would also show a pattern of movement towards male ownership, despite the often expressed firmly held belief that women should be economically independent by owning and working land. As the tables show, this expectation was not fulfilled.

Results

1. Customary land. Only land susceptible of ownership by both men and women can be used to provide data on their differential interests. Customary land can be owned by and must descend only through women, and may therefore for present purposes be eliminated. This kind of land is subject in effect to a perpetual caveat: it cannot be sold without the lembaga's consent and its transfer is restricted to female members of the same clan who can make their claim good through matrilineal kinship.

There are three clusters of customary land in this mukim, described in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2
Customary land in Mukim Serting Ulu, 1902-17

Year of first registration of title	Location	Number of lots	Total acres
1902-9	Ulu Serting	25	77.5
1915-16	Bayai	17	56.89
1917	Northwest Kg. Bukit Kelulut	35	87.2

2. Malay reservation, non-customary land. Tables 5.3 and 5.4 show the rate at which land was taken up over 65 years if we read the columns vertically. The world-wide depression in the 1930s was concurrent with government encouragement in Malaysia to increase rice production and reduce imports, and the growth in rice acreages taken up during this and the preceding decade fell to almost zero during the 1940s, the period of Japanese occupation. These figures, increasing steadily during the other decades of the century, will no doubt also be a reflection of the significant population increase among the Malays after the turn of the century. Not only do the absolute numbers of acres of this subsistence land increase, but there is also an increase in the proportion of the lots subject to joint ownership.

Table 5.4 shows that the proportion of land taken up by women steadily declined until the 1950s, especially if we recall the customary land registered in the first decade of the century, which was wholly owned by women; and it remains lower than in the first two decades.

Table 5.5 shows what happened to the same land by 1977. Titles to some lots had been cancelled, commonly because of non-payment of rent and consequent reversion to the State. This occurred in every decade except the 1950s. A comparison of Tables 5.3 and 5.5 shows substantial increase in joint ownership; and if we look at female equity in Tables 5.4 and 5.6, there is a pattern of its increasing the longer the land has been under title: it is highest in the lots taken up in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, and declines steadily from women owning 88.8 per cent of 1920s land in 1977 to their owning just over half the land taken up in the seven years preceding 1977.

Over the seventy-year period it appears that female equity has not decreased as expected, but substantially increased. This is what I have categorized as 'subsistence land': land used for all purposes other than rubber production. It suggests the *prima facie* conclusion that the customary high value placed on

Table 5.3

Ownership of land at time of first registration of title (excluding rubber) (for totals and female equity, see Table 5.4)

Year of title	Male owners		Female owners		Male and female joint owners		
	No. of lots	Acres	No. of lots	Acres	No. of lots	M. acres	F. acres
1915	9	16.64	10	24.13	-		
1917	-		4	16.79	-		
1918	6	32.72	6	17.53	-		
1919	11	36.50	11	40.44	-		
Decade	26	85.86	31	98.89	-		
1920	-		1	3.55	-		
1921	-		1	3.48	-		
1924	2	7.17	1	2.48	-		
1925	16	43.09	13	39.33	1	1.06	1.06
1926	21	51.77	25	64.64	-		
1927	1	1.54	2	6.01	-		
1928	1	3.00	-		-		
1929	4	11.94	7	20.34	1	1.89	0.94
Decade	45	118.51	50	139.83	2	2.95	2.10
1930	4	10.93	1	3.66	-		
1931	15	32.88	12	35.28	1	0.49	0.49
1932	19	47.96	13	36.38	1	1.02	1.02
1933	1	2.39	2	5.73	-		
1934	1	2.00	1	2.00	-		
1935	-		1	1.94	1	1.02	1.02
1936	5	13.70	2	4.38	-		
1937	1	2.36	1	3.26	-		
1938	4	8.41	2	4.10	-		
1939	9	24.09	6	14.20	-		
Decade	59	144.72	41	110.93	3	2.53	2.53
1940	5	12.16	3	5.18	1	1.50	1.50
1941	2	6.44	-		1	2.94	2.94
1944	1	4.44	4	9.19	-		
Decade	8	23.04	7	14.37	2	4.44	4.44
1952	1	2.98	3	4.46	1	2.00	0.66
1953	3	7.29	5	16.19	-		
1954	2	5.53	3	9.01	-		
1956	5	14.85	2	6.50	-		
1957	23	74.11	12	27.04	4	9.47	12.22
1958	8	23.21	7	23.78	2	4.98	4.98
1959	-		2	3.01	-		
Decade	42	127.97	34	89.99	7	16.45	17.86
1960	-		1	1.03	-		
1962	27	58.86	24	48.01	-		
1963	5	12.06	7	21.12	-		
1964	33	112.43	19	51.04	2	4.36	2.18
1965	50	123.47	34	86.34	11	14.68	15.35
1966	79	208.09	74	181.96	14	19.61	20.56
1968	4	9.50	6	17.72	3	7.41	5.29
1969	8	22.57	7	29.93	2	3.08	3.08
Decade	206	546.98	172	437.15	32	49.14	46.46
1970	19	58.64	14	40.81	-		
1971	13	31.79	11	27.88	1	1.49	1.50
1972	3	11.68	8	15.73	1	0.58	2.29
1973	4	12.86	5	13.25	-		
1974	5	12.73	7	21.29	-		
1975	4	12.86	8	20.00	1	1.04	2.08
1976	4	8.56	6	16.23	-		
1970-76	52	149.12	59	155.19	3	3.11	5.87

Table 5.4
Female equity in land at time of first registration
 (excluding rubber)

Year of title	Total land registered		Acres	Female equity	
	No. of lots	Acres		Percentage	
1915	19	40.77	24.13	59.18	
1917	4	16.79	16.79	100.00	
1918	12	41.25	17.53	42.50	
1919	22	76.94	40.44	52.56	
Decade	57	175.75	98.89	56.27	
1920	1	3.55	3.55	100.00	
1921	1	3.48	3.48	100.00	
1924	3	9.64	2.48	25.66	
1925	30	84.54	40.39	47.77	
1926	46	116.41	64.64	60.14	
1927	3	7.55	6.01	79.64	
1928	1	3.00	-	-	
1929	12	35.13	21.29	60.60	
Decade	97	263.30	141.84	53.87	
1930	5	14.59	3.66	25.06	
1931	28	69.13	35.76	51.73	
1932	33	86.38	37.40	43.40	
1933	3	8.13	5.73	70.54	
1934	2	4.00	2.00	50.00	
1935	2	3.97	2.95	74.33	
1936	7	18.08	4.38	24.20	
1937	2	5.63	3.26	58.00	
1938	6	12.51	4.10	32.77	
1939	15	38.29	14.20	37.09	
Decade	103	260.71	113.44	43.51	
1940	9	20.34	6.88	32.84	
1941	3	12.31	2.94	23.86	
1944	5	13.63	9.19	67.40	
Decade	17	46.28	19.21	40.63	
1952	5	10.11	5.13	50.71	
1953	8	23.49	16.19	68.95	
1954	5	14.54	9.01	61.99	
1956	7	21.35	6.50	30.44	
1957	39	122.84	39.26	31.96	
1958	17	56.93	28.75	50.50	
1959	2	3.01	3.01	100.00	
Decade	83	252.27	107.85	42.75	
1960	1	1.03	1.03	100.00	
1962	51	106.87	48.01	44.99	
1963	12	33.18	21.12	63.65	
1964	54	170.01	53.23	31.31	
1965	95	239.83	101.69	42.40	
1966	167	430.23	202.52	47.07	
1968	13	39.92	23.01	57.63	
1969	17	58.64	33.00	56.27	
Decade	410	1079.71	483.61	44.79	
1970	33	99.45	40.81	41.03	
1971	25	62.67	29.38	46.88	
1972	12	30.27	18.01	30.27	
1973	9	24.64	13.25	53.78	
1974	12	34.01	21.29	62.59	
1975	13	35.98	22.09	61.37	
1976	10	24.79	16.23	65.48	
1970-76	114	311.81	161.06	51.65	

Table 5.5

Ownership of land in May 1977 (excluding rubber)
(for totals and female equity, see Table 5.6)

Year of title	Male owners		Female owners		Male and female joint owners		
	No. of lots	Acres	No. of lots	Acres	No. of lots	M. acres	F. acres
1915	2	4.53	13	27.71	4	3.05	5.48
1917	-		2	10.66	-		
1918	-		8	25.69	2	2.88	7.03
1919	1	1.22	16	60.44	5	6.43	8.64
Decade	3	5.75	39	124.50	11	12.36	21.15
1921	-		1	3.48	-		
1924	-		2	6.03	1	1.81	1.81
1925	3	9.16	19	52.27	6	4.20	11.80
1926	4	9.33	22	50.09	9	10.13	13.17
1927	-		3	7.55			
1928	-		1	3.00	-		
1929	4	12.00	5	14.07	3	4.53	4.53
Decade	11	30.49	53	136.49	19	20.67	31.31
1930	1	2.31	3	9.01	1	1.09	2.18
1931	4	7.74	16	40.06	7	7.73	11.59
1932	4	8.74	17	45.95	7	9.17	10.99
1933	-		2	5.73	1	1.20	1.20
1934	1	2.00	1	2.00	-		
1935	-		2	3.97			
1936	1	1.00	5	14.84	1	0.56	1.68
1937	-		1	2.36	1	1.45	1.81
1938	-		4	7.06	2	3.79	1.66
1939	5	13.50	9	21.95	1	0.36	2.48
Decade	16	35.29	60	152.93	21	25.35	33.59
1940	1	2.01	5	10.22	3	3.40	4.71
1941	1	5.88	-		1	0.38	2.67
1944	-		5	13.63	-		
Decade	2	7.89	10	23.85	4	3.78	7.38
1952	1	2.98	3	4.46	1	2.00	0.66
1953	2	6.03	5	14.15	1	0.65	2.66
1954	1	2.34	3	9.01	1	1.59	1.59
1956	1	4.61	5	12.26	1	2.24	2.24
1957	13	41.45	20	59.70	6	9.10	12.59
1958	7	19.94	8	27.04	2	4.98	4.98
1959	-		2	4.89	-		
Decade	25	77.35	46	131.51	12	20.56	24.71
1960	-		1	1.01	-		
1962	19	40.68	27	52.44	5	7.18	6.57
1963	1	2.15	6	14.04	5	5.60	11.39
1964	24	73.38	19	47.21	11	18.17	31.26
1965	29	74.22	39	97.37	25	32.62	35.63
1966	58	151.86	79	192.48	30	38.09	47.71
1968	3	5.85	7	22.08	3	6.06	5.92
1969	9	27.14	7	28.36	1	1.57	1.57
Decade	143	375.28	185	454.99	80	109.29	140.05
1970	16	47.51	14	42.73	3	3.93	5.28
1971	10	25.23	12	29.98	3	4.23	3.24
1972	3	11.68	7	13.15	2	2.15	3.29
1973	4	11.39	5	13.25	-		
1974	4	9.81	8	24.20	-		
1975	4	12.86	6	15.32	3	4.31	3.49
1976	4	8.56	6	16.23	-		
1970-76	45	127.04	58	154.86	11	14.62	15.30

Table 5.6
Female equity in land in 1977 (excluding rubber)

Year of title	Total land registered		Female equity	
	No. of lots	Acres	Acres	Percentage
1915	19	40.77	33.19	81.40
1917	2	10.66	10.66	100.00
1918	10	35.60	32.71	91.91
1919	22	76.94	69.08	87.78
Decade	53	163.97	145.64	88.82
1921	1	3.48	3.48	100.00
1924	3	9.64	7.84	81.27
1925	28	77.43	64.07	82.75
1926	35	82.74	63.28	76.48
1927	3	7.55	7.55	100.00
1928	1	3.00	3.00	100.00
1929	12	35.13	18.59	52.94
Decade	83	218.97	167.81	76.64
1930	5	14.59	11.19	76.74
1931	27	67.11	51.64	76.96
1932	28	74.85	56.94	76.07
1933	3	8.13	6.93	85.23
1934	2	4.00	2.00	50.00
1935	2	3.97	3.97	100.00
1936	7	18.08	16.52	91.39
1937	2	5.63	4.18	74.22
1938	6	12.51	8.73	69.73
1939	15	38.29	24.43	63.81
Decade	97	247.16	186.53	75.47
1940	9	20.34	14.93	73.39
1941	2	8.93	2.67	29.90
1944	5	13.63	13.63	100.00
Decade	16	42.90	31.23	72.80
1952	5	10.11	5.13	50.71
1953	8	23.49	16.81	71.55
1954	5	14.54	10.60	72.91
1956	7	21.35	14.49	67.89
1957	39	122.84	72.29	58.85
1958	17	56.93	32.01	56.23
1959	2	4.89	4.89	100.00
Decade	83	254.15	156.22	61.47
1960	1	1.01	1.01	100.00
1962	51	106.87	59.01	55.21
1963	12	33.18	25.43	76.64
1964	54	170.01	78.46	46.15
1965	93	239.83	132.99	55.45
1966	167	430.15	240.19	55.84
1968	13	39.91	28.00	70.16
1969	17	58.64	29.93	58.64
Decade	408	1079.60	595.02	55.12
1970	33	99.45	48.01	48.27
1971	25	62.67	33.22	53.01
1972	12	30.27	16.44	54.31
1973	9	24.64	13.25	53.78
1974	12	34.01	24.20	71.15
1975	13	35.98	18.81	52.28
1976	10	24.79	16.23	65.48
1970-76	114	311.81	170.16	54.57

women owning their means of subsistence prevails despite monetization and capitalization of the economy.

Ownership of land, though, is not necessarily coincident with using it, and there was indeed land in the kampong not being used for any productive purpose. Homestead land could be seen as under-utilized in terms of food-producing trees and vegetable gardens, and there were many small areas of unused land alongside pathways. Apart from these, the only unused land in the kampong consisted in:

1. Several adjacent lots combined as an old and neglected rubber plantation with one absentee owner (although it served as a very useful source of firewood for all the neighbourhood kitchens); and

2. A number of riverside lots originally designated rice land but changed officially to homestead because the river had fallen over the years and did not offer sufficient water for rice cultivation. About half these lots had houses and were occupied; owners of the others had left to gain a living elsewhere.

There was no evidence of neglect or under-utilization of rice land in this particular area. The land was worked by small groups of women related usually by kinship but sometimes by close neighbourhood, with occasional assistance from male relatives. All my close neighbours in the kampong supported themselves in rice, bicycling several miles each day to reach their plots during labour intensive periods.

Rubber land shows the same trend in a much weaker form. Rubber trees are grown and tapped not for subsistence but for cash income, and acquisition and development of land for this purpose require more capital. Female equity in this, as is seen in Table 5.7, was not only significantly lower when the land was first taken up, but remained much lower after enough years had passed for transmission to have taken place (Table 5.8).

For one explanation of these trends we may look to the matrilineal kinship system and the belief that women should own subsistence land. Scrutiny of the detailed record of transmission of individual lots over the century reveals a pattern of land being first registered to a man, or to a man and his wife. Thereafter the pattern is of transmission to the woman and her daughters. This is not true of all lots: a few are sold, but more importantly some have descended after death by Islamic inheritance which assigns specified shares to widows, and twice the share to sons than to daughters: but this system of inheritance also incorporates women as landowners. While rubber land is bought and sold fairly freely, subsistence land tends to remain in the family, and it is therefore possible to explain the changes in female equity broadly in terms of family composition during its cycle over two or three generations.

Table 5.7
Rubber land at time of first registration

	M. owners		F. owners		Joint owners			Total		% F.
	No. of lots	Acres	No. of lots	Acres	No. of lots	M. acres	F. acres	No. of lots	Acres	
1930	4	17.79	-	-	-	-	-	4	17.79	-
1931	20	58.59	4	15.15	1	1.94	1.94	25	77.62	22.01
1936	1	3.56	-	-	-	-	-	1	3.56	-
Decade	25	79.94	4	15.15	1	1.94	1.94	30	98.97	17.27
1964	4	22.14	-	-	-	-	-	4	22.14	-
1965	8	31.99	3	9.32	1	1.34	1.34	12	43.99	24.24
1966	19	88.74	5	17.16	3	9.48	7.48	27	122.85	20.05
1967	1	3.04	-	-	-	-	-	1	3.04	-
1968	1	3.04	1	5.62	-	-	-	2	8.66	64.86
1969	1	5.88	-	-	1	2.84	2.84	2	11.56	24.55
Decade	34	154.83	9	32.10	5	13.65	11.66	48	212.24	20.62
1970	5	19.18	4	21.03	1	1.54	1.54	10	43.29	52.12
1971	9	30.76	7	15.31	3	6.99	9.01	19	62.07	39.18
1972	5	23.36	6	12.08	-	-	-	11	35.43	34.08
1973	7	33.89	2	11.21	-	-	-	9	45.10	24.86
1974	9	45.74	-	-	2	5.68	5.68	11	47.11	9.94
1975	9	50.29	4	25.05	3	6.29	7.19	16	88.81	36.30
1976	25	158.12	4	18.86	9	28.68	24.27	38	229.93	18.76
1970-76	69	361.34	27	103.54	18	49.18	47.69	114	551.74	26.92

Table 5.8
Ownership of rubber land in May 1977

Year of first title	M. owners		F. owners		Joint owners			Total		% F.
	No. of lots	acres	No. of lots	Acres	No. of lots	M. acres	F. acres	No. of lots	Acres	
1930	1	1.96	-	-	3	8.82	6.99	4	17.77	39.32
1931	11	30.58	6	19.29	7	12.04	12.38	24	74.29	42.63
1936	-	-	1	3.56	-	-	-	1	3.56	100.00
Decade	12	32.54	7	22.85	10	20.86	19.37	29	95.62	44.15
1964	3	15.59	1	6.55	-	-	-	4	22.14	29.59
1965	6	20.64	3	9.32	3	7.02	7.02	12	43.99	37.14
1966	19	92.51	5	17.16	3	6.09	7.09	27	122.85	19.74
1967	1	3.04	-	-	-	-	-	1	3.04	-
1968	1	3.04	1	5.62	-	-	-	2	8.66	64.86
1969	-	-	-	-	2	5.78	5.78	2	11.56	50.00
Decade	30	134.82	10	38.65	8	18.89	19.89	48	212.24	27.58
1970	5	19.18	5	24.11	-	-	-	10	43.29	55.69
1971	8	31.98	8	19.14	3	4.91	6.93	19	62.07	42.02
1972	4	21.80	6	10.93	1	1.35	1.35	11	35.43	34.66
1973	5	26.75	3	13.66	1	2.81	1.88	9	45.10	34.45
1974	8	40.98	-	-	3	6.68	9.45	11	57.11	16.55
1975	10	51.27	4	25.05	2	5.79	6.70	16	88.81	35.75
1976	24	151.80	4	18.86	10	31.84	27.43	38	229.93	20.13
1970-76	64	343.76	30	111.72	20	53.38	53.74	114	561.74	29.46

This argues also that the matrilineal customary law as it relates to the ownership and transmission of land is alive and well, at least in Mukim Serting Ulu. This hypothesis however needs testing by similar comparative analyses of land ownership and transmission in other parts of Negri Sembilan, and elsewhere in West Malaysia where the matrilineal adat does not obtain.

That is one issue: the extent to which the adat remains an active value. A second issue emerges if we take cognizance of population increase over the century, and calculate the average acreage per person. The figures in the tables presented so far assume equal numbers of men and women per available acre of land. One observed in the field, however, that many local sons went elsewhere to earn a living, and that there was much sharing of land by the women in one family. In Tables 5.9 and 5.10 the acre of subsistence land taken up are expressed in terms of the average acreage per individual.

In the three decades selected, women averaged less land per head than did their husbands and brothers; and by 1977 (Table 5.10) their average had declined in absolute terms, while becoming about equal to that of male owners. This is another way of looking at the increase in sharing shown in the last three columns of Table 5.5. Population increase, in a situation of limited capital, is dealt with not by taking up more land as was possible in the precolonial period, but by husbands, sons and brothers moving out as wage labourers, joining the army or the police, or through education becoming teachers or clerks in the civil service and so on; and by more women then sharing that land available to them.

If we look at rubber land in this light (Table 5.11), the average acreage per person is higher. Lots of rubber land are larger; and fewer people have the capital necessary to purchase them. Rubber land is never 'customary' in the adat sense. As mentioned above (p.79), it is seen more as a commodity to be bought and sold and to provide cash income.

Conclusion

To conclude, while ownership of land by women as a category has increased over the century, the share per person, of both men and women, has declined.

In the increase of total land owned by women, we may see one effect of the matrilineal adat which holds that women should own their means of subsistence, although without asserting that this is the whole explanation. The figures for land both taken up, and ultimately owned, during the 1970s at least, are affected by purchase of land by immigrants to the local area who are not members of matrilineal clans: these are for example teachers and civil servants who have come to take up jobs.

The second component in the data, the decline in individual wealth in land on the part of both sexes, must be attributed in part at least to population increase and the inability to raise capital to acquire more land. It is evident from Map 5.5 that there is land available. It is also a fact that women prefer to share with close kin, among long-known neighbours, than to move away from close people into new areas.

There is something of a contradiction here. While women collectively own more than at any earlier period in this century, considerably in accordance with adat values, those same values seem to be resulting in significant decline in the share in it pertaining to individuals. As this is equivalent to a decline in their means of subsistence, it follows that dependence on cash income must increase, and this is at present mostly provided by male family members. The female economic independence characteristic of the traditional adat subsistence economy is to this

Table 5.9

Average acres per person in year of first registration, selected decades
(excluding rubber land)

Year of 1st regn.	Male		Female		Persons	
	Acres	Indivs.	Acres	Indivs.	Acres	Indivs.
1930-39	147.26	62	113.44	46	260.69	108
1960-69	596.12	258	483.59	233	1079.71	491
1970-76	150.76	61	161.95	74	311.81	135

Table 5.10

Average acres per person in 1977, selected decades
(excluding rubber land)

Year of 1st regn.	Males		Female		Persons	
	Acres	Indivs.	Acres	Indivs.	Acres	Indivs.
1930-39	60.63	47	186.53	142	247.14	189
1960-69	484.58	268	595.04	382	1079.62	650
1970-76	141.65	83	170.16	95	311.81	178

extent being whittled away. At the same time, it is still held that women should own and work the subsistence land. The net result seems to be that women are being more and more firmly pinned to the margins of the economy as a whole, and that that position is becoming of less and less value.

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Chapter 6

Rich woman, poor woman: occupation differences in a textile producing village in Central Java

Susanna Price

Typically, the introduction of technology in traditional occupations has represented a loss for women. Both in agriculture and in home industry, new techniques, skills and equipment have been introduced to men even when the labour was traditionally undertaken by women, and women have been left with the most menial and least remunerative work.

In many cases, manufacturing industries have been established in direct competition with small-scale enterprises; the relative low productivity of these enterprises has led to their closure; women have been forced out of business whilst men have secured employment in the industrial sector. In other cases, however, technological changes have been introduced within the traditional sector and women have sustained their involvement therein. But mechanization has affected sex and class relations. Susanna Price illustrates this well in the following chapter on textile production on the north coast of Java. Here, an increasing dependence on mechanization has led to the reallocation of tasks between men and women; predictably women have been left with the least well paid and the most menial tasks. At the same time, class differentials have widened. The village elite, husbands and wives, now own home textile industries; the wives manage them and employ other women to provide the labour on site or in their own homes. Thus the author argues that technological and structural changes profoundly affect women, but according to the nature of their contribution and their status within the industry.

Women traditionally undertook cloth-making along Java's rural north coast by spinning, weaving and decorating cloth for the families' needs. As the production of cloth became increasingly complex in response to the growing intervention of world market forces women's pre-eminence in this activity declined. How did this process occur and what role do women now play in the production of textiles? In this chapter I examine the development and growing tasks differentiation of cloth-making in a

semi-urbanized village of north central Java, and analyse the determinants of women's contribution to textile production in the village today.¹

Traditional cloth-making

The villagers themselves depict cloth-making as an activity originally being undertaken by women at home as 'handcrafts' made to fill the families' needs for cloth. According to Raffles this was a universal pattern in Java where 'the operations of spinning and weaving are confined exclusively to women who from the highest to the lowest rank prepare the cloths of their husbands and their families' (Raffles 1965:178). Cotton had been grown throughout Java either on dry fields or (less productively) as a second crop on wet rice fields, and was spun laboriously by women with simple hand-made equipment: a rolling drum, winding stick and spinning wheel. Women wove the spun yarn into cloth with a backstrap loom. The cloth was the striped or checked *lurik* which men wore as sarongs, or coarse plain white cloth for *batik*-making.

Batik, the wax-resist method of fabric decoration, was a skill practised by many rural women along the north coast of Java during off-peak agricultural seasons. For hundreds of years batik cloth had been regularly exported to other parts of the Indonesian archipelago. Beeswax obtained from Sumatra, Sumbawa or Timor was heated with other substances and skilfully applied with a copper pen to locally woven white cotton cloth. The cloth was dyed in dyes derived from vegetable matter, such as indigo and palm wine for blue, bark and fruit rind for black, blue vitriol for green and a special kind of root for blood red. A cheaper, less effective dye substitute was made from rice-chaff. One had to dye repeatedly to fix these natural colours. Dyeing and boiling out the wax from dyed cloth seems to have been the only activity in cloth-making where men regularly assisted women.

Changing processes

As a result of colonial policy during the nineteenth century Java was brought closer into the world market system. Cotton-growing declined as the Culture System replaced cotton crops with the more productive cash crops of sugar and rice, and converted dry fields to potentially more intensively cultivable wet fields. Java became a marketing target for manufactured cloth from the industrialized Dutch textile centre of Twente, and improving communications dispersed manufactured cloth through Java with increasing thoroughness. Cotton-growing and spinning, considered a laborious and unproductive use of labour by the colonial administration, was allowed to decline. Weaving, however, managed to hold its own in the developing cash economy. Weavers acquired imported Dutch yarn and began to concentrate on weaving specialized high quality cloth which they could sell for cash, whilst

domestic needs began to be filled by poor quality cheap manufactured cloth imports.

In the village with which we are concerned women were still weaving with the backstrap loom at the turn of the century. They also used a narrow standup loom to make waistbands, which had become the village speciality for trading purposes. Backstrap weaving survived into the early twentieth century when, particularly after 1914, new cheap cotton cloth imports from Japan and India entered the markets and high import taxes and distribution costs were placed on imported cotton yarn.

Batik-making had been struggling to survive competition from manufacturers' cloth imports whereby British and Dutch manufacturers copied batik designs as prints on low quality cloth in an attempt to appeal to Javanese tastes. By maintaining high standards of quality, handwoven batik survived as a medium of cloth design. New batik centres began to develop technical innovations which enabled them to compete with the cheap printed imports: the batik stamp appeared (a metal square to stamp wax on to cloth which speeded up the wax-application process); and inexpensive fast-working chemical dyes from Germany.

Makers of stamped batik benefited from the influx of cheap Japanese and Indian cloth which had ended backstrap weaving. Javanese entrepreneurs gathered small amounts of capital and assembled production units to make stamped batik. The waistband makers and traders in the village had accumulated some capital and began to enter the new business. Village men learnt the techniques of these new processes from the nearby town of Pekalongan and on their trading trips south to Yogyakarta and Solo to sell waistbands. This became something of a boom period for makers of stamped batik.

With the markets saturated with non-European manufactured cloth imports the colonial administration, no longer actively seeking its own cloth markets, endeavoured to revitalize the faltering domestic weaving industry. The Weaving Institute, established in Bandung in 1921, developed a new handloom with a fly shuttle on pre-Industrial Revolution European models. This wooden loom, the ATBM,² was five times more productive than the backstrap loom; and the handloom weaving process became technically more complex. The weft cotton was spooled on to special bobbins with spooling machinery made from a bicycle tyre. The warp yarn was set up on a frame in coloured patterns and wound on to a wooden roll by means of a large wooden warping drum. Then, in warp-setting, threads from the warp roll placed on the loom were fed through the wire holes of the healds. Weaving was now probably a more comfortable occupation than it had been with the backstrap loom,³ but the total process had become more complex.

Growth of textile enterprises

Chinese entrepreneurs had increasingly taken over the Javanese-owned batik stamp production units; during the depression years protective government policies encouraged Javanese batik entrepreneurs to change to ATBM weaving. Legislation passed in 1933 aimed, first, to protect domestic weaving and Dutch capital by controlling imports through quotas; and, second, to set out new favourable conditions for Javanese-owned textile enterprises to obtain operating licences. In the village the early batik production units gradually changed to ATBM weaving. Brokers (usually Chinese or Arab cotton merchants) sold cotton to a unit owner on credit and then received the finished cloth sarongs for marketing. The two transactions could then be counted as one with the broker paying only the difference between the yarn sale and the sarong price.

These male village entrepreneurs participated in the political, social and economic movements taking place. Many village men joined the Sarekat Islam (Islamic Alliance) after 1912, and one of these opened a co-operative shop to sell textile supplies of dyes, cloth and wax to budding village entrepreneurs so as to bypass non-Javanese commission merchants. Trading contracts in Yogyakarta brought a group of male village entrepreneurs into contact with the Muhammadiyah, an Islamic reformist movement which had been founded in 1912 by K.H.A. Dahlan. A village branch of the Muhammadiyah was founded in the early 1920s and has been since then a major force in the course of village development.

Muhammadiyah emphasizes the need to educate others, particularly one's own family, in religion, and the need to promote physical, social and material well-being of oneself and one's fellow-Muslims: these aims were particularly important when the Javanese were subject to foreign rule and to what was considered to be the consequent degeneration of Islam. Formally non-political, the movement inspired villagers to develop education and social welfare programs which they funded from the profits of the textile enterprises and, later, the village textile co-operative.

Long after the Sarekat Islam co-operative had collapsed, another textiles co-operative was founded in 1937 by village Muhammadiyah leaders, and although the two organizations were structurally distinct, a proportion of the co-operative's profit was annually allocated to the Muhammadiyah social programs. The co-operative served various functions: it provided the Muhammadiyah with funds (in addition to funds given individually by members); it obviated the need for non-Javanese middlemen to supply raw materials; and it strengthened the group of textile-enterprise owners within the village, most of whom owned shares in the co-operative and received an annual dividend. The co-operative

assisted them to develop their own home industries' capacities through training and information classes in new techniques.

Post-Independence Javanese textiles co-operatives entered a period of expansion from which the well-organized village co-operative was able to benefit. The co-operative received assistance through government loan financing schemes for new equipment between 1950 and 1974, from which home industry owners also benefited. This period in the village was marked by increasing capital accumulation and spreading financial interests of the co-operative and its members. Several large-scale factories were established by the co-operative itself to make the white cotton batik cloth (using first ATBM looms and later mechanizing), thus allowing the co-operative to reduce its need to buy this type of cloth for shareholders' batik enterprises. Since 1964 the village has suffered in the general decline of the domestic textile industries, particularly in weaving, as government policies have favoured the establishment of large-scale, high technology weaving factories backed by foreign capital. Large home industries have been able to survive by acquiring mechanized looms, but smaller concerns now rarely work to full production, and many have moved, where possible, into stamped and hand-drawn batik and screen printing.

Changing roles

In some respects the traditional characteristics of a rural village have been preserved, with rice lands and dry fields encircling the settled area, and with village officials who are still paid in rice lands which they work for the duration of their office (*bengkak*). As a result of the development of textiles enterprises, however, the densely populated settled lands have long housed far too many people to work at agricultural pursuits. Less than 0.01 per cent of the total number of village inhabitants own and/or work agricultural lands as their principal livelihood; 42 per cent are employees in the textile industries; and 22 per cent work as traders, mostly trading textiles. In a population approaching 9000 there are over 100 textile home industry units, most of which are jointly owned by husbands and wives.

Women's contribution to textile production takes two main forms. In families owning home industry units, women manage the production, whilst men arrange contracts and sales outside the village if necessary. Amongst workers a range of tasks are considered womens' work. Women may also engage in a modest amount of petty textile trading, usually around their own and neighbouring villages.

When the stamped batik production methods appeared, batik work became more complex and differentiated. Tasks requiring

the most skill and netting the higher wages became male-dominated. Men made the metal wax stamps (*cap*); they became wax stampers (*tukang cap*); they took over the increasingly complex chemical dye-mixing processes; and boiled out wax from dyed batik. Designated women's work became the tasks of filling in waxed outlines and of scraping off sections of wax during the dyeing process, tasks which were regarded as demanding less skill and were therefore paid less. A speciality of the region was the bright colour which contrasted with the more sombre hues of traditional Yogyakarta and Solo batik, and patch-dyeing in bright colours became common, whereby colour was applied to sections of the design — a leaf, a flower or a butterfly — with a coconut-husk brush, and covered in wax before the whole piece was dyed another colour. This work, the lowest paid, was done by women and children. Batik making had become a production line process in which women no longer took the central role.

Similarly, the ATBM production process assigned women the more menial tasks. Where once they had been the spinners and weavers on simple equipment, women and girls now wind hanks, spool warp and weft bobbins, wash, calender and wrap finished cloth. Men weave; prepare warp rolls and set the warp; wind, dye and starch cotton hanks; and make and repair weaving equipment. Warpers are mostly highly paid, followed by dyers and then weavers. In mechanized weaving and factory production the job structure does not change. The most menial task in weaving is that of mending broken threads; the scraps of cotton collected from the floors are arduously twisted together with a simple bamboo or wooden frame for re-use as low-grade yarn. Like spooling and dyeing this task lends itself to work on a piece basis; women minding children at home undertake the work to add a modest supplement to the family income.

The role of women managers is more extensive, some home industries ranking as medium-scale (50-100 employees) or large-scale (over 100 employees). Thus, home industries differ from the large-scale co-operative factories not necessarily in size but in the type of management. Women manage home industries assisted by other family members; the owners generally develop an attitude of patronage towards employees and consider them as being of lower status but still 'part of the family'. Factories, by contrast, have developed paid management personnel, and work to far more rigid timetables (with nightly shifts) and regulations (absenteeism results in loss of monthly rice allowance). A few of the larger home industries employ managers or foremen, but even so the task of women managers is complex. Labour must be hired and paid; tasks allocated, textile designs decided on; refreshments obtained to feed the workers during the course of the day. If a worker or member of the worker's family becomes ill, has a child, is engaged, married, dies or is circumcized, gifts of cash, rice and clothing may be required from the owner.

At Lebaran gifts are given to workers and production ceases for a week or more.⁴ At Hari Korban meat is slaughtered and distributed to employees.⁵ All of these things require organization, and a deft management touch, since, as no gift is ever uniformly fixed, the value of the gift depends on the financial position of the home industry at the time, and on the strength of the personal bond between employer and employee. A fine sense of balance between the aesthetic value of the cloth product, the cost of production and likely profit is also required, particularly in the case of batik and screen-printed cloth. This sense of market judgment is required particularly when work-orders are scarce, or when buyers do not pay up immediately, so that capital is not immediately available to buy the next set of raw materials. In cases like this some home industry owners keep on producing cloth which is financed out of their own savings in order to protect the workers who will suffer without their weekly Thursday pay, but obviously the home industry cannot run indefinitely without profits. A woman manager must also be able to judge the quality and quantity of work produced, since wages vary according to the workers' skill, and payment is made on a piece basis in most cases rather than on the number of hours worked. A record of work completed is required for each worker so that the right pay is given at the end of the week. Workers may be engaged on a daily basis if there is a sudden excess of work, and these people must be found, hired, supervised and paid. Younger people may ask to learn the skill on the job, and special pay and supervision arrangements must be made for these workers.

Many older women describe with pride the management skills they have acquired, and the financial decisions which they have made over the years. Some assert forcefully that without their participation the home industries would not exist because they, rather than their husbands, really do most of the work. Some of these older women may travel to other parts of Java seeking work orders, and then arrange the purchase of raw materials to complete the orders. In recent years goods acquired during the boom period of the late 1950s have frequently been sold by women in this group to finance the education of children, which they see as being essential to participation in the post-boom era. Amongst this group a widow, rather than a son, may retain nominal or actual ownership of the production unit in recognition of the management skills and financial judgment she has acquired.

Social strata

Village society is divided into two main strata; the home industry owners and the employees. Within this structure petty traders form a kind of intermediary sub-stratum blending into the two main strata.

Home industry owners live centrally in the village, within easy access of the main road which bisects the village and the electricity which follows the road. During the period of colonialism villagers tended to build slightly off this road to escape attention, but since Independence road frontage has become increasingly valuable. The central strip of the village contains fine stone houses, large whitewashed sheds for either batik-making or weaving, and most of the community buildings and amenities.

Within this geographic area the social lives of women reinforce continually the corporate identity of the elite group. Home industry owners are almost inevitably members and office bearers of the village textile co-operative and of the village Muhammadiyah; the women form the backbone of Aisyiyah, the women's organization within Muhammadiyah, and of Naisyiah, the younger women's organization. Aisyiyah has its own allocation of funds, and has contributed to the development of women's education and health care, particularly pre- and post-natal care. This group of women perceives itself as providing an example to the rest of the women in the community in religious and social behaviour, particularly in the concept of women as the 'pillars' of the family unit, who must make every effort to develop the social, educational and religious lives of themselves and their children.

Office-bearers of Muhammadiyah and the co-operative have frequently been the same people over the years, although the two organizations are considered to be quite separate. Strategic intermarriages have reinforced the kinship bonds between families in this group; and occasionally the tendency to endogamy within the group has overridden the traditional Javanese sanction against marriage between patrilineal parallel cousins who bear the same name. The group is referred to by its members as 'one family'; it is a group linked by consanguineal and affinal kinship obligations. When children from this group marry they are customarily provided with co-operative membership and capital to begin a textile business of their own.

Women in this group lead social lives centring on the kin networks of their own and their husbands' families. Within these networks relatives provide gifts at the celebration of births, engagements, weddings and circumcisions. A group cooking session for all women in the network (*rawan*) may be held before a large celebration. Women engage in a constant visiting round within the network, discussing family and village affairs, Muhammadiyah and co-operative matters, and textile business. During the day women may travel into the town in groups, and some older women go on longer trips further afield for textile business or to see children in educational institutions. Generally, however, their lives are lived within the spatial centre of the village, and they almost never move into the spatial fringes.

Employees tend to live outside the more expensive central strip, occupying the outer sphere of the settled land which is, in parts, interspersed with dry fields and borders the village wet rice lands. Electricity does not stretch to these fringes, which are reached by narrow lanes which may be impassable in the wet season. Houses are small and simple, generally made of bamboo thatch with open holes for windows, set on a raised earthen platform to escape wet season floods. The bamboo thatch, together with the small house-gardens which families maintain to supplement their diet and cash income, gives the fringe areas a rural appearance similar to neighbouring agricultural villages. Despite appearances, however, the number of people from these areas working in agriculture is virtually negligible; almost all of the working population is employed or self-employed in the textile business. Data gathered from two village subdivisions, one located principally in the central area and one located principally in the fringe area, illustrate the differences in women's occupations in the textile trade (Table 6.1).

Women from the fringes come into the village centre regularly to work in home industries or co-operative factories, to obtain piecework to take home, to undertake textile trading activities, and to go to the market and stores. Fringe women not working in textiles but who have some occupation beyond that of 'housewife' are frequently small traders of foods, drinks, craft-goods, cigarettes, *jamu* (Javanese medicine) and ice around the village and within the home industries for employees.

Women's social lives in the fringe are rather different from those of the elite group. Families and extended families are far more dispersed, and nearly a third of fringe households are composed of individuals who have some kind of kin bond but who do not constitute a nuclear family. Greater economic pressures tend to disperse families as members are forced to seek work wherever they can find it. Fringe families are smaller than centre families, owing partly to forced separation of parents and partly to lack of money for adequate nutrition and medical care. It is interesting to compare educational levels between the two areas; Table 6.2 represents the number of women who have attended or are attending educational institutions without necessarily having graduated. From the table it is clear that, first, centre women have had broader educational opportunities than fringe women, attending school for longer and attaining higher educational levels; and, second, that centre women are more likely to have attended specifically religious educational institutions. Most of these are older women who attended the early Muhammadiyah schools in the village.

Two women

Not all women in the elite group are as 'successful' as this brief analysis may imply, and a short description of the

Table 6.1

Women's employment in textiles: centre versus fringe (%)

Task	Centre subdivision		Fringe subdivision	
	Primary occupation %	Secondary occupation %	Primary occupation %	Secondary occupation %
Managerial	23.2	80.0	1.0	-
Trade ^a	37.7	10.0	18.0	66.6
Fold woven cloth ^b	-	-	1.9	-
Winding	10.2	10.0	1.0	-
Spooling	17.4	-	55.2	33.3
Warp-setting	-	-	3.8	-
Dye-starching (assisting males)	2.9	-	5.7	-
Mend broken threads	-	-	6.7	-
Hand-drawn batik	7.2	-	3.8	-
Wax fill-in	1.4	-	1.9	-
Patch-dye	-	-	1.0	-
Total %	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	69	10	105	3

Total N

(females in
subdivision)

249

261

^a Many women trade in woven and batik fabrics amongst a relatively small group of kin and neighbours. Some of them travel and trade more widely outside the village.

^b As a separate task.

Table 6.2

Differential women's educational levels:
centre versus fringe (%)

Educational category	Centre subdivision	Fringe subdivision
	%	%
Kindergarten and primary school	50.0	78.4
High school	40.9	21.6
Tertiary	5.9	-
Non-graded Islamic school	3.2	-
	100.0	100.0

life of one woman may illustrate the difficulties which many women in this group have experienced over the last 15 years. Her life is compared to the life of a working woman from the fringe area.

The first woman, whom I will call Ibu Fatimah, is the daughter of a first wife of one of the most respected of the early batik entrepreneurs and Muhammadiyah office-bearers. Together with her husband she began a batik-stamp enterprise in the late 1930s, having received capital and co-operative membership from their parents. Production virtually ceased during the war, but the couple benefited from prosperous years between 1950 and 1964, building a fine stone house in the central strip. The year 1965 was a bad year; government concessions ceased and the political upheavals of the coup made production very difficult. Ibu Fatimah's husband died and she herself spent months in illness after the birth of her last child. Death, illness and unfavourable conditions rendered the home industry bankrupt. So, instead of being the owner of a large home industry unit Ibu Fatimah struggled to make a living for her nine unmarried children. Between 1967 and 1970 she tried ATBM weaving but was unable to make a profit. Then she opened a shop in her house to sell groceries to the neighbourhood wives, and, in 1975, assisted by a married daughter with an ATBM home industry, she moved into subcontracting. Four wooden winding drums were placed in the courtyard. She took cones of cotton on contract from home industries and employed four boys to wind them into the hanks ready for dyeing. She worried continually because orders were so scarce, and the drums stood idle for days at a time. In 1980 when I returned to the village the four winding drums had gone. Instead, in an unprecedented burst of creativity Ibu Fatimah had taken up hand-drawn batik, which is once again a fashionable and therefore financially rewarding process. She herself designs modern patterns and does the wax-work, specifying to an employed dyer how she wants the fabric coloured. She had learnt hand-drawn batik techniques as a young girl rather in the way European women made samplers, but the creative abstract designs are far removed from the traditional flower, bird and butterfly-patterned batiks of the region. Ibu Fatimah has accepted that the days when she surveyed her large, whitewashed shed full of batik-makers has gone; and also that the sound of the orchestra of mellow, clicking ATBM handlooms, which used to echo from shed after shed around the village, has died to a bare *pianissimo*. She is now comfortable and able to provide for the education of her three remaining unmarried children with assistance from older ones. Ibu Fatimah was assisted, throughout the period of her financial difficulties, by well-placed kin, and she never had to surrender her house, her position in the village or her place in Aisyiyah during this time.

The second woman, Mbok Mislimah, is, like Ibu Fatimah, around 60 years old. She earns a living mending broken threads on the edge of the village in a little bamboo thatch cottage

bordering the rice fields. She is quite old for this area, but has preserved an appearance of health and vitality. The house, which she shares with a grandson, is typical of the area: bamboo thatch walls which have to be replaced every 5-8 years; open holes for windows, two simple bamboo beds which double as chairs; earthen floors on the raised earth platform which endeavours to keep out the rain; a wood fire for cooking on the floor in the back room which she can afford to light only once a day. She has an oil lamp for the nights and draws water from a common well in the neighbourhood. Her life has been a disrupted one of hard work; born in the village she spent some years working in stamped batik before following her husband to Jakarta to seek textiles work in the big city. She is deliberately vague about what has happened to her husband and children who have remained behind in Jakarta. Because she does not have small children to mind she has more time to work at home than many women in the area and can earn Rp.250 per week mending a full kilo of broken threads on a simple bamboo instrument. She supplements her diet and income by growing fruit and vegetables on a small patch of land next to the house; she also keeps a few chickens to sell the eggs. Although she is illiterate she has a reputation amongst neighbours for having a broad understanding because of the years lived in the capital city. She is not a member of Muhammadiyah or Aisyiyah and seems to perceive these institutions as quite peripheral and unimportant in her own life, although occasionally she receives meat at Hari Korban or other gifts from the home industry owners who give her piecework. She is not a strict Muslim. Her social life seems to consist of chatting to her grandson and to neighbours, a few of whom are distantly related to her, and she loves playing with neighbouring children. She exchanges food grown in her garden for neighbours' food. For Mbok Mislimah the neighbourhood bonds with kin and non-kin alike are of more immediate use than bonds she shares with her own family, with the exception of her grandson. She is representative, in this respect, of a number of fringe-dwelling workers who have been separated from their immediate families through economic necessity. Her life does not centre around a specifically-defined and clearly identified network of kinswomen with their children as does Ibu Fatimah's but, nonetheless, similar kinds of supportive bonds are there within the neighbourhood on a more modest scale. Both women are female household heads.

Conclusions

Through colonial and post-Independence government policies the technologies and structures of textiles production have altered considerably from their traditional rural origins in Java. During the process of alteration women lost their pre-eminence in cloth production. However, it is important to recognize the wide range of skills which women have developed in the new processes, as well as the extent to which old

processes of hand-drawn batik have been maintained. In the village examined in this chapter the type of labour which women contribute is determined not only by gender, whereby women are largely relegated to specific 'women's tasks' in the production processes, but is also determined by socio-economic status within village society. Labouring tasks which are assigned to women are generally the more menial, lower paid ones, but in hand-drawn batik women's skill and expertise are still pre-eminent. The highest status women are managers and traders, with very different skills to those of the employees.

Women's contribution to the textiles industries is in some respects underestimated in census data. Women frequently underplay their participation in management of the home industries to male enumerators, and the unit may be listed as owned by the husband only. The extent of women's secondary occupations in textile production may also be underestimated; and labour contributed as piecework at home or where no wage is paid directly may not always be recorded either. At all levels within the textile industries women's contribution adds considerably to the families' ability to survive. Thus, government policies regarding the domestic textiles industries will clearly have far-reaching impact on women's lives in this village although policies may affect women differently according to the nature of their contribution to the industries and their status within them.

As domestic textiles (particularly weaving) have declined in recent years, possibly more, rather than less, responsibility has devolved on women. Amongst the elite group younger men have increasingly sought higher educational levels which will open the way to professional careers outside the village altogether. It has been increasingly left to women to keep the industries functioning as well as possible under the circumstances in the meantime.

Notes

1. Amongst the work available on the textile industry in Java, see Kadariyah (1958), Matsuo (1970), Palmer (1968), Susanto (1973), Tirtaamijaya and Marzuki (1966), and Universitas Indonesia, Fakultas Ekonomi (1973). Work which examines labour force participation and economic development, of relevance to this chapter, includes Hawkins *et al.* (1961), Hull (1976a), Kahn (1971, 1975), and Moir (1980).
2. *Alat Tenun Bukan Mesin* or handloom.
3. In backstrap (*gedogan*) weaving the weaver herself completes the simple winding, spooling and warp-setting before beginning to weave. The weaver sits inside the loom, and the bending of her body sheds the warp and weft threads.

4. Lebaran, or Hari Raya Idul Fitri, is the first day of the tenth month of the Islamic calendar, and marks the end of the fasting month of Ramadan.
5. Hari Korban, or Idul Adha, is the tenth day of the eleventh month of the Islamic calendar and is the day of animal sacrifice.

(a) 1980

Chapter 7

Women and work in an Indonesian mining town

Kathy Robinson

In the last chapter, we saw the effects on both sex and class relations brought about by the introduction of mechanization to home industry. In this chapter, traditional patterns of work and social relations have been no less disrupted as a result of the introduction of large-scale industry and the consequent incorporation of villagers into capitalist class relations.

Capital penetration has often radically affected the participation of women in the economy. As mentioned in the introduction to this volume, transnational corporations have been attracted to Malaysia by government assurance of taxation concessions and relaxed labour laws. Young women have migrated from rural villages to urban areas to work in these light export-oriented industries, for low wages and in poor conditions. In heavy industry, on the other hand, women have had limited employment opportunities and have been forced into an increasingly marginal economic position.

In the following chapter, Kathy Robinson demonstrates the impact on the indigenous population of a village of the establishment of a foreign-owned nickel mining and processing venture: these are the people of Rendra's acclaimed and moving drama, The Struggle of the Naga Tribe (1979). Development for the women of this village has led to continuing changes with respect to their domestic labour and their role in the subsistence economy. In some cases, women's participation in agriculture has increased with industrialization, but the growing importance of wage labour for the company and women's exclusion from it has resulted in declining options for them outside the home.

Much has been written in recent years on the consequences for women of the development process, many writers being inspired by Ester Boserup's pioneering work (1970). Following Boserup, it is frequently proposed that women have not benefited as much as men from development. The decline of women's traditional roles in production and the importation of Western notions about women's inferiority/weakness are often identified as the causes of an erosion of women's status in the third world (van Allen 1974; Bossen 1975).

This chapter examines the changing economic role of women in a village in Indonesia, which has become the centre of a large foreign-owned mining and mineral processing enterprise. The local economy, formerly based on independent peasant production, with limited involvement in the market economy, has been transformed by the dominant presence of the company which establishes the nature of all economic relations. In order to understand how these changes in the nature of social production affect the women of the community, I will examine their role in production in the traditional economy, and the changed nature of their participation in the contemporary economy. I will also discuss women's domestic labour (housework and child care) as a crucial aspect of the articulation of modes of production in peripheral capitalism, as it is this labour which supports the reproduction of labour power in situations where males in paid employment are not paid a family wage (Kahn 1974; Deere 1976). In a discussion of women's work, it is crucial that I also examine the ideology of gender and show the way in which it articulates with the sexual division of labour in the pre- and post-company periods. The same ideology of gender may have different consequences for women's status as the conditions of social production change. Ideological formulations which arise out of the organization of production and reproduction in the pre-capitalist period may have new practical consequences as the villagers come to be incorporated into capitalist class relations.

The chapter focuses on women's work in the society in order to understand the changes in the sexual division of labour consequent on a change in the division of labour in society. It is not concerned with broadly defined questions of change in women's 'status'.¹ The chapter is limited to a discussion of the situation of the 1000 people who are the indigenous population of the village; it is not concerned with the immigrants of many different ethnic groups who have flooded into the village in search of work, for whom the mining project has had different consequences both in terms of general economic changes and for the economic role of women.

Women's work in the pre-capitalist economy

The pre-company economy was based on agricultural production: wet rice cultivation (*sawah*) supplemented by dry field cultivation. Women had equal access with their male kinsmen to resources necessary for agriculture (in particular, rice fields and buffalo)² and worked as co-partners in the cultivation of rice and vegetables, the staple foods.

The sexual division of labour reflected two basic convictions: men were more suited to heavy work; and women had primary responsibility for the organization of the domestic sphere.

Women were notionally excluded from those areas of agricultural production deemed to involve heavy physical work, like felling trees to clear fields and build fences, felling sago palms, clearing and firing the dry fields, ploughing the wet rice fields and wielding the dibble to plant the dry fields. All these tasks were (and still are) considered primarily male tasks. Some tasks like weeding and harvesting were primarily women's work. However, the allocation of tasks by sex has always been contingent on the labour available to the household. Single or widowed women have always been able to carry out all the work necessary for the cultivation of rice, and as men go off to work for the company, women are taking over more of the agricultural tasks. (At the time of my research, twice as many women as men were engaged in agriculture.)

Women were also excluded from those activities which involved leaving the environs of the village and cultivation hamlets. This exclusion extended not only to the clearing of new fields but to the collection of jungle produce, hunting and trade. Collection of jungle produce (mainly rattan and dammar resin) and the associated trading activity were the main ways in which the people participated in the exchange economy outside the village. These items were traded for manufactured goods (cloth, cooking pots) and luxury food items, like sugar and salt. It seems that the villagers do not have an objection to women trading and earning cash incomes *per se*, but their dislike of women moving outside the environs of the village meant that these opportunities were available only to men. Here we have the greatest differentiation between male and female economic activities, and it is interesting that this was accentuated by — or perhaps began with — the beginnings of the incorporation of the village into the world markets of mercantile capitalism, around the turn of the century. This is the first instance of capitalist rationality coming to affect the organization of production and the sexual division of labour.

Dammar resin is collected from trees which grow wild in the jungle. In the late nineteenth century the expansion of market networks into the region made these resins a saleable commodity. Individual men would claim ownership of the trees which they found, thereby assuming exclusive rights to exploit them and to claim a 5 per cent share of the profit realized through the labour of other men they might authorize to tap the trees. Not only did men alone tap the trees, but also of all the resources in the pre-company period, these were the only ones owned exclusively by men.

The role of women in the pre-company economy was limited to the agricultural sphere, in which they had an equal though different participation with men, and work in the household, which was primarily the task of women. (Men had some extra-agricultural activities which took them outside the sphere of the village.)

However, it is important to note that an individual woman's realization of the combination of these tasks at any moment depended on her age and the stage in her life cycle, as well as the capacities and needs of her household, its composition, and the stage in its developmental cycle. In this community there is one cardinal rule in respect to women's work: any work, including housework, ideally takes second place to the primary responsibility for the care of her children, until they reach about two years of age. I will discuss women's ideas about themselves which encode this primary orientation towards child care, but first I wish to give an outline of the working life of a typical village woman, showing how she alternates between housework and agricultural work and child care. This is based on my observations in 1977-79, but it also refers to what I learned then of the past situation.

The stages in a woman's life

The ascription of gender identity begins at birth, for example babies are called by terms which mean 'little boy' or 'little girl' before receiving names. However, in this society with no bridewealth payments and no system of dowry, and where male and female labour are both of importance, the birth of a male child or a female child brings equal joy. The only stated sex preference is to have both male and female children.

Young girls become quickly initiated into the domestic tasks which increasingly become their responsibility until they marry and have children. From about the age of six they help wash floors, fetch water, wash dishes, care for younger siblings and carry produce back from the fields. Little boys appear to lead a much freer life. After school they swim in the lake and play around the village. It may have been that in the past when the village economy was still based on agriculture, little boys were kept as busy caring for the buffalo as the little girls are in their domestic tasks. Both boys and girls attend school (and have done so since the school's inception in about 1917) but it is expected boys will stay at school longer. Until recently, this meant that girls on average had three years of primary school and boys six. Nowadays it generally means girls finish primary school at the end of Grade Six, and parents increasingly try to mobilize resources to send their sons away to high school. They realize that their sons' futures lie in wage labour, now that their primary income no longer comes from agriculture. However, both boys and girls are expected to receive religious education, attending the *pengajian* (lessons in chanting the Koran) at the mosque each day.

Many households with young children take in a young girl, the child of a close relative or a poorer family, to help with child care and housework. The adopting family assumes responsibility for that child's upkeep, including the cost of her

education. Occasionally a little boy may be 'adopted' in the same fashion, but primarily to help with child care, for instance in a household where the mother becomes preoccupied with the needs of a new baby. Males, including little boys, never seem to help with housework.

By the time girls reach the age of 12 or 13, they have usually finished with schooling and are regarded as being capable of running the household.³ Between this age and marriage (generally at 18-20 years), many young women rarely leave the house except in pursuit of some task related to their domestic responsibilities. This restriction on their movement arises partly from concerns about protecting their modesty, but also from the onerous nature of their responsibilities. They are responsible for the range of domestic tasks - washing clothes in the lake, shopping, cooking and cleaning the house. The age at which the principal burden of these tasks falls upon them depends upon the composition and organization of the household. For example, one young girl of 10 would rise and do the washing before going to school, and would also do all the marketing, take care of four of her five younger siblings, and help cook, as her older sister had been sent away to school and her mother who was in poor health had a young baby. In another household, the daughter aged about 20 years had been running the household for many years, freeing her mother to work with her father growing rice, the family's only stable livelihood. Her younger sister of about 17 years had been 'adopted' into a wealthy family who had no female children to work in their household.

Young women also help their parents in cultivation and often participate in collective labour at planting and harvesting time. They are also the principal participants in the collective labour involved in preparing food for weddings and other ritual feasts. These two occasions provide their only respite from domestic drudgery. The combination of the amount of work demanded of them and their confinement to the house means that these young women are the most oppressed group in the village. Young men of the same age are either away at school or (from about the age of 16) working for the company. In the past, by this age they were full participants in the agricultural economy, in the collection and trade of jungle produce and in hunting.

Marriage does not effect any immediate change in women's daily work. Uxorilocal residence after marriage is the customary practice, so the girls stay on in their natal home, with their mothers and unmarried sisters, and continue in their usual work routines. I met a young bride on the morning after her wedding returning from the lake in the company of her unmarried female cousins, having just finished the family washing as she had done every day before her marriage.

Childbirth is the event which significantly transforms women's life and work. Child care is very intensive. In the first week after giving birth, the woman remains in the house, in the place where she gave birth, doing little except feeding and cuddling her baby. The midwife moves in for this period and, especially with a firstborn, instructs her in the care of her child. The mother's meals are cooked and the baby's clothes washed by a team of kinswomen and female affines. After this initial period of intense focus on the child, child care remains intensive for another eighteen months or two years. Women are never out of sight of their babies and infants, who are demand fed and never left to cry. Children are rarely forcibly weaned — most wean themselves during their second year of life as the rice porridge which they are fed from about six months of age becomes more significant in their diet. Children may be given the breast as a comforter long after the milk has dried up. It is usually the birth of a younger child, coupled with the greater independence which arises from the child learning to walk, which finally separates it from its mother. Women who are still bearing children are rarely seen without a child at their side. One day I was sharing a meal with a group of women, each of whom had a child in her lap. As we squatted on the floor to eat one of them joked, 'This is eating Indonesian style — a baby in one hand and your food in the other'.

The other event which marks a change in women's work is that, at around the time of the birth of the first child, most married couples move into a house of their own. During the period of intensive child care women give up other forms of work, especially agricultural work and often also housework, this latter task being taken over by a younger female relative or a poor child recruited to the household for this purpose. In some households, a grandmother is left to care for the child while the mother does the housework, but the intensity of child care is maintained.

When a woman is free of the responsibility of caring for infant children she is able to devote her time to other forms of work, usually agricultural production in association with her husband and other members of her household. The time at which this happens varies according to the fertility of individual women, and it can be either a cyclical movement between the fields and the home, or a once and for all change. Very old women, no longer strong enough to work in the fields, remain at home and help with child care and running the household. Fishing, using a hand line from a canoe, is traditionally a woman's activity. Younger women fish in company with their children, but older women often go off with their age mates, and for some of them this is a source of cash income which buys them coffee, tea and sugar, and thus assures them some economic independence.

Women's conceptualization of their role

'Men have no single commitment as enduring, time consuming and emotionally compelling... as the relation of a woman to her infant child' (Rosaldo 1974:24). The women of the village would have been in complete agreement with this statement made by Shelly Rosaldo in her theoretical formulation of universal determinants of women's status. It is in their child rearing role that women find their primary identity and fulfilment. Child care is considered to be more than an important and time consuming task; rather it is regarded as a primary commitment. Child care methods recognize the helplessness and intransigence of young children, the fact that they are demanding of attention and lack the understanding, patience and self-discipline to accommodate themselves to the needs of others. Their child care practices take account of the young child's inability to reason or to accept deferred gratification. There is also great value placed on the child developing sociality and feelings of mutual interdependence with other members of the household, and for this reason the child is rarely left on its own.

The responsibility for this intensive child care falls most heavily on the mother, though her female kin and affines, her other children as well as the child's father and uncles can all be involved. Men enjoy time spent in the company of young children and the responsibility they take for and the attention they give to the needs of young children are greater than is usually the case in Australia.

Women explicitly avow this primary commitment to the care of young children. Women who are not seen to measure up to the expectations of their role as mothers attract criticism. I once accompanied a group of women to the hospital, to admit a sick child. While we waited for the doctor, a baby who had fallen down the steps of her house was brought in. At the time of the accident the mother had been out watching the football, leaving the child in the care of a young aunt. One of the women with me said, in the distraught aunt's hearing, 'I never go out without mine - I never leave them at home.' Later, when the very distressed mother arrived, the women again said to me, while exchanging meaningful glances: 'Oh, she was out watching the football and look what happens. Fancy leaving a child so young. I never would.' The mother was held to be responsible for the accident, by virtue of her absence, even though similar accidents often happened in the village while the mother was at home. But it was certainly true that the women rarely left their children in the first years of their life. In fact, women with young children would rarely leave the house.

There is explicit recognition of the ways in which this primary commitment to child care interferes with a woman's freedom and limits her opportunities for other activities. For

example, women often remarked to me that the woman with whom I lived was able to lead a free life — visiting immigrant women in the company town, using her contacts to establish a small business and so on — because she had only one living child. However, this was also a reason to pity her, for being denied the great source of fulfilment associated with rearing a family. It cannot be assumed that this primary identification with child care indicates a low status for women in this community. Children are highly valued. For both men and women, the primary personal satisfaction which marriage affords is through the birth of children, rather than through emotional attachment to the spouse. Men and women would readily admit that they are more attached to their children than to their spouses. A woman who conceived immediately on marriage was regarded as very fortunate, and childless marriage was regarded as a tragedy. The teknonymous terms of address and reference used universally in this village⁴ would seem to attest to this central importance of children.

Women are also held to be primarily responsible for running the household. One woman implied, of a close friend of hers who had been working in paid employment while her unemployed husband stayed home with the baby, that they would be better off if he went to work and she ran the house: 'Their roles have been reversed for a while, but it's about time they went back to normal. Men have their tasks and women have theirs. It's better to stick to the order of things.' She also meant that they would be better off economically. It is not only better in terms of moral order that the wife run the house, but also more rational because women run the household economy more efficiently: 'Men don't know how to shop. They don't know what to buy for the kitchen. They buy a packet of smokes and they think that's all there is to buy.' On other occasions I heard women giggling about families where the wife worked and the husband, not being able to find paid employment, minded the children. Such aberrations from the usual order of things were regarded as odd or amusing, but not shocking. Some men would take responsibility for running the house and caring for the children if their wives died. There were strong notions of the proper order of things with regard to the sexual division of labour though the organization of work in particular households, for example those of widowed or single women, could transgress this order without occasioning much concern from others. The domestic world is one where women have a principal role; the world outside the village is an arena for male actors. The fields are an arena where they are equally important and legitimate actors. As discussed below, the implications of this order of things has changed with the incorporation of the villagers into capitalist class relations.

The transformation of the local economy:
the consequences for women

What changes have occurred in respect of women's productive work outside the home as a consequence of the company's presence? Capitalist penetration has had a devastating effect on the pre-existing economy. In 1974, the villagers' prime agricultural land (used for permanent cultivation of wet rice fields) was appropriated by the national government on behalf of the company. This left the villagers with only the dry fields on the mountain slopes which previously met only part of their subsistence needs. Since then, for most families in the village, their main hope for a stable income has been through wage labour, but the company has not met this need by guaranteeing the indigenous population employment.

The company and its contractors employed over 10,000 workers at the peak of the construction period in the mid-seventies, but since then the majority of these people have been retrenched and the workforce is currently about 3500 people. During the construction period (1973-76) about two-thirds of household heads were in paid employment. In 1978, only 34 per cent of household heads had employment in the company. Of the balance, 40 per cent were principally engaged in farming, another 17 per cent had no permanent occupation, and the rest were self-employed (5 per cent) or in government service (5 per cent). The situation is one of flux - a large number of the farmers, most of the men with no permanent occupation and some of the self-employed were former company workers who had not yet established an alternative regular monthly income as stable as that of wage labour.

Only a handful of families can meet most of their subsistence needs in the changed conditions of agricultural production, so they supplement their income by a variety of strategies - casual wage labour, small trading, the sale of agricultural and jungle produce, and the renting of rooms to immigrants. Income from rent was critical to the incomes of many families during the construction period, a source of income lost when immigrants returned to their natal villages after retrenchment. All village families are not affected in the same way by the changes consequent on the company's presence: for those who have been in regular, long-term employment and who survived the retrenchments, for example, the situation is much more comfortable than for those who are dependent mainly on the shrunken subsistence sector.

Conditions of work in the agricultural sector have dramatically changed. Those men in the village employed by the company are mainly in the 16-35 year old age group. This means that the labour of this able-bodied group is not available in the fields, neither to help the members of their own households, nor collectively, except on their day off. Coupled with the fact that many

other young men are away at school, this has meant some women have had to take a greater role relative to men in the truncated agricultural sector. In many households the contribution of the swidden fields, where the wife and daughters have come to play a greater role as a consequence of the absence of fathers and brothers, is crucial to the families' livelihood. In 1978, there were 101 women as opposed to 54 men who stated their principal occupation as farming.

If employment opportunities for men have been contingent and unstable, the situation for women seeking paid employment has been worse.

When the company first arrived on the scene in the late 1960s the main form of employment available was in mineral exploration teams. This involved going off into the jungle in small teams, sometimes for weeks at a time, surveying and digging test pits, under the guidance of male exploration geologists. Recruitment to these teams was through the intermediary of the village headman. Given the villagers' attitudes concerning appropriate work for women and ideas about the protection of women, there was no question of women being free to participate in this kind of work: heavy physical work, outside the bounds of the village and in the company of strange men. At this early stage, a few of the local women did work — those for whom economic need was most pressing — serving in the camps in the immediate areas as cooks and laundry maids.

It is quite clear that the objection is to women performing certain types of work or working under certain conditions, rather than to their working outside the home *per se*: thus it was acceptable that one local woman, the daughter of a former village headman whose family had long served as a model of propriety for the other villagers, had worked in the laboratory of a small Dutch mining company which explored the area in the 1940s.

As the project got into full swing, in the early 1970s, more opportunities for work opened up, mostly for men, but also for women. The work for women was mainly as waitresses, laundry maids and cleaners in the living quarters (the camp) established for the single status male employees of intermediate and high levels of skill who were recruited from outside the local area.

A few of the village women told me that they had formerly worked in the camp in 1973-75, but during the period of my fieldwork (1977-79) only one of them was still employed. (My fieldwork period coincided with the end of the construction phase and the running down of the workforce.) The construction companies claimed that they could not give me figures on the number of female workers or their place of employment, but from interviews I conducted it was clear that the main site for unskilled female employment was the camp, and that these opportunities were

rapidly drying up with the running down of the workforce at the end of the construction phase. The mining company offered some opportunities for employment to women but mainly at levels requiring a level of education not held by the village women, for example as secretaries, nurses and teachers.

Clearly, it is as much the mode of operation of the company as the attitudes of the Soroakans which impedes women's participation in paid employment. The company personnel manager could not tell me why they had so few women in their workforce: 'It's just something we have inherited from the contractors [the contractors having been the original employers]. We just took over their workforce and their employment policies.' According to Indonesian labour law, it is not permissible to employ women in mines (Indonesia, Republic 1972). Presumably this is a reflection of a notion of female gender similar to the one we have in our own culture, which deems such work as inappropriate for women. (It is even possible that this law, like much Indonesian law, derives from Dutch law, but I have no evidence on this point.) The personnel manager did not mention this legal question, and I think this gives a clue to the nature of the problem. I felt that he was taken aback by my question, that it was a question about a matter which to him seemed so normal and natural that he had never reflected on it, nor did he see any need for reflection. Expatriate employers operate in foreign situations much as they would at home, bringing all the prejudices and assumptions of their own world to bear. They uncritically replicate the sex-segmentation of the workforce, assuming the inappropriateness of women as miners and heavy equipment operators and their appropriateness for service occupations in the camp. The congruence of these assumptions creates a situation which is destined to bring about a reduced role for women in production when it is largely carried out outside of the household unit and in the industrial workplace.

Many writers have shown that the sex-segmentation of the workforce is not immutable (Power 1975). Related to this is the argument that women in industrial societies often form a reserve army of labour, which can be called upon to move out of the home and into the workforce at times of full employment or at other times of labour shortage (Curthoys 1979). This argument is not relevant in the situation being discussed where the low level of industrialization in the province as a whole, coupled with rural poverty, means that the company is never short of potential (mostly male) workers. There is no condition of labour shortage which would cause the managers to question their unreflected assumptions about the sex-segmentation of the workforce.

It is possible that there would be an incentive to employ women if male wages in the area were higher. In such situations, a sex segregated workforce means that the employer can pay a sub-class of female workers lower wages and divide up work in such a way that the lowest possible wage is paid for the

performance of each component task. But wages generally in the area are so low (indeed insufficient to provide for the needs of the average family) that there is no incentive to seek out cheaper female labour.

As a result of the company's presence, many other opportunities for earning income have opened up. The most important of these is the renting out of rooms to the migrants and the opening up of small stores. Women participate in selling though large-scale trading is an activity engaged in mainly by men. Women (and men) can occasionally get a day's paid work in the rice fields of other villagers, though women are paid less than men: male casual workers are paid Rp.1000 per day, equal to the rate they would be paid as casual labour by the company, whereas women are paid only Rp.800 per day.

The commonest form of paid work undertaken by village women has been as household servants in the company town, but even in this sector their participation has been limited. In 1978, only about six village girls were housemaids out of a total of several hundred housemaids working in the town.

Parents give a number of reasons for their reluctance to allow their daughters to work as servants, chiefly the fear that they will be the victims of unwanted sexual attentions and that the work will take them away from the alternative commitments they have in helping their mothers run the household. Those girls who did work tended to be the youngest daughters of widowed mothers, or girls who had female siblings close in age who could take over their duties at home; they were all girls from homes in relatively impoverished circumstances. In other homes the question was not even considered. In cases of economic necessity, pragmatic considerations carried more weight than ideas about the proper order of things.

Women's domestic labour

Having considered the changed role of women in production, I now wish to return to the question of their domestic work and examine its importance in this peripheral capitalist formation.

We have seen how women's extra-domestic labour occurs mainly in an agricultural sector which is of shrinking importance and how they are by and large excluded from the new forms of work. In the traditional economy, women's work was divided between the farm and the home. I now wish to examine the ways in which their work in the domestic sphere has been affected by changes in the extra-domestic sphere.

Apart from intensive child care, the work of running a household is much more labour intensive than in advanced industrial societies. Food is either grown or bought in unprocessed form,

so that a great deal of labour is needed to process it. Rice grown locally (a declining proportion of rice eaten) has to be husked and cleaned, and pounded into flour if they wish to make cakes. Fish and vegetables are all in a completely unprocessed state. All these foods have to be purchased daily in a society without refrigerators. Many purchases are from itinerant vendors on motor cycles and in boats who must be watched for lest they slip by unnoticed. Other shopping involves daily trips to the markets. Cooking is done on wood fires which have to be lit every morning. (In line with other aspects of the sexual division of labour, firewood is collected by men.) Washing is done by hand with the aid of scrubbing brushes, in the lake or at wells. Clothes are ironed with charcoal burning irons. Water has to be fetched from stand pipes or wells. All of these activities add up to a long day's housework.

Thus housework has an important role in this village economy. Food can be bought at the company store in more highly processed form. (For expatriates there are even frozen pizzas and TV dinners.) But the villagers are not allowed to shop in the company store, this privilege being restricted to the upper echelons of company workforce who live in modern houses with running water, electricity and refrigerators. Even if they could, the processed food is more expensive than the unprocessed foods available in the village and so out of the villagers' reach.

The form of housework has not varied greatly in the post-company village economy. For the most part, the villagers stick with their customary diet and habits of food preparation even when they buy the bulk of their food. An important saving in labour is that imported rice is often now purchased ready milled.

So how has the character of domestic labour changed in the contemporary economy? In the past, when the majority of village households was primarily engaged in subsistence production, the sexual division of labour served as a means of organizing labour to meet subsistence needs. In the current situation where the village economy is adjusted to the over-riding rationality of the company, this sexual division of labour takes on a different meaning. As the vast literature on the nature of domestic labour under capitalism has asserted, domestic labour (housework and child care) is crucial in ensuring reproduction and maintenance of the labour force.⁵ This is important in all capitalist societies, but is of extra significance in this area of peripheral capitalism, where there is as yet little development of the capitalist market into such areas as food processing, home amenities (plumbing, electricity etc.) and consumer durables. It is of extra importance in a society where the wages of labourers would not be sufficient to purchase such goods and services, even if they were available. So the domestic labour of women is an aspect of the development of peripheral capitalism in that it provides services necessary for survival which cannot be obtained through

the market, both because of low wages and the unavailability of these services in a capitalized form. It serves to lower the cost of the reproduction of labour power for capital, enhancing the relative rate of surplus value for peripheral capital accumulation.

Domestic labour in the contemporary situation has changed in another significant way, in terms of its relation to the wider socio-economic context. In the past, as I have shown, work in the home — housework or child care was only a part of women's work activities. Women also had a role in the most important kind of social production — agriculture. In the current situation this agricultural sector is shrinking, not only in the number of families engaged in agricultural production, but also in the amount of food which can be produced, owing to changed conditions of production.

Households are increasingly becoming differentiated in terms of affluence and lifestyle, between those who have one or more members employed by the company and those who do not. On the whole, those families with regular income from wages are better off than those who still derive their primary income from agriculture. However, the worker families are also divided between those whose income is sufficient to meet most of their needs and those for whom it is not (because the wage is lower and/or they have more children). In the latter families, the women often continue to cultivate rice, albeit on a reduced scale, and they take primary responsibility for agricultural production in the same way as women who are household heads.

In the households where the wage is adequate (usually young families where the husband has a higher wage and there are few children), we are beginning to see the phenomenon of the 'stay at home' housewife: women whose total work occurs within the domestic sphere. These households do not carry out agricultural production and there is little likelihood that they ever will. (In some of these households, the husband's wage is about four times the average wage for the villagers.) So what was once a phase in a woman's life cycle is becoming a permanent state.

Also, some households are influenced by models of behaviour established by the Indonesian managerial elite in the company town. Company rules forbid wives to become company employees themselves, and, as there are no other avenues of employment, many of these women who were formerly employed or who ran their own businesses now lead lives of leisured boredom. The expatriate wives are in a situation similar to that of the Indonesian elite wives, but it is the latter who serve as models for the villagers. The differences in the values and lifestyle of the expatriates are too great for them to serve as models, and most of them do not speak Indonesian or mix with the village folk in any way other than as employers.

The erosion of the possibilities for women to be independent producers through the decline in the agricultural sector will have the consequence of making them more dependent on men. The plight of women who have no independent economic role in a situation where there are few jobs for women is exemplified by the situation of deserted wives. Many male workers who came to the area without their families took wives for the duration of their employment, but returned to their original families when retrenched. Many of the women they left behind have children to support and the only opportunity for income earning available to them is prostitution.

In the pre-capitalist economy, men and women participated together in agricultural production, the main economic activity in the village. There was a sexual division of labour, but not one which implied a drastic separation of male and female worlds. There were some seasonal activities which took men outside of the village, but fundamentally male and female cultivation were carried out in the same area. The situation of male workers in the contemporary situation is quite different. They leave the village early in the morning, not long after the morning prayers, to catch the man-hauls which take them to work. During most of my fieldwork period, most men were working compulsory overtime (a 60-hour week) and would not return home till late in the evening. Many of them also worked on Saturdays. For this reason, labour in the fields which necessitated co-operative labour was usually scheduled for Sundays. The village during the day is very much a domain of women and children. In this it contrasts greatly with the cultivation hamlets close by the fields, which are mixed sex domains.

Not only do the male workers spend long days away, but they are working in a technologically complex industrial enterprise whose overall functioning they do not understand, and they certainly do not comprehend their own place in the process of mining and processing of nickel. The men's lack of understanding is small compared with that of their non-employed families. I was constantly struck by how little women knew of their husband's work. They often could not immediately tell me in which section their husbands worked, let alone what their daily tasks were. Some could, on reflection, utter an Indonesianized English label for a division of the company — for example *werhaus* (warehouse) or *proses* (the processing plant). They did not know what these words meant or what work was carried out in these divisions. The men's daily work activities figured very little in their night-time conversations. This is very different from the conditions of agricultural production, where men and women working together understand each others' tasks and can converse about the fields, the weather and its consequences for rice cultivation, the progress of the crop, or the condition of the buffalo.

Much has been written on the segregation of male and female worlds in peasant societies, especially those which practise

Islam.⁶ Certainly there is this kind of separation in the village. Many public events are either male or female, or else different sex participants are segregated. People say that this kind of sex segregation was intensified in the 1950s at the time of the Islamic rebellion in the area. However, the segregation which occurs on these social occasions is not of the same order as the kind of segregation which is beginning to occur with employed men spending most of their days in a foreign arena outside of the village.

It is true that, in the current situation, women's declining role in production and their increasing identification exclusively with the domestic sphere is being accompanied by some gains with regard to personal freedom. Many people comment that women are much freer to go about in the world outside the home and to mix with strangers than in the past. They have much more freedom in choice of dress, and many young women are cutting their long hair. Young men and women often have more authority in the arrangement of their marriages than they did in the past. However, the major point remains that the segregation which is occurring today, as a consequence of the articulation of the new forms of division of labour in society with the sexual division of labour, means that men and women are beginning to move in separate worlds.

Conclusion

The young women who are basically housewives, spending their days in each other's company while their children play, speak about the newfound leisure of their lives, but many simultaneously remark on the greater frequency of headaches and other minor ailments, linking the two phenomena. The women have no consciousness of their changed position as a group with common interest. If I asked about how the changes ushered in by the company's presence had changed women's lives, they would always answer in terms of the interests of their households: 'There is better medical care now'; 'it is easier to buy clothes and other consumer goods now'.

However, it is clear that these women are in a situation of greater economic dependence than they were in the past, and that their domestic labour now serves the interests of capital rather than that of an independent peasant household. They increasingly spend their days in a world of women, cut off from the work lives of their men. But it is the loss of their economic independence which gives the surety that they can live out their lives and support their children in the case of death or desertion of a husband which is their greatest loss.

In this village, women as a group have seen an erosion of their traditional role in social production, in spite of the fact that in some households the women have an intensified role in

agriculture. The overall decline in the significance of agriculture as the basis of the livelihood of these people, and the importance of wage labour for the company has led to a shrinking role for women outside the home. There are factors, like pollution from the processing plant, and declining length of fallow cycles, which are likely to erode further the contribution of agriculture to the economy, while the 'spin-off' from the development of the project will lead to more intensive capitalist development in the area. If current trends continue with respect to women's participation in the capitalized sector, this will lead to further erosion of their work opportunities outside the home.

Acknowledgments

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Notes

1. For a discussion of the difficulties with arguments framed in terms of changes in women's 'status', see Quinn (1977).
2. Primary and secondary jungle, the land cleared for dry rice fields, has always been regarded by the villagers as a 'free gift of nature', open to all to exploit so long as they have the capacity to clear it. Irrigated land was owned by individuals, or more correctly by households, and was cultivated by the parents and their children. At the death of both parents, the land was divided (in theory, equally) between all children. However, notions of inheritance were weakly developed in this community where irrigated rice fields were only established in the 1930s.
3. On a return field trip in December 1980-January 1981, I found a high school had been established in a nearby village, and a few young village women were continuing their education there.
4. Teknonymy refers to the practice whereby parents take a name from their child (for example, 'The Mother of Nurdin').
5. For a discussion of this literature, see Thornton (1975).
6. For example, see Friedl (1967) for a discussion of sex segregation, and Jeffery (1979) for a discussion of women's lives in an Indian Muslim community.

Chapter 8

Housewives and farmers: Malay women in the Muda Irrigation Scheme

Rosemary Barnard

Women have been disadvantaged in agriculture no less than in industry with economic development and modernization. In Indonesia and Malaysia, in policy and in practice, women in paid and unpaid employment in the agricultural sector have most often been ignored; at best their role in development has been linked to their roles as wives and mothers.

As Rosemary Barnard demonstrates below, rural development programs have been developed on the basis of assumptions, mythical rather than real, regarding the nature of rural households and the allocation of authority within them. She suggests that rural households are not homogeneous with regard to household headship, and that women constitute a significant proportion of household heads. Nor are households homogeneous with respect to productive assets, which in turn may affect their access to government services. Even in the norm where the senior male is the household head, he is not always a suitable proxy for female members of the household for the purposes of decision-making in matters which are accepted as female responsibilities. Focusing on the Muda Irrigation Scheme in the northern Malaysian state of Kedah, she provides us with a penetrating analysis of the adequacy of rural development programs with respect to poor households in general and to women in particular.

Any study of Malay rural women in a development context needs to begin from the premise that the household, as the basic unit of production, is also the basic unit to which development efforts must be addressed. As a corollary, the complementarity of male and female producing members of the household must be recognized in the design and implementation of development programs.

Agricultural development programs in Malaysia have been primarily directed at males (Manderson 1979a:253), a situation not uncommon elsewhere in the developing world (Palmer 1977:100-4; Rogers 1980: *passim*). In Malaysia's case this approach has been

the most practical, if not the most ideal, for the conservative Muslim rural populace, in which senior men represent the household in its external social and economic relations. The practicality of gearing programs to male representatives of households is further enforced by the chronic shortage of agricultural extension staff in general, and of female staff in particular.

The slowness of Malaysia's program planners and implementers to come to terms with the specific needs of rural women may also relate to the lower incidence of poverty in that country compared with neighbouring countries such as Indonesia. Hence in Malaysia it is less imperative to encourage a more active and rewarding participation by women in the development process.

Whatever the reason for Malaysia's approach to women in agricultural development programs, the effectiveness of these programs could be increased if more explicit provision for women were made. Provision for women should be complementary to other reforms which are also indicated to increase productivity (e.g. improved irrigation and extension).

As a first step in adjusting programs, more needs to be known about women's agricultural roles. Only then can an assessment be made of the adequacy of existing agricultural development institutions for meeting their needs, and policy changes effected if necessary. This chapter broadly examines the roles, and experience in agricultural development institutions, of Malay women in one village, Kampung Asam Riang,¹ in the Muda Irrigation Scheme up to 1978; the use of the present tense refers to the situation at that time. It is intended to suggest issues for further research rather than to provide the detailed evidence on which policy may be based, as the data were collected as part of a project looking at the overall impact of agricultural modernization on the village,² without focusing particularly on its women.

Kg Asam Riang and the Muda Irrigation Scheme

The Muda Irrigation Scheme was designed to raise farm incomes among a large economically depressed rural population, as well as to reduce Malaysia's rice imports. It involves the provision of water for an off-season crop of rice on 98,000 hectares of North Kedah and Perlis, in addition to the main-season crop which is rain-fed. Coupled with double-cropping is the use of improved short-term rice varieties, chemical fertilizers, other agricultural chemicals and mechanization of tillage and (increasingly) harvesting. Credit and marketing facilities have been expanded to meet increases in both the demand for cash to purchase the new inputs and the surplus of padi sold. To facilitate the implementation of this very large integrated agricultural development program the Muda area has been divided

into twenty-seven 'farm localities', each serving about 2000 farm households (excluding households of landless, non-tenant, agricultural labourers). Each 'farm locality' has a Farmers' Association based at a centrally located Farmers' Development Centre, and together they are under the jurisdiction of the Muda Agricultural Development Authority (Barnard 1979b).

Kg Asam Riang first received water for off-season cropping in 1971. It lies close to the geographic heart of the Muda area, approximately 4 km to the south of the Kedah State capital, Alor Setar. It roughly corresponds with one of the eleven village-based Small Agricultural Units constituting the Farmers' Association in the locality.

Table 8.1

Source of household income, Kg Asam Riang, 1978^a

	No. of households	Percent of households
Padi income households		
Family farm ^b only	10	8
Family farm/farm labour	24	19
Family farm/off-farm work	11	8
Family farm/farm labour/off-farm work	38	29
Family farm/padi land rental	1	1
Farm labour only	4	3
Farm/labour/off-farm work	13	10
Farm labour/off-farm work/padi land rental	1	1
Farm labour/padi land rental	1	1
Farm labour/pension	1	1
Padi land rental only	1	1
Padi land rental/off-farm work	2	2
Non-padi income households	16	12
Other households ^c	5	4
Total households	128	100

^aExcludes remittances from outmigrants.

^b'Farm' refers to rice farming and does not include gardening and other activities which take place within the confines of the house compound.

^cComprises aged couples or single-person households with neither direct involvement in the padi economy nor engaging in any form of off-farm work. The data were insufficient to indicate which households in the village, if any, provided support for aged relatives.

132 Kg = Kampung = village
Kampong small rural,
"township" Kota = town

According to a census in February 1978, there were 663 persons and 128 households³ permanently resident in Kg Asam Riang. Some eighty-four households operated rice farms, and a further twenty-three participated in the agricultural economy as labourers and/or small rentiers. There is also a significant number of households which are not involved in rice farming in any capacity, but which derive income from employment in and around the nearby town of Alor Setar. Table 8.1 summarizes sources of household income of Kg Asam Riang in 1978.

Women in the agricultural economy

Women's contributions to the agricultural economy of Kg Asam Riang may be examined from two angles: their position in the household for representational and management purposes; and their contribution to the household finances in cash income (or non-expenditure of cash).

Women as household heads. Rogers (1980:63-7) argues that the use of the Western stereotype of the male breadwinner by planners in third world countries undervalues women's roles as representatives and managers in the family:

If there is a man in the 'household', it is virtually automatic that the planners define him as the 'head of the household'. Women can only be counted in the category if there is no likely male candidate, for example in the case of unmarried women (including widows, divorced, separated and never married women), particularly those with children and aged dependants....

Even with the strong preference of statistics for locating the male 'head', one out of three 'households' in the world today are run by women without men present. This is more pronounced the less 'developed' the country and the poorer the social stratum (Rogers 1980:65-6).

And again,

In many cases where women are officially classified as 'dependants' of a household head, it is clear that in fact they play a crucial part in the maintenance of individuals in that grouping, and that, in some cases, the man classified as the 'head' might more accurately be described as a dependant from the point of view of productive activity (ibid:65).

Similar biases are likely to be present in the data on household heads for the Muda Irrigation Scheme. According to the World Bank/FAO (1975:25) only 6.5 per cent of all Muda farm household heads are female. However, data from the 107 padi income

households in Kg Asam Riang in 1978 indicate that a somewhat larger proportion of households, 13 per cent, are effectively headed by women. These women are widowed, or divorced, or have very ill husbands, and have no son or son-in-law experienced enough and willing to take on managerial responsibilities. If the Kg Asam Riang case is typical of the Muda area as a whole, then the livelihood of at least 8000 households⁴ is determined by women.

This would imply that a significant number of Muda women are taking on managerial roles outside those allotted by the traditional division of labour between the sexes. Men normally handle extra-village economic relations (the purchase of inputs, obtaining credit, engaging contractors and the final sale of the crop). While it is true that circumstances have always demanded that some women take on these roles, the context in which they now do so has changed. Compared with the previous single-cropping agricultural system prevailing before 1970, the present double-cropping system requires considerably greater involvement with factor and product markets and familiarity with technologies and prices. This imposes abnormal demands on women household heads because they lack the education of their male counterparts (most women over 40 years of age in Kg Asam Riang are illiterate). Women are also constrained by the lack of time to make visits outside the village in order to complete the numerous financial transactions required by the new farming system. The implications of female household headship for the Muda Scheme's socio-spatial organization are examined in more detail below.

Women as contributors to the household finances. Whether or not they are household heads, rural Malay women are important contributors to household income, either directly by earning cash or indirectly by doing work on the farm which would otherwise have to be paid for from the family's finances. Table 8.2 summarizes the occupations of Kg Asam Riang women in 1978.

There is no simple explanation for the many different combinations of farm work, off-farm work and housework shown in Table 8.2. While the size of the major economic resource, the padi farm, is clearly an important influence on women's participation in farm work, the physical incapacity of some women to engage in backbreaking work in the padi field, the problem of caring for small children and the availability of income from some other source (factory work for both young men and women is popular in Kg Asam Riang) are equally valid reasons for women not to involve themselves in farming at all. In fact 48 per cent of the 171 Kg Asam Riang women available for farm work in 1978 (aged 16 and over, not invalid, aged or full-time students) apparently did not contribute to agricultural production in any capacity, whereas the comparable figure for men was 26 per cent. To some extent this difference may reflect male interviewers' and interviewees' perceptions of women's roles in farming, unpaid farm work not

being 'worth' recording; but it must also reflect the greater physical and cultural restrictions with which the Malay village woman is faced.

Table 8.2
Occupations of women 16 years of age and over,
Kg Asam Riang, 1978

	Number	Percent
Padi income women ^a		
Family farm ^b only	8	4
Family farm/farm labour	54	29
Family farm/farm labour/off-farm work	6	3
Farm labour only	16	8
Farm labour/off-farm work	2	1
Farm labour/off-farm work/padi land rental	1	1
Padi land rental only	1	1
Padi land rental/off-farm work	1	1
Other adult women		
Household tasks only ^c	60	32
Off-farm work only	22	11
Invalid or aged	5	2
Full-time student	13	7
Total adult females	189	100

^aAll occupations in this category are in addition to housework.

^bSee note b, Table 8.1.

^cIncludes some women who would otherwise be unemployed.

The type of agricultural and other work women do changes with the family's income level and resources, as shown in Table 8.3. In families with no land and no source of income sufficient for their support (Group I), women have no choice but to sell their labour (*upah*) to those with land. The main types of *upah* are transplanting and reaping work. During slack periods in the agricultural calendar they engage in tasks such as thatch-making, cake-making and livestock-rearing (poultry and goats). Where there is some land but less than the minimum required for an average sized household of five persons to live 'comfortably' (*senang*)⁵ (Group II), the family farm provides the staple food but paid agricultural labour and other work are essential to help meet the costs of extra items such as clothing, housing and

Table 8.3
Farm size and female agricultural employment by
households, Kg Asam Rieng, 1978

	Farm size ^a (equivalent owned <i>relong</i>)				Total
	Group I Nil	Group II 0-4.9	Group III 5-9.9	Group IV 10 and over	
Agricultural labour only	16	-	-	-	16
Agricultural labour + non-agricultural employment	4	-	-	-	4
Agricultural labour + family farm	-	32	5	3	40
Agricultural labour + family farm + non-agricultural employment	-	11	2	-	13
Family farm only	-	2	2	1	5
Family farm + non-agricultural employment	-	2	-	-	2

^a Area operated only. Non-operating petty rentiers are placed in Group I. The 'equivalent owned *relong*' is calculated on the basis that one *relong* of rented padi land is worth only five-sevenths of a *relong* of owned padi land. This calculation is made on the basis of Kg Asam Rieng farmers' estimate that 5 *relong* of owned, or 7 *relong* of rented, padi land is required for a 'comfortable' living for an average family.

education. In this group women involve themselves in farm work as fully as possible in order to conserve wage payments while at the same time earning as much additional cash as their energies and opportunities permit. Thus they participate in co-operative work groups in which no cash payments to participants are involved (*derau*) and also in groups who work for cash (*upah*). In 'comfortable' and 'wealthy' households with more than five and ten *relong* respectively (Groups III and IV) the main effort is expended on the home farm. However, it is common practice for

many of these women to participate in upah groups as a means of obtaining a labour supply for their own farms without the problems of bargaining and supervision. Since they are 'comfortable' or 'wealthy' only in relative terms, the cash saving or earning derived from their participation in upah groups on their own and other farms is an added, if not absolutely essential, bonus. The more control these women have over the main resource, land, the better placed they are to exploit employment opportunities arising from its use, and that they frequently do so is evident from Table 8.3. This may be a threat to the livelihood of landless and near landless households, particularly in the present situation of shrinking employment opportunities in agriculture.

The increasing tendency to substitute capital for labour in the Muda area has affected both male and female employment opportunities but has been more pronounced in men's activities than in women's.⁶ The first male task to be affected by double-cropping was tillage, in which the buffalo-drawn plough was rapidly replaced by the tractor. This change was necessitated by the shortened period available for tillage between crops. Men who formerly did this job themselves or hired another farmer and his buffalo now look to a contractor, usually someone from outside the village. Then the constant problem of insufficient labour during the harvest period encouraged the introduction of combine harvesters, also on a contract basis, beginning in Kg Asam Riang in the 1977-78 main season harvest. This has reduced by at least half male employment in threshing and transporting and also female employment in reaping. The only tasks not so far affected by mechanization are transplanting, in which women play the major role, and weeding, winnowing and drying⁷ which are done by husband and wife together and so do not usually require non-family labour. Overall, poor Kg Asam Riang women have better opportunities than poor men for wage labour, though the contrast is weaker than one observed in rural Java (Stoler 1977:88).

Families capitalize on their womanpower by allowing the participation of even the unmarried daughters who once stayed at home. These changes could lead to the erosion of the traditional authority of the senior male in matters relating to the disposal of income and create an underemployed male population. However, the level of employment among men and women is meaningful only when related to total household income, and whether this is adequate to live 'comfortably' or not.

Data from a sample of twenty-nine farm operating households⁸ for the six-month 1977-78 main-season crop period provide much more detailed information about the relative contributions men and women make to household incomes and how they vary according to the size of the basic economic resource, rice land (Table 8.4). The same farm-size classes adopted in Table 8.3 distinguish economic strata of households in Table 8.4, except that there are no landless households represented.⁹

Table 8.4
Sources of income as percentage of total income for
households grouped according to padi farm size^a

	Farm size in relong		
	Group II Under 5 (N = 18)	Group III 5-9.9 (N = 8)	Group IV 10 and over (N = 3)
Male rice cultivation (family farm) ^b	31	61	58
Male agricultural wage labour	9	-	-
Male non-agricultural wage labour	4	-	-
Other male work ^c	7	7	-
Total male	<u>51</u>	<u>68</u>	<u>58</u>
Female rice cultivation (family farm) ^b	22	22	34
Female agricultural wage labour	13	-	-
Female non-agricultural wage labour	9	-	-
Other female work ^d	-	8	8
Total female	<u>44</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>42</u>
Remittances	5	2	1
Total	100	100	100

^a Equivalent owned area. See note a, Table 8.3.

^b Relative male and female contributions to rice cultivation are calculated from the net value of the rice crop divided according to the proportion of labour expended on it by all male and female members of the household. Since male and female wage ranges for agricultural labour are the same (about M\$6 per day), this method accurately reflects the relative contributions made. A more detailed explanation of methods and assumptions used in calculating these income measures can be found in Barnard (1981).

^c Comprises carpentry, fishing, shopkeeping, poultry raising and traditional medical practice.

^d Comprises rents from padi land, shopkeeping, poultry raising and tailoring.

The first distinction to be noted in Table 8.4 is the diversity of both male and female sources of income in the poorest stratum. 'Comfortable' and 'wealthy' households tend to specialize in padi production, with only one exception in which income from the padi farm is a supplement to that from shopkeeping. However, even here it is important to appreciate that a large landholding is necessary to accumulate sufficient capital for such an enterprise.

Second, the male and female contributions in the poorest stratum are nearly equal, whereas there is a much greater disparity between them in the 'comfortable' and 'wealthy' strata. This reflects the economic constraints on poor women for whom working outside the domestic sphere is not a matter of choice. On the other hand, freedom from economic constraints allows upper income women to concentrate on work in the home, which is a role still highly valued in Malay rural society. A similar contrast between the roles of lower and middle class women has been observed in rural Java (Hull 1979:12-25).

Third, the relative female contribution to the 'wealthy' group is higher than in the 'comfortable' group, not because these women work longer hours outside the domestic sphere, but because men's work on the farm is also greatly reduced. 'Wealthy' families' farms are so large that much of the work has to be done by hired labour, leaving the men little to do except organize and perhaps supervise.

Fourth, income from agricultural wage labour as a proportion of total income is only significant for poor families; and women contribute more from this source than do men. They also contribute more from local non-agricultural wage labour (principally factory work) in which there are more openings for females than males.

Finally, poor men have to some extent filled the void caused by declining employment opportunities in agriculture by utilizing their traditional woodworking skills in the thriving village house construction and improvement business. This requires little capital. Women's traditional craft skills pay very poorly for the time input required, hence they have not been an attractive alternative to nearby factories.

An assessment of the Muda Scheme's impact therefore needs to differentiate the economic strata of households, examining the needs of both men and women within them. The remainder of this chapter considers agricultural development institutions in the Muda Scheme and the place of women in them.

Women and agricultural development institutions

Farmers' Associations. Planners have recognized the importance of women in the Muda Scheme not as people involved directly in farming, but as managers of the home and participants in the day-to-day social relations of the village. The Muda Agricultural Development Authority sees the role of women in the following terms:

It is mostly true that men make most of the decisions but it is also true that these decisions are to a large extent influenced by their spouses whose needs reflect not only the socio-economic but also the entire human needs of the household. For instance, the efficiency of a farmer in the field may depend on the efficiency of his wife in providing him the proper diet. Or the degree of the farmer's involvement in his community may again depend on his wife's relationship with the community. It is therefore apparent that the needs of the farmer is (*sic*) an integral part of the need of his household; and that the performance of the farmer in his farming enterprise is determined by the performance of his household in preparing him for work (Afifuddin and Nor Aziyah n.d.:2).

The perception of women's roles underlies the manner in which they have been provided for in the Muda Scheme's Farmers' Associations. The Farmers' Associations were established primarily to provide cheap credit for certain specified agricultural purposes and extension. Since it is the men who normally handle their families' external economic relations, it is naturally they who are most involved in Farmers' Association affairs, as ordinary members with borrowing privileges and voting rights or as the elected and appointed representatives on committees at various levels of the organization. Wives and daughters are not members in their own right, but remain in the background except when called on to cater for Farmers' Association gatherings.

That very few women are members of the Farmers' Association in their own right is attested by the Muda Agricultural Development Authority's records: by November 1978 women comprised only 3.5 per cent of the total Farmers' Association membership in the Muda Scheme of 21,552 (Malaysia, Federation 1978b:1, 16). Even if 'household head' is narrowly defined (as discussed above) women are clearly under-represented in the Farmers' Association in relation to the total number of female household heads in the Muda area. In Kg Asam Riang only two women are Farmers' Association members in their own right. However, they are also widows of deceased members, and, like other village women, play no active part in the activities of the organization.

It is not always easy, even for men, to obtain Farmers' Association membership. Credit is the primary role of the Farmers'

Alor Star
- Alor Setar

Association, and so the creditworthiness of prospective members is thoroughly scrutinized before their applications are accepted. Poor farmers stand little chance of meeting the creditworthiness criterion. Since female household heads are only in that position because there is no productive male to take on the role, their earning power and therefore their economic situation tend to be precarious. It is not so much because they are women that they are excluded from membership, as because they are poor. Even so, in Kg Asam Riag at least two women who controlled as much rice land as some existing Farmers' Association members had had their applications rejected by the all-male screening committee.

is more subtle
than that - it is
because they
are both women
and poor.

The chief effect of exclusion from borrowing privileges at the Farmers' Association is that poor women, like poor men, have no choice but to seek credit from more expensive sources. In Kg Asam Riag this means reliance on the pawnbroker in Alor Setar, as was the practice before Farmers' Associations were set up. Now that the scale of borrowing has increased dramatically (Barnard 1979a:76-7), the fact that the pawnbroker charges three or four times the interest charged by the Farmers' Association (24 or 36 per cent as against 8.5 per cent per year) represents an ill-afforded reduction of meagre incomes.

cheat

It is generally conceded that agricultural extension has been one of the weakest functions of the Farmers' Associations (Kalshoven 1978:19). This is the result of staffing inadequacies at the Farmers' Development Centres and a lack of suitable information to extend. The present irrigation system relies on field-to-field flooding from secondary canals: the time of water delivery is too uncertain to permit very specific recommendations on padi variety, fertilizer application and pest control to be followed. Under these circumstances non-Farmers' Association members are at no great disadvantage in not having access to information through Farmers' Association channels.

When the second stage of the Muda Scheme is implemented (this began in 1979) more precise water control will be possible through a system of tertiary and quaternary canals. Since there will be a strict schedule for the rotation of water between different areas, farmers will have to follow precise instructions on a group basis in order to make optimal use not only of water but also of chemical inputs, machinery and labour. Thus agricultural extension will be crucial and to facilitate it this function will be transferred from the Farmers' Associations to water users' groups based on the contiguity of farms (Barnard 1979b:6-9).

If extension is to be more effective, the water users' groups will have to be much more cognizant of the agricultural role of women than Farmers' Associations have been. Not only will it be necessary to include all women farm managers, but it will be strongly advisable also to involve the majority of Muda women, including the landless, who work as part of a husband-and-wife

team. In the past women have been responsible for the crucial tasks of mobilizing the labour supply for the traditional female activities of transplanting and reaping. As long as these remain partly or wholly manual activities, the problem of rotating a labour force between areas following different irrigation schedules will be more readily solved if those responsible — the women — are included in the information talks which prepare the farm community for the second phase of the Muda Scheme.

If women have been virtually ignored in Farmers' Association affairs which relate directly to rice farming itself, the importance of their home management and community roles has been acknowledged in the setting up of special clubs under the Farmers' Association umbrella. In 1973 training courses were begun for rural women leaders from the families of Farmers' Association members, and in 1975 the first Farm Family Development Clubs (Kelab Pembangunan Keluarga Tani) were formed using the trained women leaders as a nucleus (Malaysia, Federation 1977:106-11). Eventually Farm Family Development Clubs are supposed to operate in conjunction with all twenty-seven Farmers' Associations in the Muda Scheme. They have not caught on fast: by the beginning of 1979 there were still only four pilot clubs operating at Kodiang, Tunjang, Kobah and Hutan Kampung.

The activities of these clubs are determined by their members. They are heavily oriented to domestic skills (cooking, sewing and handicrafts), social activities (Koran reading competitions), raising money (food stalls), and vegetable production in the area around the house. Poultry rearing is not included even though it is traditionally a female responsibility. Nor is there any program of instruction to improve knowledge about rice farming, nor even basic literacy and numeracy classes (Malaysia, Federation 1978a:96-100). This domestic bias is consonant with the preference of the more well-to-do women for concentrating their activities within the home and its immediate surroundings.

In Kg Asam Riang most women appear to lack interest in the possibility of a Farm Family Development Club's establishment in their area. They consider its activities irrelevant or inappropriate to the realities of their everyday situation, and a slight on their own considerable experience and abilities. These attitudes are based not just on hearsay but on the type of women's activities previously initiated in the area by the government.

Cooking classes have been held in the village once or twice under the guidance of the locality female Agricultural Assistant. These classes included suggestions on the use of local ingredients to create more economical and nutritious meals: this elicited a scornful reaction, since the women were already aware of these possibilities. Cooking classes have also included European cake-making and decoration. This art is much in demand for

wedding presentations and is popular among some of the young unmarried women, but has no relevance to ordinary meal preparation and also requires expensive ingredients and equipment.

Other activities are likewise irrelevant. Most Kg Asam Riang women, if they possess a treadle sewing machine, can cut and sew simple clothes for everyday wear. Vegetable production is a waste of precious time when they can afford to purchase their needs from local shops and the Alor Setar market. They are interested in improving their techniques of poultry raising, but the only training given in this field so far has been for men at live-in courses.

Even classes considered to be useful reach comparatively few women because the venue is outside the village or the duration of the course is too long. Extremely busy women cannot spare the time to be absent from the village for hours at a time, let alone participate in a week-long live-in course at the Muda Agricultural Development Authority's Teluk Chengai Training Centre. Already in the pilot clubs it is recognized that distance from the Farmers' Development Centres is one of the main difficulties in involving women in group activities (Malaysia, Federation 1978a:101).

By 1978, no Kg Asam Riang women had attended leadership training courses. Those who felt they might have benefited from the subject matter were too young to be opinion leaders; and those older women who were opinion leaders were immobilized by their family responsibilities and very sceptical of the value of club activities. Any extension work, whether in domestic or agricultural areas, will run into problems unless additional female staff can be found to go to women in the villages, to learn as well as to instruct.

Co-operative societies. It is perhaps paradoxical that at a time when co-operative societies run by men are being wound up and their members and functions incorporated into the Farmers' Association movement, the most thriving remaining co-operatives in the Muda area are those in which membership is exclusively female.¹⁰ The success of women's co-operative societies is proof of some very capable and astute Malay businesswomen.

The four women's co-operative societies in the Muda area are all linked to the women's wing of the United Malays National Organization (Kaum Ibu UMNO). The office-bearers are nearly all wives of politicians and active in UMNO affairs. They represent a wealthy, highly-educated group which is atypical of Muda farm women. The membership of the co-operatives is drawn from professional women (teachers and nurses) as well as from farm women.

The largest of the four women's co-operatives is Kaum Ibu Ayer Hitam serving the area covered by the Kubang Pasu Barat

parliamentary constituency. It was formed in 1958 and now has about 950 members. Its main function is to provide credit for both padi production loans (a maximum of M\$450 in cash plus M\$100 for fertilizer per season) and medium term loans of up to M\$2000 for larger expenditures such as houses and land. In addition, the co-operative runs a sundries shop in which 50 per cent of the sales are on credit terms, with a limit of M\$200 worth of credit per season per member. The co-operative also gives education grants of about M\$60 to two or three people every year.

Kaum Ibu Sala Besar at Guar Chempedak was formed in 1964 and now has 407 members. It provides padi production loans and also owns one four-wheel and two power tillers which are used for contracting. Kaum Ibu Sala Kecil at Kota Sarang Semut was also formed in 1964. Its only function is to provide credit for padi production. It has 124 members. Kaum Ibu Simpang Empat (Perlis) is the smallest of the women's co-operatives. It was formed in 1957 and has 116 members. It provides padi production and medium term loans.

These organizations have a useful role in providing members with an alternative to the male-dominated Farmers' Association. As noted by Manderson (1979:252), Malay women are much keener to participate actively in organizations in which the membership is exclusively female, probably for cultural reasons. However, the existing women's co-operative societies are few in number, are within easy reach of only a small part of the Muda female population and moreover are identified with upper class interests. The majority of women, including Kg Asam Riang women, must make do with agricultural development institutions run by men.

Conclusion

Muda women's roles in agriculture and the importance of their contribution to the household finances from agricultural work belie the housewife stereotype underlying the roles accorded them in agricultural development institutions. At present women's involvement in agricultural development institutions in the Muda Scheme is indirect, because they are seen not as housewives and farmers but only as housewives in a supportive role. In fact a small minority of Kg Asam Riang women is economically secure enough to be able to choose to devote themselves entirely to the domestic sphere.

Three main areas of further research are needed to create a sound data base for policy formulation. First, much more needs to be known about the way in which women combine farm and domestic roles, their overall workload and the effect of technical change on it, compared with men. Because they bear a 'double burden', women have fewer opportunities than men to participate in training. Thus there is the danger that existing inequalities between the

sexes will not only be perpetuated, but will widen, unless measures can be devised and implemented to provide opportunities which allow for women's dual role.

Second, it would be instructive for extension purposes to know more about inter-personal communication patterns. The interaction between government officials and villagers, between village men and women, and between different socio-economic classes of village women are equally important areas of study.

Finally, and most crucially, there is a problem of perception of roles. Much more research needs to be done to understand the range of rural women's actual roles as distinct from their idealized or stereotyped role. Detailed village level studies such as those done in Java (Hull 1979; Stoler 1977) are essential to avoid the pitfalls of sweeping generalizations about rural women as a class (Rogers 1980:29). Village women are made up of several socio-economic classes, with various roles and needs. An agricultural development program must therefore be tailored very carefully to these various roles and needs if it is to be fully effective.

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Notes

1. This is not the real name of the village.
2. The village was studied in 1966-68 for sixteen months and again in 1977-78 for four months, spanning the transformation from a single- to a double-cropping rice economy. The 1966-68 fieldwork was carried out while I held a Commonwealth Postgraduate Award at the Australian National University. The 1978 fieldwork was funded by an award from the Australian Research Grants Committee.
3. 'Household' is defined as a group of people with shared budgeting arrangements. In Kg Asam Riang it normally corresponds with the residential unit.
4. Calculated on the basis of approximately 60,000 padi farming households and 5000 farm labouring, non-tenant, households.

5. Villagers consider that five relong of owned land or seven relong of rented land is the minimum for a 'comfortable' living. One relong is equivalent to 0.285 hectares.
6. See Barnard (1981) for a full description of changing employment practices in Kg Asam Riang.
7. As a result of mechanized harvesting, winnowing and drying before sale are omitted. They are now done only for that part of the crop reserved for family consumption.
8. Thirty-one of the original 1967 sample of forty farm operating households were re-interviewed in 1978. Data from two of these could not be incorporated in this analysis because drought conditions caused a net loss in their rice farming enterprise.
9. The detailed farm management survey did not include landless, non-tenant, farm labouring households. However, their position can be surmised from that of Group II, households operating less than 5 relong.
10. This section is based on an interview with Encik Abu Bakar Desa of the Agriculture Division, Muda Agricultural Development Authority.

Chapter 9

Indonesian women in development: state theory and urban kampung practice

Norma Sullivan

In the previous chapter, Rosemary Barnard outlined a number of organizational initiatives designed to involve women in development. The majority of these initiatives ignored women's participation in agriculture, emphasized their domestic role, and provided them with skills which were often irrelevant both to their needs and their means. Norma Sullivan provides us below with a comparative case for Indonesia.

The focus of the following chapter is the Indonesian Government program for the promotion of family welfare, a program designed to integrate women into national development. The program is normative as well as instrumental: it is based on the assumption that women's prime roles are as a wife, a mother, a housekeeper, the family's prime socializer, and finally an Indonesian citizen. Norma Sullivan discusses the theoretical/ideological basis to this program and questions its relevance to the realities of life in urban kampungs. She suggests that the incompatibility of a number of projects initiated by the program with the realities and needs of the mass of urban women has a class basis: the middle and upper class leaders and theorists of the program have little interest in examining closely the realities of the mass of women or in closing the class gap between them. //

Indonesia has a long, continuous history of formal women's organizations. These go back to the 1920s when a few such associations formed in the opening phases of the modern nationalist movement. In the last six or more years, the Indonesian Government has expressed a new interest in women as a definite social group-
ing fundamentally important to the process of national development. X
It has initiated certain programs designed to specify the role of women in this process and to establish an organizational structure within which that role can be fruitfully played on a national scale. Within its general program, using elements of older women's associations and functional groups, it has established what it calls a 'non-political women's movement'.

This chapter examines the new program and movement, focusing particularly on the official conception of women revealed in the relevant state directives, advice and initiatives, and the nature of the roles and functions allotted to women, as 'developmental force', on the basis of that conception. The examination is ordered around a description of the formal organizational structure of the new 'non-political' movement, its links to various other organs and levels of the state and, most importantly, its relations to ordinary working women — the mass of Indonesia's female population. In the latter respect, I concentrate on relations between the formal programs and structures and the everyday lives of women in specific Javanese urban *kampungs*.¹

The PKK program

In 1973, the Minister of Home Affairs commented in a letter to regional governors that, whereas in the past, the development of the nation had been virtually the sole responsibility of the state, the time had come for all Indonesians to accept that responsibility and become involved in national development. He added that it was the duty of governors, and administrators at all levels, to ensure that this occurred (Indonesia, Republic 1973).

Referring to an earlier Instruction (*Instruksi Menteri Dalam Negeri* Nomor SJ.18/2/42), the Minister singled out married women as a group with a crucial role in this new approach. To organize women better to fulfil this role, the Applied Family Welfare Program (*Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga* — PKK) was initiated in the same year. PKK was presented as the program of a non-political women's movement (*Kelompok Pelaksana PKK* 1977:1). The participation of women in national development became law in 1974 (*Undang-undang Nomor 5 Tahun 1975*). That legislation specified the links between PKK and state, and institutionalized PKK units in villages and urban kampungs as components of the Village Social Committees (*Lembaga Sosial Desa* — LSD) (*Kelompok Pelaksana PKK* 1977:1).

The relevant directives explained that the most fundamental developmental programs must begin in the family, because that was the most fundamental social institution that formed the roles, values, attitudes, and behaviour patterns on which fruitful development depended (*Kelompok Pelaksana PKK* 1977:1). Woman, as the crucial central agent of the family, was assigned five major roles in this capacity:

1. as loyal backstop and supporter of her husband;
2. as caretaker of the household;
3. as producer of future generations;
4. as the family's prime socializer;
5. as Indonesian citizen (*Cabang Tingkat Pusat PERTIWI* 1978:4).²

Other publications expanded on women's responsibilities for the spiritual, moral, mental, and physical welfare of their families and for producing good future citizens, and the concomitant duty of learning to be good citizens themselves (Kelompok Pelaksana PKK 1977; Cabang Tingkat Pusat PERTIWI 1978). The PKK movement, it was thought, would help women meet these obligations, by furnishing appropriate ideals, information, guidelines, and so on, and training them in their application (Kelompok Pelaksana PKK 1977:3).

This focus on female roles and functions was built into the Second Five-Year Development Plan (1974-79 - Repelita II), the central aim of which was defined as the improvement of living standards and social welfare services (Indonesia, Republic 1977:94). Among other targets, the plan aimed at an overall upgrading of the quality of goods and clothing; improved housing and associated facilities; expanded social infrastructure; a more equitable distribution of welfare benefits; increased employment opportunities (ibid.:95).

The government stated a commitment to a reduced reliance on foreign aid in the new planning period, looking to a fall in that component of developmental funding from 35 per cent (1974) to 16 per cent (1979) (Indonesia, Republic 1977:98). The plan promised an increase in state funding but indicated that a substantial proportion of development costs in 1974-79 would have to be funded directly by the people in communal, self-help efforts (*dana swadaya*). The pertinent texts explained that these efforts would give the people greater self-confidence, encourage Indonesians everywhere to determine their own lives and thus help appreciably to build a just and prosperous society, based on the principles of Pancasila (Indonesia, Republic 1977:74). Indonesia's very large population was still causing state authorities concern. Demographers projected an increase, during Repelita II, of 12.3 per cent - from 126.1 millions to an estimated 141.6 millions (ibid.:92). The planners pointed out that the expected increase called for 'greater efforts to be made in order to maintain the existing level of prosperity' (ibid.), outlining how it could constrain provision of 'life's necessities, such as food, clothing, housing, education and health facilities and so on' (ibid.). This concern with population growth and questions of basic needs seems to have turned official attention to female groupings and women's organizations. The state began to show a particular interest in the Indonesian Women's Congress (*Kongres Wanita Indonesia* - KOWANI). This was the umbrella organization for most of the nation's women's associations, predominantly upper and middle class bodies composed of the wives of government employees, professionals, religious leaders, intellectuals, and so on, as well as women actually working in each of these fields. The Congress can be traced back to the 1920 upsurges of Indonesian nationalist movements and sentiments (Vreede-de Stuers 1960: *passim*). Some of its now famous early activists still hold senior positions in KOWANI and affiliated organizations. These women are highly respected in many national circles, and,

at the start of Repelita II; were invited to sit on state committees and act as advisers on issues relating to women and the family (KOWANI 1978: *passim*).

The Sixteenth KOWANI Congress, Jakarta, was convened in the May following the opening of Repelita II. It endorsed certain state development programs in the fields of education, health, nutrition, family planning, and others concerned with improving family welfare, and adopted them as its own work programs. KOWANI leaders began to plan courses for women such as 'Family Life Education', 'Increasing Women's Participation in the National Planning Program', 'Increasing the Role of Women in Economic Development, Especially through Co-operatives', 'Population Education via Non-formal Methods' (KOWANI 1978:219). Among other things, these headings indicate that state and female leaders perceived close links between the National Family Planning Program and Applied Family Welfare Program. It is worth noting that this connection was based on an assumption that lower class women bore more children than higher class women. That assumption has since been seriously questioned (Hull 1976a:2-6); however, the relevant conceptual link is interesting in terms of its throwing some light on an attitude of the movement's leadership to its female rank and file.

The general attitude of the planners and leaders seems to have been 'educative'. They saw a complementarity between family planning and family welfare, and took up the challenge of educating lower class women to see the same relationship and realize it for their own good and the good of their society.

In 1974 a new Marriage Law was passed, embodying many reforms which KOWANI and other female leaders had been pursuing for decades. Cora Vreede-de Stuers (1976:88) proposed:

In its anxiety to lessen the population growth of Indonesia, the government was wholly concerned with bringing down legislation which, by limiting the minimum age of marriage and the freedom of men regarding multiple marriages and repeated repudiations, was able to favourably influence the birth rate. Without previous codification (in matrimonial law for all Indonesians) the Family Planning Programme ('keluarga berencana') would not be able to produce the results expected by the government.

The proposition is no doubt valid, but it is also true that male authorities considered too the reform's effect in getting influential female leaders on side - in winning them over to the new developmental blueprint.

The salient point in all this is that, in the first half of the 1970s, the leaders of formal women's organizations were enlisted to propagandize two major state programs among other

women — KB (Family Planning Program) and PKK (Applied Family Welfare Program).

PKK organizational structure

The *theorists* of the PKK program are predominantly male. They are the senior officials and development planners who designed it, and the key administrators overseeing its implementation at all levels of society. Its actual *practitioners* are exclusively female. They are the leaders and rank and file of the national women's movement. To implement PKK theories, the government selects certain women to be leaders at various levels of the movement corresponding to the major levels of the state administrative hierarchy. Figure 9.1 shows how the two structures parallel and interconnect. My account focuses on the lower levels of these structures as they are to be found in the Special Region of Yogyakarta.

In principle, the mechanism for activating PKK ideals, theories and programs is composed of the PKK's own internal organizational structure and the state's civil administrative framework, 'mediated' by the PERTIWI complex (*Persatuan Istri Karyawan dan Karyawati de Lingkungan Departmen Dalam Negeri* — The Union of Wives of Male Employees and Female Employees in Department of Home Affairs). The Central Government Department of Home Affairs is the site of Indonesia-wide leadership direction. At that level, PKK is aligned with the central bureaucracy per medium of the Jakarta-based PERTIWI leadership executive, the *ex-officio* head of which is the wife of the Minister of Home Affairs. The Bureau of Village Development, in Home Affairs, which has offices in the regions, advises PKK executives at various levels on general administrative and technical matters. More specific technical advice is provided by other municipal offices and a few non-governmental bodies (*Kelompok Pelaksana PKK 1977*). At the provincial level, in Yogyakarta, the PKK leader is a female relative of the *Pakualam* (the Deputy Governor of the Special Region); she is also president of PERTIWI in the Region.

Yogyakarta Province is divided into five Districts (*Kabupaten*). A *Bupati* governs each of the four rural Districts (Sleman, Bantul, Kulon Progo, Gunung Kidul; a *Walikotamadya* (Mayor) governs the urban one — the city (*Kotamadya*). The highest level of PKK in the city is the Policy Body (*Kelompok Kebijaksanaan*). The Mayor's wife is, *ex-officio*, head of both PKK and PERTIWI at this level. The next link is established at Ward (*Kecamatan*) level. The titular head of PKK is the *Camat*'s wife, also a member of PERTIWI. The next administrative level in Yogyakarta is the *Rukun Kampung* ('harmonious communal association', hereafter RK). At this point, the pertinent PKK unit is conceived as a component of the LSD, and, as such, is commonly called *Seki Wanita* (the women's section

Figure 9.1 Organizational structure of PKK movement: PERTIWI-PKK work relation

Source: Cabang Pingkat Pusat PERTIWI (1978).

of the RK), although in Fig. 9.1 it is listed as Women's Section - PKK. The RK chief's wife, or a female relative, is *ex-officio* President of Seksi Wanita (hereafter SW). (She will also be a member of PERTIWI if her husband works for Home Affairs.) SW is divided into functional units.

Executive

Figure 9.2 Management-administrative structure of Seksi Wanita operating in one kampung

Source: Personal interview with president of sample Seksi Wanita (1979).

As shown in Fig. 9.2 SW is administered by an executive (*Pengurus*) comprising a president and two deputies, two secretaries and two treasurers. The president appoints office bearers to each functional sub-section: sport and art, education, community relations, social projects, family planning, equipment, credit society-saving scheme (*simpan/pinjam-arisan*), and area commissioners (*komisaris lingkungan*). The composition of SW executives is supposed to be basically the same everywhere; in practice, the numbers and types of functional units differ from area to area, depending mainly on the levels of activity and numbers of projects engaged in by different executives.

The leaders of the SW functional units are directed by and accountable to the president — the RK chief's wife. She, in turn, is directed by, and accountable to, the *Pengurus Inti* RK (RK Core Executive) headed by her husband. As president of SW, the chief's wife attends *Pengurus Inti* RK meetings where she submits SW reports and receives instructions and suggestions concerning specific ongoing SW projects. As a member of PKK ward level committees she is also directed by, and answerable to higher state levels for proper implementation of the Family Welfare Program in her kampung.

Conceptions and contradictions

Despite the democratic language of Repelita II and its calls for more progressive attitudes and actions from the people, its associated initiatives have some very conservative aspects.

The five major female roles recorded earlier, and their peculiar ranking, on which Hull (1976a:22) has also remarked, disclose an official conception similar to traditional notions of women's status and function. The new approach promises that women, in their customary roles as homebound followers of male initiatives — as wives, housekeepers, mothers, child-rearers (and, ultimately, as 'citizens') — will now be formally acknowledged as participants in and practical supporters of male-directed developmental programs. To help women understand more clearly their place in the new developmental trajectory, PKK theorists provided a 10-point formula which itemized the specific areas in which women could work most fruitfully to help modernize their nation. Their attention was directed to the following spheres of 'female interest':

1. the creation of good relations within and between families;
2. correct child care;
3. the use of hygienic food preparation techniques and close attention to nutrition;
4. care that clothing is suited to its proper functions — protection, morality, modesty;
5. intelligent use of house space to meet needs of hygiene, privacy, entertainment, etc.;
6. the securing of total family health — in physical, mental, spiritual and moral spheres;
7. effective household budgeting;
8. efficient basic housekeeping, calculated to maximize order and cleanliness;

9. the preservation of emotional and physical security and a tranquil environment in the home;
10. the development of family attitudes appropriate to the modernization process — planning for the future (Kelompok Pelaksana PKK 1977:5-7; Cabang Tingkat Pusat PERTIWI 1978:4).

The list points up numerous female responsibilities but no rights. It indicates how women should identify with national objectives but alludes to no benefits women might gain in the attainment of developmental ends. In all, it makes it clear enough that women's formal entry into national development heralds no change in status.

The list also points up an interesting contradiction in the outlining of the new program. It would seem that, to meet most of the ten points at all adequately, the responsible female would require quite substantial funds. Reasonable child care, adequate clothing, medicine, shelter and living space, levels of hygiene, nutrition, physical, mental and emotional well-being, tranquillity, and so on, demand expenditures which, it could be argued, are beyond the incomes of a great many contemporary Indonesian families. Indeed, just that notion appears to be a major parameter of the current 'self-help' and 'social service' Five-Year Plan. Nonetheless, perhaps the male planners and well-off ladies who spelt out the ten points are unaware that they may constitute far distant *ends* rather than efficacious *means* for the majority of Indonesian housewives. Possibly middle and upper class mediators are aware of the practical constraints, but offer this checklist and related advice with less obvious ends and means in mind. Whatever the case may be, the ability of most married women to further national development by following the formula precisely presupposes a level of economic development and pattern of resource distribution which, according to all the relevant evidence, have not been reached.

From one position, this could be pinpointed as another case of the vicious circle of late development. Given the contemporary structuring of Indonesian society and its dependent position within the world politico-economic order, the considerable material resources needed to raise basic living standards and improve social welfare are, in effect, unavailable. Government is effectively constrained from injecting substantial funds directly into rural and urban communities, and from initiating practical, far-reaching reforms, which might give the idea of 'self-help' a solid material base by supporting increased income-creation at rural and urban community level.

At first glance, the PKK initiative appears an idealistic effort to break the circle, to instigate fruitful development

without expending material resources or removing other real social constraints. It may be that state authorities hope their vague theories and largely inapplicable advice will somehow make women effective agents and initiators of real development. It may be that the planners, their backers and followers, being unable and/or unwilling to do anything more practical, hope that their abstract efforts will at least appear practical and promising in relevant quarters. It is not at all clear how their efforts could be widely well-received in lower class female circles. Rural women, for instance, have good cause to question the plausible characterizations of Repelita II as a socially-progressive advance on the agriculturally-centred Repelita I. As some researchers (Manderson 1980b; Stoler 1977; White 1976) have pointed out, it now appears that very many rural women were victims of Repelita I's agricultural advances, rather than beneficiaries. New technology introduced in the period deprived many poorer women of their positions in traditional agricultural production, particularly in harvesting. Previously, harvesting jobs gave numerous client women rights to shares of their patrons' harvested crops. Many lost these and associated rights with increased use of (invariably male-operated) machinery and related changes in farming methods. Their displacement meant a real drop in importance and status in home and community as they became that much more dependent on their men-folk to sustain their families (Manderson 1980b; Stoler 1977; White 1976). The role for women written into Repelita II does not promise any remedy; rather, it puts a firm official stamp on the belief that women's place is in the home (Hull 1979), not in the fields nor in any other influential sphere of economic activity.

Given the undoubted evidence that state planners attribute little real significance to women's possible economic and social contributions, events like the 1974 Marriage Law do not seem at all purposively progressive, whatever KOWANI and other female leaders say to the contrary. Theoretically, the 1974 reform tends to make women less dependent on men, and better placed to take up decisive roles in national development, but in practice the vast majority of women are being systematically excluded from decisive roles in any sphere outside the home. The relevant literature makes it quite clear that, even within those narrow confines, their role is a subservient, other-directed one. Even the most sympathetic reading of PKK declarations shows that role to be peripheral to, and largely disconnected from, all processes that could be reasonably described as undeniably national developmental.

Indonesia is faced with a large and growing population, a proportionately slower rate of economic growth, deeply-structured inequalities in wealth and income distribution, and concomitant deficiencies in mass living standards. The state and its immediate beneficiaries must at least appear to be taking positive steps to solve the problems these factors present for ordinary people, if the present regime is to maintain some credibility in international forums, and preserve present levels of social and political

stability. The new thesis of popular participation in development seems to present two faces. On the one hand, the copious complicated blueprints defining the new trajectory might, if presented with enough skill and aplomb, be fairly widely apprehended as conscientious developmental actions in themselves. On the other hand, if, as seems quite likely, little real development eventuates, it might be possible for their theorists to spread the blame rather broadly. They could, with appealing contriteness, take all the blame themselves — for placing too much responsibility on the shoulders of the, as yet, backward masses; for being a little 'premature' with a basically well-intentioned, progressive experiment.

Ultimately, there is no irrefutable evidence or argument for singling out one rationale above all those possible in this regard. It is one thing to try and define the logic of the social situation in which Indonesia's ruling elites and ruled masses now find themselves. It is something else entirely to imply that bodies such as the Indonesian state and ruling stratum are seamless monoliths that can think and plan with 'one mind'. Doubtless, the plans and publications I am discussing have been shaped by agents with excellent intentions and high hopes for a brighter future for all Indonesians, by others less optimistic but equally benevolent, who just cannot see any viable alternatives, by yet others who see the whole thing as a cynical, manipulative, window-dressing exercise, and, probably, by yet others who could not care less whether their contributions are developmental, futile, manipulative or whatever. In any study of this type, however, it must be assumed that powerful groupings within and close to the zone of the state expect definite results, however diverse, from such initiatives — results that the social analyst must at least try to isolate and understand. However, more to the point, the initiatives under investigation are now some five years old and have had definite effects which we can record and inquire into more closely.

To advance the examination of those effects I concentrate my analysis on the PKK program and structure at what seems to me to be a very critical juncture: the point at which the kampung level of the movement meets the next level up — that of the kecamatan (ward).

The PKK ward-kampung juncture

In the city of Yogyakarta, the most crucial internal vertical link in the movement, and the most crucial external horizontal link between the movement and the state, occurs at ward level. The city has 14 wards administering 163 RK in which live about 364,000 people.

Tables 9.1 and 9.2 show projects initiated at kecamatan and kampung levels respectively. The tables illustrate the kinds of

Table 9.1

PKK projects initiated at ward or higher levels for
implementation at kampung level, April-December 1979

Project type	Action taken at kampung level
Traditional Javanese dancing exhibition and bazaar to commemorate 100th birthday of Ibu Kartini. ^a	Reported at SW meeting. Six committee members attend and operate food stall.
Film screening in PKK building at Municipal Office Complex for Ibu Kartini Day.	Not reported at SW meeting.
Course: Javanese dancing for children held at ward office.	Not reported at SW meeting.
Contests: anniversary of the City of Yogyakarta. Various PKK competitions.	Not reported at SW meeting.
Lecture: family health, held at local primary school.	Reported at SW meeting. Two committee members attend.
Course: classical Javanese singing for women, held at ward office.	Not reported at SW meeting.
Contest: cultivating vegetable and herb gardens in kampungs. Seeds supplied by municipal office, distributed to kampung through PKK.	Seeds received by President SW; contest reported at SW meeting, but not acted on. Reason given by President — no space in kampung for gardens.
Evaluation of PKK administration at kampung level. SW administrative records to be assembled at ward level for examination by municipal level PKK leaders. Records should cover: diagram of SW management structure; books for minutes, excursions, social projects, visitors, cash, courses, fund raising activities, charity work, research and development education.	Not reported at SW meeting. Administrative records not sent to ward level. (Records kept in kampung by SW — books for minutes, cash, credit society and saving scheme, subscriptions.)

Table 9.1 continued

Project type	Action taken at kampung level
Competition: national walking race to commemorate Independence Day. PKK members to participate in special races for families and women.	Not reported at SW meeting.
Contests: walking race; guessing quiz; cooking (nutritious meal for 3, maximum cost Rp500 (approx. 71¢ Aust.); healthy baby.	Cooking contest only reported at SW meeting. One committee member competes, but scores low.
Course: English language, held at ward office.	Not reported at SW meeting.
Lecture: public speaking, held at one of the ward's community halls.	Not reported at SW meeting.
Contest: guessing quiz to commemorate Mother's Day, held at ward office.	Not reported at SW meeting.
Excursion: to President Sukarno's grave site, Blitar.	Not reported at SW meeting.

^aKartini, a Javanese princess, is considered the pioneer of Indonesian women's movements, and is now a national heroine.

Source: PKK ward unit and kampung SW minute books.

activities important at the ward-RK juncture. They also start to disclose an informative disjuncture that occurs at this level. Table 9.1 should make it clear that many ward level projects are not really geared to improving living conditions of ordinary Kampung women and their families. They are largely cultural and recreational; and many of them in fact demand a level of education beyond that achieved by most kampung women. More critically, many are essentially alien to lower class, kampung culture; it is not obvious that, even if more definite economic constraints did not figure in the matter, many kampung women would be disposed to participate freely in them. I must point out that most of the projects listed assume quantum of leisure time and surplus funds not possessed by the average kampung. The related registration fees, admission charges, costs for uniforms, transport and various other incidentals, are enough to prohibit most kampung women from taking any consistent part in ward level projects. The average monthly family income is much too small (Sullivan 1980:12). The size of the average family income

leaves little or no funds for 'culturally uplifting' activities, especially for female members of families.

Table 9.2

PKK projects initiated at kampung level,
April-December 1979

Project type	Type of action taken
Communal celebration: <i>Ruwahan-Apeman</i> (traditional religious ritual).	Special committee formed under the aegis of SW to organize production and distribution of ceremonial food.
Lecture: birth control methods.	Leaders of Family Planning Sub-section to arrange for a speaker from PUSKESMAS (Public Health Centre) in ward to talk at the next meeting of this section.
Communal celebration: <i>Tirakatan</i> (this occasion is a communal feast, held during August to celebrate Indonesia's Independence).	SW members to assemble into five groups and prepare food for <i>Tirakatan</i> . RK chief to judge the food contributions of each group and award a prize for the best presented dish.
<i>Perpisahan</i> (farewell party): organized to farewell foreign guest.	SW management committee organized this farewell ritual. RK chief, RK secretary, and president of RK youth section invited by SW committee to make farewell speeches.

Source: Seksi Wanita Minute Book.

On the other hand, kampung-level projects tend to take account of these and other harsh realities. Compared with ward projects, those of the kampung are far more closely geared to neighbourhood interests. Many are designed to fulfil some perceived communal need, such as commemorating, as fully and cheaply as possible, Independence Day or an important Holy Day. ✓

A careful comparison of kecamatan and kampung projects reveals that their respective aims and activities are often in basic opposition. In some respects, the two PKK units themselves appear as unconnected associations, each functioning to serve its own exclusive ends. ✗

According to official accounts, the primary function of PKK ward units is to transmit state and PKK directives, advice and general ideology to the mass of ordinary urban women. Each unit's success, in these respects, is evaluated, and each is ranked

accordingly on a scale of merit. In general, the members of ward units, who are members by virtue of their senior position in kampung units, work diligently to disseminate the movement's curious developmentalist ideology and implement state-PKK instructions. However, their loyalties to the state, as ward unit members, can easily come into conflict with their loyalties to community, as kampung unit leaders. In the kampung community, the SW leader is the state's main cadre (*kader*) within the female population, and in this capacity must advance state interests. At ward level, she is a communal representative in a state setting; in this role she is expected by her kampung neighbours to protect and advance communal interests. Furthermore, communal female interests may conflict with communal male interests. This conflict may be sharply experienced by a PKK leader in her dual role as RK chief's wife and SW president. For various reasons, the leader of the *Pengurus Inti* RK may be forced to override proposals and pleas presented by the leader of the *Pengurus* SW on behalf of, and under pressure from, her section's membership. It may be quite difficult for her to explain failures of this kind to her female neighbours.

The major discontinuity at the ward-RK axis is reflected in the generally stark differences in life-styles and social environments of those holding positions at ward level and higher, and those making up the mass urban PKK membership. I will try to elucidate these differences by describing two kinds of PKK meeting: one in the kampung and one higher up the ladder.

Higher level PKK meetings spend far more time on specifically PKK business than do kampung SW meetings. In the kampung, official PKK business is dealt with quickly at the start of meetings and the rest of the time is devoted to matters of more engrossing neighbourhood interest. To illustrate, I will report on the first SW meeting I attended in Yogyakarta, which, I found after another 10 months of regular attendance, was quite typical.

Two PKK meetings

Shortly after I arrived in the kampung, my landlady's daughter told me that a SW meeting was about to start. I hurried to the community hall (*balai*) and found it full of women and children. Several women sat at tables, collecting money and writing in books. This, I later discovered, was the credit society and saving scheme in session. Forms and chairs were set in uniform rows; the leaders sat at a table out front. Younger women walked to and fro, feeding, nursing and comforting babies. Children played, rolled on the floor and bounced around the room. Everyone was talking, arguing and moving about. It was very noisy. My first thought was that this was strange Javanese female public behaviour. My only previous experience of Javanese women in public had been in mixed company on ceremonial

occasions. There, in accordance with Javanese customs and tradition, they presented a collective image of refinement, tranquillity, modesty and passivity. Now in the exclusively female SW gathering, the ladies were noisy, argumentative, boisterous - collectively, somewhat less than demure.

After the meeting was called to some semblance of order, a few items of specifically PKK business were presented to the assembly by the functionaries at the front table. None of these items raised much discussion. Indeed, they did not appear to generate much interest at all. The items were read out dutifully by the appropriate officers, while the assembled ladies chatted to each other and engaged in other activities without any appearance of listening to the official reports and announcements. This first, more or less formal, official segment of the meeting passed quickly and, I thought, largely unnoticed. It was certainly overshadowed and overwhelmed by everything else that occurred during the meeting. The ladies present socialized noisily, and, for the most part, courteously. Some were obviously vying with each other in obscure communal power games. Most engaged, at one time or another, in various kinds of financial transactions - involving mainly the borrowing of money. This first meeting, and all the others attended, were sites of diverse social practices, each serving different sets of needs and interests. In PKK business discussion, certain state interests were served after a fashion. In socializing, women served multiple community interests. Leaders of various kampung cliques canvassed allies and verbally assaulted rivals in advancing diverse 'political' ends for themselves and their followers. Family economic interests were served in negotiations with the credit society, contributions to the saving scheme and the like.

In the months that followed, I attended a series of PKK ward level meetings. These were very different affairs from the one I have just described. They were much smaller (never more than thirty women attended, including an occasional guest speaker) than kampung meetings ($\pm$ 100 women plus children). No children came. The meetings started on time and ran to a strict agenda (strict time limits were set for presentation, discussion and evaluation of each item). Each meeting ended on time - some $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours after its commencement. Women recorded their wish to speak by raising their hands. Their signals were noted by the chairperson's assistant, who called each name in turn, reminding each speaker to present her case succinctly. While this went on, the other ladies sat quietly and attentively. Sometimes they whispered to each other, usually about the matter being discussed. When they stood to speak, they were confident and refined. They were never aggressive, but all made their points firmly. The general tone of these meetings was, in a word, businesslike. Discussion focused almost exclusively on formal PKK business for the whole $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours. The meeting was held in the Camat's office (that of the ward chief). The location

seemed to accentuate the formality of meetings, conceivably reminding those present that they were gathered to discuss 'affairs of state'. Many of the participants at this level wished to be seen as decisive, influential, progressive people, ordering their own lives efficiently and well able to order the lives of others less able than themselves. My impression was that most were convinced that they were playing an indispensable part in the development drama.

Once each meeting was formally closed, the Camat's daughter and a servant served tea and snacks. Then the women could chat about families, community affairs, husbands' jobs, and other informal things. The conversations were invariably reserved and refined. Credit society and saving scheme business was completed before each meeting began, hence cruder economic concerns did not impinge on the formal meeting or the subsequent informal, but very civilized, conversations. As opposed to kampung meetings, where all these activities and more ambled along simultaneously for the course of the sitting, at the Camat's office the women compartmentalized very strictly the few practices involved, all of which were patently peripheral to the main purpose of their gatherings — the conducting of PKK business.

PKK leaders at and near the grass roots

For heuristic purposes I divide PKK leaders at lower levels of the movement into two categories: one which I designate with the term 'outward-looking leaders' and the other with the term 'inward-looking leaders'. The first category I associate more closely, but not of course exclusively, with the kecamatan level, and the second more closely but not exclusively with the RK level.

The 'outward-looking' term is applied to PKK leaders, who, at RK level, tend to identify, almost exclusively, with a small clique of wealthier, better-educated women, and at supra-RK levels mix only with women who are members of similar cliques in other RK. Their husbands are often administrators in government departments. Many are themselves state employees. Others choose to stay at home most of the time, managing house and family. Most can afford home-help, which allows time to participate in PKK affairs, cultural and social work activities, courses and lectures.

In PKK ward units, 'outward-looking leaders' occupy the most senior executive position as presidents, deputy presidents, secretaries, treasurers, project leaders and so on. In these positions, they effectively monopolize decision-making and can determine the types of projects and methods of implementation adopted at RK level. In some respects PKK leaders who fall into the 'outward-looking' category display characteristics similar

to the rural middle class Hull describes (1976a) and are among 'the urban middle class who plan education and development programs, who form the membership of the major women's organizations, and who are the leaders of the women's movement' (Hull 1976a:21).

The 'inward-looking' term applies to PKK leaders who tend to identify with and seek the company of 'ordinary' less wealthy, less well-educated women in their own communities. Like 'ordinary' women, these leaders tend to stay very much in their own territories and in their own class. They are geographically and socially restricted, not necessarily by choice. Their husbands are, in the main, low-level white collar workers in government and private enterprise; some are pensioners.³ Their husbands' incomes must often be supplemented by their own efforts — leasing rooms in the house, sewing for neighbours, selling in their own neighbourhoods home-made goods or merchandise bought for that purpose at the central market. The PKK leaders associated with the 'inward-looking' category have much less time and money to expend on PKK activities outside their own communities, and tend to view their involvement in extra-communal activities as a duty, rather more than as a pastime.

In the hierarchical structuring of the ward unit, 'inward-looking leaders' occupy the lowest status positions. They have limited responsibilities and limited power. Finally, they simply endorse decisions made by higher status 'outward-looking leaders' in this unit. Because they have little say in drawing up plans and projects, they tend to feel less committed to implementing them in their own kampung units, unless they can be clearly demonstrated as having some close relevance to a pressing kampung need. When ward unit PKK theories do not meet this criterion, 'inward-looking leaders' may neglect to pass them on to their respective SW memberships. Consequently, many 'ordinary' women may never hear about certain PKK ward level projects.

Kampung units too are subjected to an evaluation process at higher levels of the movement and by the state. 'Inward-looking leaders' often grade badly, and they and the kampung units they lead are labelled 'low achievers'. The label 'low achievers' justifies 'inward-looking leaders' being given lower status by 'outward-looking leaders' in ward units. The former are made feel inferior by the latter, which accentuates existing perceptions of social, political and psychological disadvantage, and encourages 'inward-looking leaders' to turn even more away from this group and in on their own communities, where they enjoy relatively high status *vis à vis* other kampung women as RK chiefs' wives and presidents of SW.

'Inward-looking leaders' add to their status at this level by organizing kampung projects. Many of these projects tend to preserve certain *traditional* forms, which serves to confirm the opinions of 'outward-looking leaders' that their lower status

colleagues are rather backward, that they are indeed conservative in their attitudes and probably anti-developmental.

To help illustrate the order of problems that emerge with these differences in orientations, I will outline two specific PKK projects: one planned by 'outward-looking leaders' of the ward, to be implemented at kampung level, the other planned and implemented at kampung level by an 'inward-looking leader' and her committee.

The first project concerned a sporting competition. Its stated aim was to encourage 'ordinary' women to become involved in PKK outside their own communities, to enter into wider social relations, improve co-operation and co-ordination, and raise developmental consciousness within the movement. Several practical problems emerged in its implementation. Initially, when the ward proposal was presented to the members of the kampung unit, everyone was enthusiastic; it seemed an inexpensive form of entertainment. The SW sports section swung into action, selected the fittest ladies, enlisted help from girls in the kampung's Youth Section (*Seksi Pemuda*), and trained each afternoon for several weeks. Other women attended the matches as spectators and bar-rackers. But enthusiasm soon waned. The organizers could neither sustain nor enforce team discipline. They could not keep the team training consistently, nor its players feeling suitably competitive. Most had far more pressing problems to tackle. Games were lost and forfeited, which annoyed the keener organizers, depressed the keener players, and led to arguments and ill-feeling. It cost much more than originally expected, because each team had to wear uniforms. It did not provide much entertainment; indeed, if anything, it intensified the stresses and difficulties of daily life. The ladies just did not care about the abstract ideas of 'PKK outside their own communities', 'entering into wider social relations', 'improving co-operation, co-ordination and raising their developmental consciousness'. In fact, they did not want closer relations with people living in the other thirteen kampungs of the ward.

Other complications arose in this regard. In the ward, some kampungs are considered more respectable than others. The sample kampung had a large number of pimps, prostitutes, pick-pockets, scalpers, touts and other low-status types, and ranked low on the ward 'respectability' ladder. Javanese women in general take their status from their husbands, whose status in turn is largely, although not solely, determined by occupation. This particular team of ladies was less respectable than most and was made to feel it. Although, in accordance with PKK theory, all women from the ward's fourteen kampungs would meet as sporting equals, the fact that they were not socio-economic equals shaped the events that followed. While the perception of being socio-economically disadvantaged may or may not have

affected their handball ability, it certainly influenced their desire to participate, to put themselves into an invidious position *vis à vis* women from other kampungs. Not only was personal pride threatened but also community pride.

The ladies of this team did not complain to the 'outward-looking' ward leaders who had initiated this project, they simply withdrew from the competition. Ultimately, rather than drawing women out of their respective kampungs and fulfilling the desired objectives, the project had the reverse effect, making many participants turn back into their own communities, to the comforting 'non-progressive' patterns of everyday life. Owing to certain very real social forces and cleavages, which its proponents did not take into account, the theory and project did not work.

The second example concerns a project planned and implemented by kampung women for kampung people in general, to meet a specific set of traditional religious obligations. The meeting of those obligations, which entailed relatively high costs, had become difficult because of worsening economic conditions in many ordinary kampung families. These women formed a special committee under the aegis of SW, which they called the Ruwahan-Apeman committee.⁴ Each member of SW contributed Rp200 (approx. 29 cents Aust.) to the special fund. Basic materials were purchased in bulk from the central market at prices below those of the local market. The kampung was divided into five territories. One house in each of these sections became a production and distribution centre. Early on the set day, materials, equipment and women workers assembled at each centre. By noon, most kampung houses had received a food parcel at approximately Rp300 (43 cents Aust.) — enough for a family of three. The difference between contributions and costs was covered by a cash contribution from the SW funds. The women's efforts were applauded by the kampung government in particular, and its people in general. This female-initiated project was a means by which an age-old religious custom had been adapted to meet current social and family economic conditions. Some people said the project was a fine manifestation of *gotong royong* (mutual co-operation), because a group of women had pooled their energies, money and time for the benefit of the community. X

The main lesson to be drawn from the above comparison concerns the gap between the first project's theory and practice, and the complementarity of theory and practice in the second one. The first project was conceived away from its site of implementation with little serious thought to the social realities of that site, including the prevailing difficult economic conditions, the real exclusivity of kampung communities in the district, and their long-standing rivalries. The theory's relation to practical kampung needs and interests was gravely miscalculated. On the other hand, the second project was theorized at its site of

implementation by its actual implementors (the leaders and ordinary members of SW) on the basis of known communal needs, interests and relations, taking into account various material constraints. The theory of the latter project was constructed to *serve* a specific practical reality, not, as in the former case, to transform a given social reality into something different — something thought to be desirable by theoreticians lacking practical knowledge of the thing they wanted to 'improve'.

The comparison is not made to suggest that the kinds of objectives sought by proponents of the first project are impossible to achieve. Nor is it intended to imply that higher-level initiatives must either bow down completely to kampung interests and customs or face inevitable disaster. The point is that the higher-level theorists are, in actuality, socially separated from the zone in which they wish their theories to be applied. The separation of the top male theorists from the female leaders of the movement is not, apparently, quite as stark as recorded official conceptions of women might at first indicate. There is such a separation and it is indicated to some extent by the planners' very conservative definitions of woman's proper social role and function. However, it is clear from the actions and attitudes of the middle and upper class ladies leading the movement that they do not conform to, and definitely do not consider themselves as conforming to, those definitions. The really stark separation occurs on class lines between the middle and upper class leaders and theorists in PKK itself and the mass of lower class women. The female leaders and theoreticians, by and large, do not want to close this gap and do not wish to study closely life on the other side of it. Accordingly, the projects they endorse or design themselves tend to be incompatible with kampung life, and hence fail. The failure measures their ignorance not only of everyday kampung life, but also of the breadth and nature of the cleavage between their world and that of the kampung. This ignorance is reflected in their firm expectation that, in time, the kinds of objectives they see as meaningful and progressive can be achieved by edict, backed up by clever ideas, impressive theories, and organizational schemes.

Actually, the kampung-based initiative outlined above may not be quite so conservative as 'outward-looking leaders' would conceive it. The 'inward-looking leader' and her committee took an old religio-cultural practice and, in a real sense, adapted it to fit contemporary conditions. Certainly, they 'conserved' something traditional and possibly even 'anti-developmental'. But they effectively lifted it out of the narrowly familial level and placed it in a somewhat broader social-communal context. They made it more economically efficient and beneficial, significantly improving its social function, which is, among other things, to affirm certain social relations, draw a community closer together, and distribute food resources. Without doubt, that function has an unmistakably conservative

facet, but surely too the project that enhanced it had some decidedly creative-progressive aspects which the sporting competition of the 'outward-looking leaders' did not have.

It must be admitted, however, that the kampung project was probably assisted in large part by skills which the 'inward-looking leaders' had learned or refined within the PKK organization, and especially perhaps in their contacts with and observations of the organizational and administrative work of the 'outward-looking leaders'. It is clear that in this and other respects, the PKK program, movement and organization are not entirely divorced from the mass of urban and rural women, and that they have their own genuinely progressive aspects. A particular aspect must be strongly emphasized. Indonesia has an encouraging record in the area of family planning. Since its inception in 1969, the Family Planning Program can boast certain successes (Hull and Mantra 1979). This particular program is today linked with the PKK complex, and owes a great deal of its recent success to the work of women holding offices as KB promoters (cadres) within the PKK, especially in the KB-APSARI (Contraceptive Acceptors/Users) subsection of the urban and rural SW. In general, it is fair to say that PKK is training female leaders at all levels of society and that those leaders have definite effects on their society's development.

Conclusion

State authorities (Indonesia, Republic 1977) describe the PKK as a program package intended to improve family living conditions on a national scale by harnessing to that goal of national development the specialized efforts of married women. Those efforts are conceived as co-ordinated by the associated women's movement bearing the same title as the program - PKK. Indirectly, the state places certain suitable female leaders at all levels of the movement. These leaders are charged with the responsibility of mediating prescribed state objectives and women's organizational activities. This means that female leaders are now the effective links between the predominantly male-designed developmental theory and its female zone of practical implementation. As indicated above, there are now a great many female theoreticians with influence inside the movement but, in general, we can conceive it validly as a more or less coherent composition of male theory and female practice.

State authorities declare that improvements in the sphere of family welfare are conditional on a process of moving the mass of ordinary people 'from traditional and static to a rational and dynamic way of thinking' (Indonesia, Republic 1977). Hence, the whole impulse can be said to be idealistically based; to be more exact, it is a fundamentally ideological initiative: a state 'ideas program' or educative initiative mounted, ostensibly, to

embed ideas in the unenlightened masses conducive to the generation of more tangible goods and services. In this context, the PKK program stands as a set of ideological principles needed by women to upgrade mass living standards. The PKK movement is the organizational structure derived from those principles to order the women's realization of those principles and ideals in the thrust to develop the nation.

Clearly, many state and PKK leaders sincerely believe that the program and movement promise real improvements in the lives of ordinary people. Many are no doubt hopeful that the existence of the PKK complex will enhance social stability and prompt a certain degree of international as well as national recognition that the Indonesian Government has a sensitive, progressive attitude to women and to developmental issues. It is hardly accidental that the government began to stress mass participation and social welfare issues in its Second Five-Year Plan, at the same time as many very influential agencies and groupings around the world began calling loudly for governments to heed mass 'felt needs' in development (United Nations 1972). Moreover, the state's new concern for women in the first half of the 1970s coincided nicely with the heightened world interest in women's issues, sparked off by the demands and vigorous actions of various feminist groupings in the Western world. During the same period, the UN Commission on the Status of Women submitted a significant report on 'Participation of Women in Community Development' (United Nations 1972) and International Women's Year of 1975 marked the beginning of a decade in which the UN set itself to address the question of women in society.

As a developing nation, Indonesia cannot prudently ignore such international forums, events, perspectives and pressures. Much of the propaganda revolving around PKK was no doubt contrived to convey an impression to foreign audiences that the social status of Indonesian women was a matter of serious and intelligent concern to government leaders and planners. However, even given the practical successes of the PKK and the real benefits it has generated for many women, it has in no way changed the social status of women at any level of Indonesian society *vis à vis* that of men. As pointed out, the 'new direction' quite definitely endorses and reinforces traditional gender distinctions, stipulating a special area of national development for women which is no more than the long-accepted, subordinate area of female activity 'writ large'. Woman's place is ever more strictly in the home, but now the home has been redefined in vague idealistic terms as a crucial arena of national development.

It is not yet clear how the Indonesian state's undeniably paternalistic view of women and its unenlightened subject masses will be received by many of the foreign agencies and groupings it is, to some extent, designed to impress. My own study does not qualify me to forward any firm conclusions about the general

reception of the relevant state conceptions and initiatives across the endless diversity of the Indonesian population. In my own research area, it is, in the main, very well received, even by those who have found certain PKK exercises at times rather hurtful, at other times simply irrelevant. It should be unnecessary to point out that my criticisms, reservations and analyses are not those of an Indonesian woman, neither do they purport to represent the views of any significant grouping of Indonesian women. Let me add here that the concept of the dominant male, the strong, caring, paternal figure, is a warm and meaningful one for most people, male and female, in my research area. So too is the idea of the passive, submissive, elegant female figure. The traditional stereotypes still seem to mean a great deal to those men and women notably lacking in the kinds of attributes those stereotypes celebrate.

Regarding the question of what PKK can actually be seen to do in one specific urban setting, I would like to stress the following points. At village and kampung level PKK is, in official terms, but one aspect of a broader program designed to incorporate ordinary people in development — the LSD (Indonesia, Republic 1977). According to state designs, only the most powerful women in the kampung sit on the management committee of LSD; but in this context they constitute a definite minority with little power. The main purpose of LSD, according to state prescriptions (ibid.) is to help the RK government to manage the area and advance state development programs among the people. In reality, ordinary women are excluded from meetings in which such matters are discussed, so they have extremely limited knowledge of state development theories. Few actually articulate links between PKK as a national government program and SW, their women's organization. They know that their SW grouping is linked with others at higher levels in the PKK movement, and that this link is activated by their leaders' positions in PKK ward units. But what happens up there is little known and, partly because of that lack of knowledge, is little cared about. Plainly, if it has significance in the lives of their leaders, in the kampung world this is itself a good enough reason to infer that it will have little or no significance in their everyday lives. Most Kampung women do not bother to give their organization its full title — *Seksi Wanita-PKK*. They invariably drop the 'PKK' term and call it simply 'Seksi Wanita'. This trivial abbreviation is not unrevealing: it says something significant, I believe, about popular female responses to the PKK movement. For one thing, it represents a minute example of the kampung tendency to drop what is extraneous and grasp what is useful. It does seem that if the main theorists and directors of the PKK program and movement do not grasp this fact and act on it, there will still be profound breaches in the Ward-RK locus for many years to come, and the Junior Minister for Women's Affairs may feel forced to reiterate her view 'that seventy per-

cent of the female members of Indonesian society, especially those living in critical areas, were now still in a backward condition' (*Indonesian Observer*, 10 April 1980).

Notes

1. Lower-class urban community. This is the term used by the people to describe their community. It has a broader and more complex meaning than the term RK (Rukun Kampung), although it is often used synonymously with the latter term. John Sullivan constructs a concept of kampung in *Back Alley Neighbourhood* (1980).
2. This is a translation of: (1) Isteri pendamping suami; (2) Ibu pengelola rumah tangga; (3) Ibu penerus keturunan; (4) Ibu pendidik anak; (5) Warga negara Indonesia.
3. During 1979 John Sullivan carried out field research across this ward. He interviewed the fourteen RK chiefs. I am indebted to him for briefing me on, among other things, their respective socio-economic standings and occupations as he saw these.
4. *Ruwahan-Apeman* is a Javanese ritual which traditionally was used to pay homage to one's ancestors, but which was taken up in Javanese Islam. It is held at the start of the Moslem fasting month, *Puasa*. At this time certain foodstuffs, among them *Apem*, a Javanese version of Australian drop scones, are used as ceremonial foods, and are distributed mutually among families, relatives, friends and neighbours. In religious terms now, this is a way of asking God's forgiveness for any individual or familial wrong-doings before starting the fast. By making the sacrifice, the food gift, to each other, people demonstrate their religious unity and belief in the goodness and compassion of God the Almighty. In a social sense, this ritual acts as a means of reconfirming, rejuvenating and repairing the family's social, friendship, neighbourship and kinship relations.

Chapter 10

Separate but equal: Indonesian Muslim perceptions of the roles of women

Carlien Patricia Woodcroft-Lee

In both Indonesia and Malaysia, religion has provided the guidelines for everyday life but has not necessarily circumscribed it. Islam has the greatest number of followers in the region, but its impact on women has varied: certain institutions, including polygyny, have disadvantaged some women, but by and large they have been free to move in the community, to enjoy a measure of economic independence, and to exercise power and authority in consequence.

However, organized religion plays an important normative role and can potentially circumscribe women's lives. In the following chapter, Carlien Patricia Woodcroft-Lee examines statements about women's roles presented in two Indonesian Muslim journals, Kiblat and Panji Masyarakat. As she demonstrates, women are idealized as wives and mothers, and in both journal articles and in advice columns to women readers these prime roles are upheld absolutely. Whilst the contributors to the journals argue that women under Islam are advantaged since their rights are guaranteed and since they are respected within the family and the community, the author argues that, in the last analysis, women may in fact be separate and unequal.

One of the most remarkable developments in Indonesian society during the past decade has been the slow but steady revival of interest in the faith and practice of Islam among a wide cross-section of the population of the archipelago (*Tempo* 9 (41) 1978: 44-9; McDonald 1980; Nakamura 1980).¹ The revival of Islam, however, is not a movement to convert non-Muslims, though of course conversions are welcomed with great joy by the whole community (*ummat*) of Islam. Rather, it is a movement aimed at deepening the understanding of the faith of Muslims, encouraging them to be more observant in their practice of their religion, and in building up their sense of belonging to both a community of believers within Indonesia and to the world-wide Muslim community. The movement has had some notable successes among people who were previously lax in the practice of their religion

or who mixed some pre-Islamic folk rituals with their observance of Islam. There have been a number of manifestations of this revival of Islamic consciousness: the stricter observance of the five daily prayer times and the Fast; the giving of alms or *zakat* within the community; the enormous popularity of the *haj* (the pilgrimage to Mecca) among the wealthier members of the community; and in the building and refurbishing of mosques and the up-grading of schools, libraries and other communal institutions. Much of the success of this revival must be attributed to the *Da'wah* movement — a revivalist movement which presents lectures and discussions on Islamic law, ethics and social theory, and endeavours to inspire Muslims with a greater sense of their rights and responsibilities in the Islamic community. An outgrowth of this movement has been the setting up of *pengajian* groups — small classes which meet regularly in mosques, prayer halls or private homes for scriptural study or discussion on religious matters.²

Not all the 'born again' Muslims, particularly in the cities, are drawn from the ranks of the traditionally observant Islamic community. Many are from the usually only nominally Muslim, urban upper and middle classes, the group often referred to as the 'modernizing elite' by foreign economists and sociologists, and regarded as 'backsliders' from Islam by their more orthodox fellow citizens on account of their 'westernized' education and their 'liberated' and 'luxury-loving' way of life. Today, however, the congregations of mosques in fashionable Jakarta suburbs and the regular members of *Da'wah* and *pengajian* groups include among their number civil servants, executives of private corporations, artists, musicians and students (*Tempo* 9 (41) 1978:44-9; *Kiblat* XXVI (17) 1979:1-4).

The majority of *Da'wah* members follow the 'modernist' or 'reformist' variant of Indonesian Islam, which they regard as based on the Quran and *Hadith* (the *Sunnah* or tradition of The Prophet), and purged of all pre-Islamic practices and unjustifiable innovations (*bida'a*). The Islamic religion thus purified is, they claim, based on reason — well suited to the technological age.

Women and girls play an active part in this regenerative movement, as they have always done in the life of the Muslim *ummat* in Indonesia.³ Women organize *pengajian* groups in their homes (usually for women only) at which one of their number gives instruction or leads the discussion (for example, see Lucas 1980: 37), and they participate in international Quran reading contests. Women's organizations aligned with the Modernist group, *Aisyiyah* and *Wanita Islam* (Islamic Women), have been active and forthright in their lobbying of the government on various subjects from the civil marriage laws to the banning of beauty contests. Teenage girls are also active in the mosque oriented youth groups, which offer a variety of activities for young people, including cultural activities, art and drama groups, discussions on current affairs and sports. A girls' drumband from the Al-Azhar mosque

in Jakarta achieved considerable popularity in the late 1970s and was written up in the secular teenage magazine *Gadis* (111 (24) 1976:38-42).

In contrast to many of their sisters in other Islamic countries, women have enjoyed considerable freedom in the Malay Muslim world, both in many of the traditional cultures of the region and in the modern state of Indonesia. In the pre-Independence period, women's organizations of all kinds flourished. One of the most influential of the Islamic groups was the Aisyiyah, founded by Nyai Achmad Dahlan, wife of the founder of the Reformist movement for men, Muhammadiyah. This organization, as well as attempting to eradicate illiteracy among women and to teach them useful skills, also set up *Pondok Pesantren* (religious schools) especially for women and encouraged them to study Islamic law and philosophy, as well as to be more diligent in the practice of their religion. The movement, and others similar to it, grew rapidly in the 1920s and 1930s.⁴ During the revolution, Islamic women's groups, particularly in Sumatra, took an active part in the fighting. These women, and the heroines of earlier wars, belong to a tradition of active independent Muslim women ready to work, and if need be fight, for their homeland and Islam. The interest of contemporary writers in this tradition will be discussed later.

The identification of women with the nationalist movement has ensured them a respected place in post-Independence Indonesian society. This is not to say that governments and political parties have always taken note of the proposals made to them by the various women's movements: in fact as Lenore Manderson (1980b) has argued convincingly, the political influence of Indonesian women may be more apparent than real. Nevertheless, the right of Indonesian women to organize and to speak publicly on issues that concern them has never been seriously challenged.

'Panji Masyarakat', 'Kiblat' and images of women

In view of the tradition of active involvement of women in all aspects of Indonesian life, and also of the greater importance which Islam is assuming in the life of the nation, it seems appropriate to look at some of the ideas about the role of women in the family, the Muslim ummat, and society at large, ideas which have gained wide acceptance among the members of one of the sub-groups which make up the multi-faceted entity loosely called 'Indonesian Islam'. The particular group under discussion, the Modernist, urban, middle-class Muslims who comprise the readers and contributors to the journals *Panji Masyarakat* and *Kiblat*, was chosen not because it is necessarily the most important group in Indonesian Muslim society (the 'traditionalist' supporters of *Nahdatul Ulama* have at least as good a claim).⁵ Rather the decision was pragmatic: the existence of two widely read and

long-running journals, which had followed a consistent editorial policy over a long period, provided the kind of documentation necessary for a paper of this kind.

It is not possible without further research to define precisely the readership of the two journals, but from a perusal of the contents it is clear that their appeal is mainly to the group discussed earlier: well-educated professional or business people, with a strong interest in national and international affairs and with a strong sense of Islamic solidarity, especially with their fellow Muslims in neighbouring Malaysia and the Middle East. Both journals have been running for long periods (especially by Indonesian standards): *Panji Masyarakat* (usually called *Panjimas*) for twenty-one years, and *Kiblat* for twenty-eight. The same people often write for both journals and there is no indication that they regard each other as rivals.⁶ Both are comparatively expensive by Indonesian standards, Rp 500 and Rp 400 respectively (about A\$1.00 and A\$0.90 at the time of writing), another indication that they are supported by the relatively well-to-do Muslims of the cities and towns and by some more prosperous rural dwellers of the Modernist persuasion. Their contents reflect, by and large, the views of a fairly well defined sub-section of the ummat.

Both *Panjimas* and *Kiblat* have roughly the same format: editorial comment, news from home and abroad, notes on events and personalities within the community, Quranic interpretation (*tafsir*), personal advice columns, sections on health and family affairs, and a children's section. In international affairs the Middle East is given most attention: prior to 1979 the Arab/Israeli conflict held pride of place in foreign news; after January 1979, however, the focus shifted towards Iran, and this served to highlight a number of women's issues.

Kiblat has a women's page, simply entitled *Wanita* (Woman), but its contents, mainly advice on health, beauty and child care, although indicative of the range of interests usually ascribed to women readers, do not throw much light on the underlying assumptions which the community makes about the status and role of women. The most revealing material in this regard, apart from specific articles on particular women, or on issues such as dress, come from the columns offering editorial advice to readers on matters of marriage and family life. In these columns — called 'Bimbingan Pribadi' (Personal Advice) in *Panjimas* and 'Perkawinan Dan Keluarga' (Marriage and Family) in *Kiblat* — the subjects of choice of a marriage partner, divorce and polygamy are discussed regularly, and the answers given are based on the editor's understanding of Islamic law or on the decisions (*fatwa*) issued by the *Majelis Ulama* (Council of Religious Scholars). As the data from the two journals proved rather voluminous, I have restricted the discussion to material gleaned over two years of the journals, leaving the important question of changes in group attitudes over time to another occasion.

Career women and model mothers

As presented in these journals, the ideal Muslim woman appears to be the wife and mother (of many children, preferably) who has successfully pursued an academic or professional career after marriage and who has been active in the fields of community welfare, religious education or even politics. In spite of her achievements in the outside world, she nevertheless plays the role of the devoted wife and concerned parent at home.

Examples of this 'model mother' are not lacking. In *Panjinmas* in February 1980 (XXI (289):66-7), for instance, there appeared an article entitled 'Bincang-Bincang Dengan Ibu Teladan: Ibu Aliyah Bakry' [A Chat with a Model Mother: Aliyah Bakry] in which the winner of the national 'model mother' competition, held annually by the Ministry of Religion and Ministry of Social Welfare, was interviewed. Aliyah is the wife of a retired teacher and the mother of nine children. She is well known as a Da'wah lecturer, sits on the boards of several schools, hospitals and orphanages in her home town of Pekalongan (West Java), and holds office in three Islamic women's organizations, Aisyiyah, Wanita Islam and Wanita Al-Irsyad (the latter is the women's section of an organization whose membership derives mainly from Indonesians of Arabic descent); in addition she helped set up a girls' movement in Pekalongan called *Fateyat Al-Irsyad* (Unmarried Girls' Section of Al-Irsyad). Educated in a religious school in the colonial period when the teaching of Arabic was emphasized, Aliyah is fluent in Arabic and practises her religion with great devotion. Her own children, as well as her sons and daughters in law, are all highly educated; most of them have at least one university degree. Higher education is much admired by the writers of all these articles and Aliyah carefully supervises both the secular and religious education of her youngest son. The article recalls that Aliyah's own love of learning was stimulated by the Da'wah held by HAMKA (Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah) in the town where she lived as a child. Her mother often took her to such meetings and when they returned home explained what had been discussed to her 8-year-old daughter.)

Another example of the model mother appeared in *Kiblat* under the title 'Hajjah Midrawaty: Walaupun Telah Punya Anak Orang Masih Aktif Jadi Ustazzah' [Hajjah Midrawaty: Active as a Professor Although She Has Nine Children] (*Kiblat* XXVII (18) 1980: 50-1). Hajjah Midrawaty, who teaches at the IAIN (Institut Agama Islam Negeri), North Sumatra, is also active in the Da'wah movement and holds office in several Islamic women's organizations. Her greatest concern is with the education of the younger generation and she sees the religious education of children outside the secular school system as being the most pressing task of Muslim education. Like Aliyah and women featured in numerous other articles, Midrawaty appears to have a decisive say in the education of her children. However, she is careful to attribute

her success in all her activities to the support of her husband, who is also organization minded and with whom she talks over all her plans (see also *Panji Masyarakat* (hereafter *Panjimas*) XXI (292) 1980:27).

Other educated but religiously observant women include the wife and daughters of the late Dr Muhammad Hatta; Ny. Aisjah Amini, member of parliament and Master of Law; the wives of such Islamic notables as Muhammad Natsir and Muhammad Roem; and, rather surprisingly, the late Ibu Fatmawati, one of the widows of former President Soekarno (*Panjimas* XX (268) 1979:34; *Kiblat* XXVIII (2) 1980:32-8). Many of the women featured in these articles were educated in segregated schools run by various Muslim organizations, though others attended secular institutions or mixed colleges established by certain Muslim groups. They usually have attended and in some cases led religious study groups for women only, and have been active in one or more Muslim women's organizations. During all these activities they were suitably attired in long-sleeved *kebaya* or some other variant of the traditional dress of the Indonesian archipelago, and many, though by no means all, regularly wear a head scarf (*kudung* or *kerudung*) which is now becoming *de rigueur* for the observant Muslim woman.

The women in this group do not hesitate to make known their opinions on all subjects and especially on the position of women in the Indonesian community at large and to call on the government to improve opportunities for women in education and the workforce. Speakers at the IVth Congress of *Wanita Islam*, held in Jakarta in April 1979, criticized the government for its lack of attention to training facilities for girls where they could learn skills to enable them to take their place in the workforce. They also complained of the greater degree of illiteracy among women than men in the rural areas. At a seminar on the problems of career women, run by the Sunda Kelapa Muslim Youth group, one of the participants spoke of the lack of opportunities for advancement for women in their chosen careers, and said that the reason Indonesia had not so far produced a Golda Meir or an Indira Gandhi was not that Indonesian women were incapable of holding such positions, but that they had not yet been given the opportunity. The government's 'stability' (anti-inflation) policy was, she said, largely responsible for the decline in opportunities for women (*Panjimas* XXI (272) 1979:27-35; (279) 1979:19).

The inference to be drawn from these interviews and articles is that Muslim women of this particular social group enjoy a great deal of freedom and upward social mobility. According to *Kiblat* and *Panjimas* writers, within the limits of a developing economy, there is nothing that the intelligent, dedicated and determined woman cannot achieve. She may pursue a career in education, social work, law or politics without restriction. The fact that men and women are separated for all religious activities is not seen as an obstacle to her progress in the outside world;

nor are regulations about women's dress an impediment to her progress as these are not interpreted in an extreme manner in Indonesia. It is of course assumed that men and women will have different interests and will to some extent play different roles in society, but Muslim theorists, in Indonesia as in other Islamic societies, stress this does not mean that one is inferior to the other. The rights of the Muslim woman are, they say, safeguarded by the law, and, especially if she is a mother, she holds a respected place in her society (see, for example, Birohi 1980; Holepota 1981; HAMKA 1974).

The favourable position of the Indonesian Muslim woman is often contrasted with the status of women in other religions (Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism), with women in the 'liberated' West, and in the secularized sections of Indonesian society. In polemical articles of this kind, the examples cited are frequently extreme: including claims that under ancient Jewish law a woman has no rights of her own and can be sold as a slave by her father (*Kiblat* XXVI (4) 1978:36-8); that Hindus are still likely to burn widows; and that Christians regard women as the root of all evil.

The most consistent polemics on the status of women are those launched against the secular West, where hapless girls are, according to one writer, 'chased from home by their parents at eighteen ... to take whatever work they can find, rough or genteel, honest work or prostitution' (*Panjimas* XXI (270) 1979:20). The same writer claims that, should the Western woman by chance find secure employment, she will no doubt fail in finding a life partner. If she does marry, she is still not secure, as her husband will surely be unfaithful to her. In order to keep her man in this corrupt society she may have to sacrifice her own integrity, as did the NATO secretary who stole defence secrets for her communist lover. An article in *Kiblat* (XXVII (13) 1979: 41-2), entitled 'Sketsa Kehidupan Modern' [Sketches from Modern Life], further elaborates on the theme of the degradation of modern woman, presenting three examples: the 15-year-old unmarried mother; the young widow willing to marry the man in prison for (accidentally) killing her child; the retired woman with no family who has become a drunkard in order to drown the feeling of emptiness which oppresses her at the end of her life. In view of this decline in the status of women in the West, another article argues, it ill becomes Western women like Simone de Beauvoir or Australian politician Rosemary Kyburz to criticize the position of women in Iran where in any case most women welcomed the regulations of the Islamic Republic on matters of dress and other facets of social life (*Panjimas* XXI (267) 1979:19).

It is perhaps rather surprising that Indonesian Muslims should react so strongly to criticisms that were, after all, directed to conditions in Iran, conditions which have never applied in Indonesia. The intensity of the reaction may be due

largely to the sense of solidarity with the Islamic societies outside Indonesia, which has always been strongly felt among the Modernist Muslims.

Fighters and heroines

Whilst the images of the modestly attired but educated wife and mother busy about community welfare work and child care, upholding family life and Islamic values, predominate in *Panjimas* and *Kiblat*, other articles draw on the traditional images of the woman fighter in the holy war. HAMKA writes that it is man's duty to earn a living and to fight, but that if a woman chooses to follow her husband to war she too has the right to become a *mujahid* (one who fights the *jiḥād* or war for the cause of Islam) (HAMKA 1974:5). This concept has a long and honourable history in Southeast Asia and the exploits of women fighters of the past are often recalled in the journals. The heroines of the Aceh war, Cut Nya Dien and Cut Meutia, are popular examples of the fighting heroine of Islam. Both these women followed their husbands to war, and after their menfolk were killed took part in the fighting themselves, displaying no little skill in military matters. Cut Nya Dien died in exile in 1908 in West Java, and Cut Meutia, who also lost a child whilst hiding in the jungle, was killed in a shoot out with the Dutch in 1910. In Java, Raden Ayu Ageng Serang who had lost her father, brother and husband in rebellions against the Dutch, joined her grandson in fighting for Diponegoro in the Java war of 1825 (KOWANI 1978:4-7). In Sulawesi Opa Daeng Risaju fought in the revolution in 1945, and was imprisoned and tortured by the Dutch. Her exploits are commemorated in an article in *Panjimas* entitled 'Macan Betina Dibawah Panji Tauhid' [A Tigress Under the Banner of Tauhid] (*Panjimas* XXI (287) 1979:40-1). (*Tauhid* is the theological term for the unity of God. It is sometimes used as a shorthand reference to the creed of Islam.) In the 1930s two Sumatran women played an active part in founding schools and in opposing the colonial administration. Rahmah El-Yunusiyah founded the *Sekolah Diniyah Putri* (Girls' Religious School) in Padang Panjang, and Hajjah Rasuna Said was active in the *Tawalib* movement which established schools and teachers' colleges. Both these women took part in the revolutionary struggle: Rasuna Said, who died in 1965, was subsequently declared a *Pahlawan Nasional* (National Heroine). Also in Sumatra, two women's organizations, *Laskar Muslimat* and *Laskar Sabil Muslimat*, took an active part in the fighting during the revolutionary period. They took over guard duties and the distribution of food in liberated areas in order to free their menfolk for guerrilla warfare.

The exploits of all these women and their willingness to sacrifice in many cases even their own lives and those of their children in the defence of their faith and homeland are recounted with great pride, and this tradition may account for the very

obvious sympathy for Muslim women fighters in other parts of the world (KOWANI 1978:80-1). For instance, the veiled militant women of Iran are much admired and a Palestinian woman commando named Fatima Bernawi is referred to approvingly as 'Srikandi' after a character from the *wayang* theatre, the ideal type of the fighting heroine (*Panjimas* XXI (289) 1979:33; (301) 1980:76-7). This tradition of the Muslim woman as fighter does not of course greatly affect the daily lives of most Indonesian women. It is worth noting, however, since it counteracts certain Western images of Muslim women as totally passive and subservient to men.

Islamic law in Indonesia and the issues of dress

As the subject of women's rights in Islam has aroused such heated controversy both in Indonesia and the West, it is perhaps appropriate at this point to define the rights and duties of women under Islamic law, and its application in Indonesia.

The major rights which are specifically guaranteed in Islamic law are:

1. A woman cannot be forced to marry against her will. (There are a number of Hadith supporting this.) A marriage arranged by parents is not valid until the bride gives her consent. If she has been married off as a child to a man whom she does not like, then she may, on reaching her maturity around the age of 15 years, apply to a religious court to have the marriage annulled.
2. A woman may own property in her own right. She may dispose of it as she sees fit and her husband may not claim any part of it unless she offers it to him. This also applies to the *mahr* (*mas kawin*), the dower which a man settles on his wife at the time of their marriage. The husband cannot claim it unless it is offered to him, nor can he take it back after divorce. If, however, the wife obtains the divorce, she may in some circumstances be asked to return a part of the dower.
3. A wife may write certain conditions into the marriage contract, and if these do not conflict with Islamic law, the husband must comply with them. If he does not do so, his wife may sue him in a religious court for breach of the marriage contract.
4. A woman may sue for divorce in a religious court under certain circumstances but she does not have the same right as a man to pronounce the *talak* or formula for divorce. The reason given for this by one writer on Islamic law is that 'women, being more emotional than men, would be more likely to divorce themselves from their husbands for inconsequential reasons' (Tabbarah 1978: 37); men, responsible for the family's income and the welfare of their children, would be less inclined to act in haste. It is necessary to emphasize that there are certain conditions which

restrict the husband's use of the formula also. The grounds on which a wife may sue for divorce are, among others, apostasy from Islam, impotence, failure to support the wife and her children, madness or any disease which makes it impossible for the couple to live together, and the disappearance of the husband. In fact, 'irretrievable breakdown' of a marriage appears to be the usual grounds for divorce for both women and men under Indonesian civil law. In a religious court the provisions for divorce will sometimes be interpreted to harmonize with those of the civil law.

5. Women have the same obligations as men to perform the ritual prayer and to fast in Ramadhan, but with certain exceptions: women and men are exempted from fasting if they are in ill-health or advanced in years; women are also exempted during pregnancy and lactation. People unable to fast are expected to give alms instead, or to fast later in the year if possible. Both men and women are obliged, if possible, to seek religious knowledge and to make the pilgrimage to Mecca. They are usually expected to study their religion separately, although in Indonesia some religious schools have introduced co-education to the extent that boys sit on one side of a classroom and girls — with hair, arms and legs suitably covered — on the other. Some special restrictions apply to a woman: she cannot make the Pilgrimage alone, but must be accompanied by a male, either husband or close relative, and she cannot contract a marriage without being represented by a male *wali* who negotiates on her behalf with the bridegroom or his family. Her share of the family inheritance is also smaller, for she will marry and her husband will be obliged to support her, whereas her brothers will themselves have to support wives and children (HAMKA 1974:76).

Women also have the added obligation of guarding the purity of the community; they must therefore be careful in their associations with men outside their immediate family circle and should be appropriately dressed, that is with only the face, hands and feet visible (Hussein Haji Muhammad 1979:58-63). The regulations concerning women's dress, which have often been literally applied in the Middle East, have been moderated and adapted in the Muslim communities of Southeast Asia. In many communities women rarely covered their heads except when praying, and shawls or scarves were usually worn by older women only. Religious teachers agree that there is nothing in the Quran or Hadith which obliges a woman to veil her face. Most, however, feel it would be better if women covered themselves from head to feet when going out in public. Even Indonesian and Malay *ulama* would like to see this state of affairs become general, but the majority of Muslim women in the region show no signs of going to such lengths. In Malaysia head coverings have become rather more popular with younger women, especially university students in recent times, perhaps as a way of stressing their Malay identity, and in Aceh, called the 'Verandah of Mecca' on account of its orthodoxy, it is usual for women to cover their heads in public. However, younger Acehnese women, living away from their own area, would often not wear

even a scarf over their hair, although they would regard themselves as devout Muslims. Girls attending a religious school, women in a pengajian class or at a function organized by one of the women's organizations will tend to wear a headscarf, but most of these women would not consider this necessary when going about their daily work. However, there has been a tendency recently to encourage Muslim women to wear head coverings and long dresses at all times, and this has become almost a fashion among the Jakarta middle class Muslim women who wear traditional dress, *kain*, kebaya and head scarf (kudung), as a kind of protest or reaction against what they consider to be the impropriety of some modern Western fashions.

Articles in the journals actively encourage women to dress in a manner more compatible with Islamic legal requirements (*Panjinias* XXI (269) 1979:30-9; *Kiblat* XXVI (19) 1977:28-9). The Indonesian national dress in all its variations was said to be the most acceptable and attractive costume for Indonesian Muslim women, much admired abroad for its grace and simplicity if despised by smart people in Indonesia (*Kiblat* XXVI (19) 1979:29). As for the kudung: 'a head covering with two ends which reached to the chest was not going to detract from anyone's beauty, a woman will be more easily identified as a Muslim by that kudung' (ibid.).

The debate concerning women's dress in Islam which the Indonesian Muslim women themselves regard as a 'small matter' has attracted perhaps more attention than it deserves from Westerners.⁷ Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the whole matter is that many more women are now wearing a kudung to identify themselves as observant Muslims and that this is a comparatively new development among some of the younger and more affluent women.⁸

Marriage, divorce and journal ideology

The position of the Muslim woman as reflected in these journals is closely related to her marital status. The idea that everyone should marry and if possible have a large family seems to be absolutely central to Muslim social thought, at least in the Indonesian context. This is reinforced by traditional Southeast Asian attitudes, whereby marriage was often the only way for a girl to acquire a measure of freedom (cf. Kartini 1964:5).⁹ Women who have become mothers are held in high esteem and girls are taught to make motherhood their primary goal in life. The beauty of motherhood, which 'decadent' Western women are suspected of denying, is constantly emphasized in the journals.¹⁰ One reason for educating girls is to produce educated mothers for the next generation. Islam has always encouraged religious learning in both men and women, and the mother is expected to be able to guide her children along the right path; I noted earlier the popular image of mothers as the educators of the young. Secular learning is not despised among the Modernists, for one should

always improve the lot of one's family and community. The editors of *Panjimas* and *Kiblat* appear to subscribe to a kind of 'Protestant ethic' in regard to members of their community. Academic and business success is paraded as if in testimony to Allah's special blessing on right belief and conduct (see, for example, the article on Aliyah Bakry, *Panjimas* XXI (289) 1979:67). Once a married woman has seen to the welfare of her children and ensured their religious education, she is at liberty to pursue whatever career she chooses, or to engage in social work for the good of the community — in fact she is expected to do so should her means permit. Although there are exceptions, an unmarried career woman is somewhat suspect and there is little room for her in the community once she is over the age of about thirty (*Kiblat* XXV (16) 1978:35).

If a married woman is happy with her husband and financially secure then she can achieve a great deal; in view of the structure of Indonesian society she is freed from the problems of child care which beset her Western counterparts who opt for a career after marriage. Among middle class women it is usual to have servants and, in the case of poorer women, children are often taken care of by other female members of the extended family. However, if the marriage runs into trouble, she is still at a disadvantage, despite the provisions made for the dissolution of marriage upon the wife's application to a religious court. Many women are not sure of their rights under either the religious or civil law, and the issue is complicated by the fact that many men are not averse to using the religious law to attain their own ends. Hence the 'personal advice' columns of the journals deal with some rather complex cases involving the Islamic law on marriage and divorce.

Cases of misuse of the man's right to divorce his wife, and the limited right to contract polygamous marriages, still occur fairly regularly in spite of stringent civil marriage laws and the attempts of the Islamic religious establishment to discourage them. Under the 1974 *Undang-Undang Perkawinan* (Marriage Laws) both husband and wife have equal recourse to the law in case of marriage breakdown. Efforts have also been made to ensure that the formula of divorce pronounced by a man is not misused. The divorce formula should now be pronounced only before a religious court, not in front of two witnesses or the families of husband and wife as was often the custom in village communities. A wife who had discovered, on her return from a visit to her village, that her husband had pronounced a divorce formula against her in a fit of rage was assured through the personal advice column, that since it had not been made officially before a religious court and thus contravened civil law, and since it had been pronounced in anger, it was therefore invalid (*Kiblat* XXVIII (1) 1980:39). The wife was advised that she herself could file for divorce on the grounds of her husband's undesirable character traits (he was often unemployed for long periods and his wife was obliged to support him from her own earnings, or have him go to prison for debt;

in addition his bad temper made for a great deal of trouble between the couple and their relatives and friends). The columnist assured the wife that she would probably have little trouble in obtaining a divorce on these grounds.

In another case, a man requests advice on the best way to rid himself of his first wife. In 1976, he had divorced his first wife in front of the assembled members of her family, but had neglected to report the matter to the civil authorities. Four years later, he began to wonder if the divorce was valid, as his first wife was still living with her youngest child in a house which he owned but which he had bought in his second wife's name. Now the second wife was urging him to get rid of the first wife occupying 'her' house. In reply to this letter the columnist tells the man that he has behaved badly: 'The kind of divorce which you have carried out is "village" divorce and would be considered invalid not only by the religious court, but by the most old fashioned of religious lawyers. It is like throwing away mango seeds when you have sucked all the juice out of them' (*Kiblat* XXVIII (3) 1980:42). As no divorce is valid until the religious court is notified, the man is now liable for the maintenance he did not pay to his first wife during the four years he had been still legally married to her. The columnist adds rather gleefully that he will probably have to give her the house in lieu of this maintenance, before the divorce can be finalized.

Yet another case concerns a wife whose husband returned home drunk and pronounced a divorce formula to her. The next day he regretted his action and the wife wanted to know if in fact the talak was valid: in response, he was assured that a pronouncement made when the person was not aware of what he was doing was invalid, and in any case notification had not been made to a religious court (*Kiblat* XXVI (15) 1978:31). In the case of a young girl married to a man with whom she would not set up house until she had finished school (a common practice in some regions, referred to as *kawin gantung* or suspended marriage), the *Kiblat* columnist, Dr Hasbullah Bakry, was of the opinion that the marriage was legal if the girl had not made any verbal objection at the time that the marriage was contracted. (Silence is usually taken as compliance in the case of a young girl.) However, on reaching 18, the age at which she could be married under the civil law, she could take her case for the annulment of the marriage to the religious court if she wished, as she could not be forced against her will to live with the husband of her parents' choice (*Kiblat* XXVII (21) 1980:42). In such cases an annulment would probably not be difficult to obtain. There appears to be a real effort, both on the part of the religious authorities and those charged with upholding the civil law, to ensure that the worst inequalities between men and women are ironed out, and that young people are not forced by tradition into marriage against their will.

On the other hand, there appears also to be a tendency for the writers in these journals to advise their female correspondents to put up with conditions which most women would find extremely unpleasant, before even thinking of seeking a divorce. A woman wrote to *Kiblat* complaining of a husband who disliked her going out without him, and who would never allow her to buy clothes for herself and her six step-children (he was a widower) without his prior permission, which it seems was difficult to obtain (*Kiblat* XXVI (9) 1978:34). As a result the family had very few clothes. Dr Bakry assured the woman that the situation at home was normal. She was young, her husband much older. He was jealous, not out of hate but because he loved her. He was of course obliged to buy clothing for his wife and children; she should go ahead and buy what was needed for the family if she had the money. On the other hand, if she feared the arguments that would follow, then she had better desist. She should not give alms, using her husband's money, nor should she give any of it to her relatives, especially since they were not in real need of it. The wife had also asked whether she should pay back her brother-in-law, who had brought her up since the death of her parents. No, said Dr Bakry, as the brother-in-law is not a blood relative, anything given to him by the wife might arouse the husband's jealousy. In the case of a husband whose wife was disliked by his parents, the columnist advised him to see that his wife humbled herself in order to win the favour of his family, which would in time accept her if she behaved appropriately (*Kiblat* XXVI (9) 1978:37-8). A wife, who complained of the interference of her husband's family, inducing him to marry secretly another woman when she had not, at the age of 26, produced descendants, was told that her husband was in breach of the civil law in taking another wife without her consent, but that the second marriage was valid in Islamic law, since it had been carried out in accordance with the requirements of that law. The wife was advised to try to improve relations with her husband's family, so that in the end they would become very fond of her, and with her husband, so that she might eventually have a child of her own (*Kiblat* XXV (11) 1978:33). It is apparently always assumed that if the wife behaves appropriately, the situation in the family will automatically improve.

The greatest impediment to the development of equality in marriage between husband and wife seems to be the persistence of polygamy. Cases in which the husband has married a second wife, without the permission of the first, appear in the journals quite regularly: the cause of the second marriage being most commonly the lack of offspring from the first. An improvement in the economic status of the husband is also sometimes the occasion for a polygamous second marriage.

One such case concerned a man who had been married to his wife since 1952, but when his business prospered he had, in 1975, married a second wife, then aged 18. Now the first wife and their grown-up children had discovered the second marriage and were

urging the husband to divorce his younger wife. The marriage, although contravening the civil law, was valid in Islamic law, and the civil transgression meant a fine of Rp.7500, a very small amount for an action which is in effect under-cutting the legal gains made by women in matrimonial matters. In this case, the husband was advised by the *Kiblat* columnist that, though divorcing either wife was unjust, it would be better to divorce the second wife as she had only two children, whereas the first wife had seven. This course would be the lesser of two evils, as fewer people would suffer (*Kiblat* XXV (16) 1978:34-5). In another case, a husband had taken as a second wife a female relative but had then returned to his first wife: the first wife was told 'this is a common situation experienced by many wives ... from the point of view of religion it is more desirable than if the husband committed adultery with a prostitute' (*Kiblat* XXVIII (5) 1980:46-7). The important thing was that the husband had returned and she should not worry too much about it happening again; with appropriate behaviour from the wife the husband would settle down again.

It seems that many men are reluctant to forgo the right to marry more than one wife, even though polygamy contravenes civil law and is discouraged by the religious authorities. In almost all the cases reported, the second marriage was contracted secretly, without the knowledge of the first wife, and caused a great deal of suffering to both first and second wives and their children. In some cases the second wife was willing to contact the first wife and to establish good relations but the first wife refused to have anything to do with her. In other cases, the second wife was unaware of the existence of the first family.

In only a few cases of polygamy reported in the journals did the first wife give her consent to her husband's new marriage. One such case was complicated by a conditional consent given by the first wife. Finding herself unable to have children she agreed to the husband marrying a girl from his village, on condition that at the end of three years the second wife should be divorced and the child or children of the marriage adopted by the first wife and brought up as her own. At the end of the specified period, the husband showed a marked reluctance to dispense with the second wife. In response to her enquiry, the first wife was informed by the *Kiblat* columnist that her stipulation that the second wife be divorced was invalid according to Islamic law: since the second wife had done nothing wrong it would be unjust of the husband to divorce her. As the marriage had been validated by her consent under civil law, she would just have to live with it (*Kiblat* XXVI (10) 1978:33-4).

Just as some men persist in upholding their right to contract polygamous marriages, so too some still persist in believing that they have the right to use the power to pronounce the divorce formula for their own ends. A case in *Panjinmas* (XXI (288) 1979:60-6) concerned a husband who had seduced his wife's younger

sister. When the sister was found to be expecting his child he divorced his wife, married her sister for a short time, so that the baby would be legitimate, then divorced her and returned to his first wife. The response to this case was that it was a clear misuse of talak and the columnist added 'we all pray that such events will not continually be repeated in our society'. It is perhaps worth noting that many of the people involved in these rather sensational cases are, according to their letters, middle class professionals, although a good many of the second marriages take place when they return to their home villages from the city.

The picture which emerges from these columns, of women dominated by in-laws at the mercy of their husbands despite formal protection under the *Undang-Undang Perkawinan*, who often have to choose between divorce or having a co-wife, seems to accord very little with that of the self-confident, independent woman projected by many writers in these journals: the role models presented to women in numerous articles, interviews and news items seem very far removed from the prescriptive behaviour for women set out in the advice columns. It is not surprising that many readers' letters from both men and women betray considerable confusion as to what is appropriate behaviour in a wide range of situations. A partial explanation of these contradictions may be that Indonesia is still in many ways a transitional society, and that various areas of life do not all change at the same rate. Ideas appropriate for a rural village society persist into periods of economic expansion which have brought about great changes to the lives of both men and women.

Some writers in these journals attempt to explain this apparent dichotomy as being caused by too great a reliance on local tradition (*adat*) and too little understanding of the Muslim law. In April 1979, on the centenary of the birth of Kartini, an article appeared in *Panjiimas* entitled 'R.A. Kartini: A Muslim Woman Struggles Against Adat' which claimed that Kartini at least in the latter part of her life was a devout Muslim who campaigned through her famous letters to stop the misuse of Islamic law which went on in her society and which had hardened into customary practice (*Panjiimas* XXI (270) 1979:44-5).¹¹ One might take exception to the way in which the writer has used his evidence to present this thesis but the message is clear: many traditional practices have no basis in Islam and should be abandoned as they are harmful to the welfare of the community. The same message is contained in the answers to many enquiries. The attitudes of many men involved in these cases is characterized as 'backward' or 'village' behaviour and thus inappropriate for modern times.

The Modernist Muslims believe firmly in the perfection of Islam (understood as the Quran and the Hadith) as a system of values very suitable for a complex modern society. Once people are educated in this value system, all apparent contradictions and anomalies will be automatically resolved.

Although in general the editors of both *Panjimas* and *Kiblat* are against injustice towards women and do not hesitate to criticize men who have abused the law for their own ends, they often display, perhaps because of their legalistic outlook, a harsh and unyielding approach to women who in their opinion have 'fallen by the way'. An example of this is the wife who writes asking what she can do to obtain her husband's forgiveness for an act of adultery which she claimed her husband's boss had forced her into many years before (*Kiblat* XXVII (4) 1979:47-8). Beset by a guilty conscience she had told her husband the story and he had treated her badly ever since. The husband had even thought of killing the other man, but had decided against this. In reply, the adviser noted that the woman's sins were manifold. First of all she had probably tempted the man, who she claimed had overpowered her, but whatever the situation 'in Islamic law the blood of both of you is lawful' (*halal*). Secondly, she had caused her husband much agony of mind by telling him the whole story. If she had to tell him why did she not request him to divorce her there and then? This would have been the best thing for her to do. Now the only thing she could do was wait and pray that Allah would accept her repentance and would soften her husband's heart so that he too would forgive her.

This tone is not uncommon, though space does not permit the citing of further examples. Generally it is assumed that the woman is the guardian of family purity, and that as such she is doubly to be condemned if she transgresses the laws of the community on these matters. This may also account to some extent for the reluctance on the part of some of the advisers in these journals to encourage women to leave husbands whose behaviour was making them desperately unhappy.¹² The role of the wife and mother is so sacrosanct that it is not to be abandoned except in the most critical circumstances. The Indonesian Muslim woman is of course not alone in receiving a variety of conflicting messages from the media regarding appropriate behaviour. In her case however the dichotomy is very marked and is compounded by the ever increasing rate of social change in a developing society.

Conclusion

The division of roles between men and women, and the idea that they differ markedly in 'innate' abilities and psychological traits, and that only in marriage can both men and women achieve their full potential as human beings, is very deep rooted in the various societies that make up the Republic of Indonesia. One has only to read the letters of Kartini, the traditional advice to girls in the Minangkabau *Kaba*, or the memoirs of some Indonesians still living, to realize the extent of this traditional heritage (for example, Subandrio 1963; Johns 1959; Radjab 1950). Islamic law has to a degree reinforced the belief, already widespread in the cultures of the region, that since men and

women are so different and play such different roles in the community, then different regulations must be made for them, not necessarily to the disadvantage of one side or the other. This outlook is only now being replaced, slowly and by no means universally, by the idea of the equality of all citizens before the law. Although there is much of value to be preserved in all the various traditions of the Southeast Asian world, most women's organizations in Indonesia have consistently supported laws which improved the status of women, including the uniform marriage law, provided it does not conflict with the religious beliefs of any community (a limiting factor in the case of marriage laws) as most of them recognize the fact that, here as in other spheres, separate *but equal* can easily deteriorate in the last analysis into separate *and unequal*.

Notes

1. The vast majority of Indonesians have always described themselves as Muslims, and no other major religion has posed a serious threat to Islam on a nationwide level, although in parts of the outer islands there have been numerous conversions to Christianity, and in the late 1960s and early 1970s in central and east Java to both Christianity and the mystical sects usually referred to collectively as the *Aliran Kebatinan* (perhaps best translated as 'movement for the inner life') or *Agama Jawa* (religion of Java).
2. *Pengajian* originally meant the teaching of the art of Quranic recitation (*mengaji*) but the contemporary groups of this name, as well as studying the Quran, address themselves to a wide range of topics connected with religious studies.
3. Christine Dobbin (1980) has demonstrated very effectively just how erroneous is the perception, seemingly rather widespread among Western writers, that Islamic religious life in this part of the world is the province of men only.
4. On the history of women's movements in Indonesia, see KOWANI (1978) and Vreede-de Stuers (1960).
5. The *Nahdatul Ulama* is currently enjoying a good deal of support from younger intellectuals. It has two women's sections, *Muslimat* for married women and *Fateyat* for single girls. It has a solid base in the countryside and is perhaps in a better position than the Modernists to resist government policies unfavourable to Islam.
6. Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah was the managing director of *Panji Masyarakat* and the Chief Adviser to *Kiblat* until his death in July 1981. The chief editor of *Panjimas* is Rusydi and the deputy editor Wahyuddin Usman. The deputy editor of

Kiblat is Musaffa Basyir, the women's editor, Ny. Par Sachlan and the 'marriage and family column' editor Dr Hasbullah Bakry. Roeslan Abdulgani, the late Dr Abu Hanifah, Muh. Zein Hassan, Lukman Harun, and Yoesoef Sou'yb have all written for both journals at different times. All these writers have by and large somewhat similar views on both religion and politics, as have the regular editorial staff of the two journals.

7. Vreede-de Stuers, writing on women's movements in Indonesia in the colonial period, comments that 'members of the female section of *Muhammadiyah*, called *Aisyiyah*, wear a sort of veil which leaves the face exposed but covers the head and neck completely. In a country where the veil has never been worn, this comparatively recent adoption of it although more symbolic than real, may be looked upon as an indication of a regressive tendency regarding the actual position of the Indonesian woman' (1960:65). In view of the great variations in the attitude to dress among observant Muslim women, this could hardly be said to be the case in contemporary Indonesian society.
8. The photo of a pretty young girl, dressed for a Quran reading contest with flowing scarf, even appeared on the front page of *Sinar Harapan*, a newspaper not noted for its sympathy with Islam (13 July 1980). She was Maria Ulfa, one of the group of girls studying the recitation and interpretation of the Quran in the *Institut Ilmu Al-Qur'an* at Ciputat near Bogor, West Java. The institute hopes to improve the image of women in Islam by opening the specialized field of Quranic sciences to women students. Maria was said to be completing requirements for a degree of Master of Arts (not as yet recognized by the government) with a thesis on the role of Quranic Studies in the Da'wah movement.
9. Kartini frequently complained of the fact that all Javanese girls *must* marry, and of the custom of segregating unmarried girls, but she herself was forced to marry in order to gain a measure of independence.
10. All the writers on Islamic law and the role of women emphasize the prime importance of the role of mother, and all the women interviewed stress their concern for the welfare and the religious instruction of their children. The destiny of men and women to become mothers and fathers is built into the Indonesian language. Men are addressed as *bapak* and women as *ibu* as a mark of respect, and it is common to refer to women in general as *kaum ibu* (mothers) and to men as *kaum bapak* (fathers) in formal language or in journalism.
11. The author of this article takes issue with the popular view of Kartini as a member of the *Priyayi* class whose knowledge of and interest in orthodox Islam was minimal. He pictures

her as returning to Islam, instead of to the mystical *Agama Jawa* which she is generally thought to have embraced.

12. They do not however hesitate to tell men in similar situations to divorce their wives. A case in point was that of a 27-year-old man who married a woman of 54. She proved to be bossy and the man wanted a divorce. He had heard that getting a divorce registered was expensive. The adviser contented himself by saying that people were not well informed about the marriage law. Registration was in fact quite cheap, and anyway, if the man was really suffering oppression and had no money, then some of his friends should lend him the price of his freedom (*Panjimas* XXII (291) 1980:59).

Chapter 11

Four paces behind: women's work in Peninsular Malaysia

Leslie N. O'Brien

The sexual division of labour in the subsistence economy did not necessarily disadvantage women. However, as we have seen above, modernization and industrialization may sharpen distinctions of gender. Whilst women have been able to take advantage of an increasing range of employment opportunities with the diversification of the labour force, these opportunities have been limited relative to those for men on the basis of assumptions regarding women's interests and activities. Typically, women have found work in the modern and urban sectors in occupations either closely associated with their roles as wives and mothers, for example as domestic servants, dressmakers, waitresses, and paid child minders, or in positions subordinate to and in support of men, as secretaries and typists to male bosses, for instance, or as female machinists working under male supervision. Few women have gained employment in administrative, managerial or executive capacity, or in areas of employment which are considered in the West to be stereotypically male, such as in mining, construction and transport industries. These generalizations tend to cut across both class and ethnicity, as Wang (1980), for example, demonstrates.

In the chapter that follows, Leslie O'Brien explores the growing sexual division of labour with development in broad perspective in Peninsular Malaysia. With increasing industrialization and urbanization, employment opportunities have required increasingly specialized skills; education is the main means of recruitment to better paid and higher status positions in the labour force. But, the author argues, women by virtue of their limited education have been ill-equipped to compete with men for such positions; this, together with the deference of women to men, has placed them nearly universally in a position of subordination and disadvantage.

The subordinate position of women in society is rooted in multiple causes and reinforced by many different institutions, beliefs and practices. The gender-role division of labour which assigns child-rearing and domestic labour to women, on the basis

of their biological propensity to bear children is, however, a major contributing factor to their relative powerlessness in most societies, but most especially in those societies based upon the capitalist mode of production. When productive activities are carried out along family or kinship lines, women can — given the absence of social beliefs and values to the contrary — play an important, even dominant role in production. Gender-role differentiation means that men and women have their own, clearly defined, spheres of influence. The work women do in such societies may not have given them culturally legitimated authority or high social prestige but it generally provides them with a degree of economic independence. With successive technological and economic developments, women tend to lose ground both economically and politically (Boserup 1970). The advent of industrial technology, for example, which divided the labour force into domestic and industrial units, removed domestic labour from any direct relationship with capital. Had there been an ideology which advocated that women should participate in production, no matter where productive activities were undertaken, or had there been structural support for women so as to allow them to combine their traditional roles with occupational activities in the modern labour force, this event would have been of less importance to women. As it was, ideology came to hold that a woman's 'place' was in the home, despite the reality of the high proportion of women who never withdrew from productive activities but followed their craft or trade into the factories. This put an almost impossible strain upon those women struggling to combine now incompatible roles in disparate domains — one public, the other private. Such a division meant that those women participating in the 'real' world of work not only had (and have) to bear the burden of two full-time jobs, but also to struggle against an ideology which denies them equal rights with men in the market place. Those who became full-time 'housewives' suffered a further reduction in status: under capitalism, the worth of the labourer is evaluated in terms of the economic return awarded for his or her labour (although the wage does not reflect the true value of labour). As the performers of activities which do not directly produce surplus value, domestic labourers (i.e. housewives) are accorded neither recognition for their work nor value as workers. As a final hardship, they are economically dependent upon men, from whom they have little legal protection, because the family is generally considered to be the concern of individual male heads of households (Baker 1964; Marx 1967; Pinchbeck 1969; Secombe 1973; Coulson *et al.* 1975; Gardiner 1976; Fee 1976; Molyneux 1979).

The Malaysian case

The development of capitalist economic relations in the Malay Peninsula followed the logic of colonial penetration during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Malaysia today is clearly integrated into the world capitalist system (Bach 1976;

Jomo 1977; Zawawi 1978), although the labour force can be divided into 'traditional' or peasant economic activities, and 'modern' work roles more closely related to industrial technology and capitalist economic relations. This distinction in the labour force is made not to connote any duality in the economy (for both peasant and modern activities are integrated into the capitalist economy) but rather to distinguish two different modes of recruitment into productive activities. Access to the former type of work role is largely dependent upon kin relationships, and one learns to perform a task by way of an informal system of 'apprenticeship'. By contrast, access to at least the better occupational roles in the 'modern' labour force is dependent upon formal education, training and subsequent certification.¹

Elsewhere, the impact of industrial technology has been to shift the locus of production from an 'inside' domestic sphere to an 'outside' perhaps industrial locale, with a subsequent lessening of the participation of women in productive activities (Baker 1964; Marx 1967; Pinchbeck 1969; Boserup 1970). Despite the plausible notion that female participation in production will increase with economic development, this is not always the case. In Malaysia it is not possible to gauge accurately the pattern of change of female participation in the labour force, owing to changes in definitions and measurements used by the various superintendents of the censuses, both during the colonial period and afterwards. Such problems of comparability of data as the completeness of coverage, changing definitions of the employed population, variation in age boundaries and differences in occupational classifications over time inhibit any systematic study of the occupational structure through time. With these qualifications in mind, we can state that the statistics point towards an overall increase in the number and proportion of women in the labour force in recent years,² moreover that technological changes appear to have altered the pattern of female participation in certain sectors of the economy. This is more marked in those sectors most affected by machine technology, namely the agricultural and industrial manufacturing. As will be discussed below, however, changes in the nature of women's productive activities are related not only to the nature of the forces of production (e.g. the type of technology) but other processes which affect the forces of production (e.g. changes in the system of education).

Women in agriculture

The change from traditional to modern farming generally results in a gradual displacement of women from agriculture or a drop in their productivity (Boserup 1965, 1970). Men, the 'legitimate' occupiers of formal roles in the public domain, are not only best placed to monopolize any new opportunities as may occur in society but are generally the principal recipients of any program aimed at modernization or change (O'Brien 1979).

The European colonizers of what is now the third world showed little sympathy for the female farming systems they found in many of their colonies (Boserup 1965, 1970). The European acceptance that cultivation is a better job for men than women meant that modern farming methods were taught only to men, even in instances where women were the traditional cultivators of the land. Men, not women, were taught to use tractors and other farm machinery. When agricultural schools and colleges were established during the colonial period, they were set up for and attended by men, not women. The usage of chemical fertilizers, pumping sets, the need to do soil analysis, to treat soil salinity etc., all require peasants and farmers to have had some basic schooling, yet educational opportunities for women generally are more limited than those available to men. Not unexpectedly, such practices result in men becoming more efficient, more productive than women who continue to use the traditional agricultural methods, thus justifying the policies of the Europeans.

In Malaysia, the long history of the more limited educational opportunities for women than men is now well documented (Chelliah 1947; Gerhold 1971; Manderson 1978; O'Brien 1979). As elsewhere, agricultural education in the Malay Peninsula has been a male rather than female phenomenon. For example, when an Agricultural College was established at Serdang in 1931, the first intake (and the vast majority of all subsequent student intakes) was of men not women (Malaysia, Federation 1968). In 1971, an Agricultural University was established as a merger of the old Agricultural College and the Faculty of Agriculture of the University of Malaya. In 1974, women comprised a scant 21 per cent of all enrolments at that institution, and of these women 13 per cent were studying home science (Malaysia, Federation 1975). Official figures reveal that more men than women are engaged in the agricultural sector of the economy, and that more men than women perform agricultural occupations — a reflection of the under-enumeration of women in labour force statistics, because so much of the work that women do is not officially recognized as 'labour' and because their participation is more sporadic in recognized productive activities. In terms of those women who do work outside the home and who are classified as in the workforce, a considerably higher proportion of the female (59 per cent) than male (45 per cent) workforce is engaged in the agricultural sector. A similarly higher proportion of the female (58 per cent) than male (44 per cent) workforce performs agriculturally-based occupations (Chander 1977: Tables 7.10 and 7.15). Despite this pattern in the official division of labour, and despite the traditional participation of women in agricultural production, women are either excluded from agricultural education because it is seen as 'inappropriate' for them, or fail to take advantage of such programs as are available for the same normative reason.

Between the 1957 and the 1970 censuses, the number of women engaged in agriculture increased from 401,317 to 505,741 persons, by far the greatest numerical expansion of the female labour force in any sector of the economy. Although agricultural employment engaged approximately half the total labour force of Peninsular Malaysia in 1970, in the thirteen years between the two censuses there was some diversification of the economy away from agriculture. The agricultural sector has remained a major sector for employment, however its overall proportionate share of the labour force dropped from 58.2 per cent in 1957 to 49.6 per cent in 1970. The decline in the proportion of the female labour force in agriculture was more marked than the decline in the proportion of the male labour force (from 76 to 59 per cent for the former, from 52 to 45 per cent for men), particularly in the area of agricultural industry (i.e. 'Agricultural products requiring substantial processing'), as illustrated in Tables 11.1 and 11.2.

The decline in the proportion of the total labour force in agriculture can be attributed to rural-urban migration (the lure of the cities, the spread of education) and to the creation of more opportunities for employment in other sectors of the economy.³ The greater decline in the case of women may also be related to the tendency for change to capital rather than labour intensive industry and to increased mechanization and modernization of agriculture. In line with the Boserup thesis expounded above, we might expect these factors to have a more deleterious effect upon the participation of women in agricultural production than upon men.

That such a high proportion of the female labour force today is composed of women who perform agricultural occupations, despite the trend towards the establishment of large-scale agricultural industry, deserves some comment. The proportion of women in agriculture is a reflection of the level of economic development in Malaysia (United Nations 1962; International Labour Organization 1963; Boserup 1965, 1970). A high proportion of women in the agricultural sector (36 per cent), particularly Malay women (34 per cent), are engaged in the production of rice (Chander 1975: Table 4.21). Rice is the staple food in the Malay diet. The high rates of participation of Malay women in the production of rice reveal the continued importance of subsistence activities within an increasingly-monetized economy. Their activities in this regard probably help subsidize male wages which may be too low for the sustenance of the family as a whole.

Another factor related to the continued participation of women in agriculture is the high proportion of that sector given over to the cultivation of rubber. About 90 per cent of all those involved in the production of 'Agricultural products requiring substantial processing' in 1970 were in rubber (Chander 1977:431). Whilst the growing of rubber is a highly scientific activity, many of the tasks associated with its production

Table 11.1
Industry of the experienced labour force by sex, Peninsular Malaysia, 1957 and 1970

Industry	Males		Females		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1957						
Agriculture, forestry, hunting and fishing	412,994	25.6	159,795	30.4	572,789	26.8
Agricultural products requiring substantial processing	430,483	26.7	241,522	46.0	672,005	31.4
Total agriculture	843,477	52.3	401,317	76.4	1,244,794	58.2
Mining and quarrying	49,026	3.0	9,473	1.8	58,499	2.7
Manufacturing	112,837	7.0	22,545	4.3	135,382	6.3
Construction	62,772	3.9	5,362	1.0	68,134	3.2
Electricity, gas, water and sanitary services	11,171	0.7	398	0.1	11,569	0.5
Commerce	176,558	10.9	18,634	3.5	195,192	9.1
Transport, storage and communication	73,259	4.5	1,496	0.3	74,755	3.5
Services	258,698	16.0	61,047	11.6	319,745	14.9
Industry not adequately described	27,103	1.7	5,329	1.0	32,432	1.5
Total experienced labour force ^a	1,614,901	100.0	525,601	100.0	2,140,502	100.0
Looking for first job	20,179		4,180		24,359	
Total labour force	1,635,080		529,781		2,164,861	
1970						
Agriculture, forestry, hunting and fishing	402,554	21.4	208,792	24.3	611,346	22.3
Agricultural products requiring substantial processing	450,874	24.0	296,949	34.6	747,823	27.3
Total agriculture	853,428	45.4	505,741	58.9	1,359,169	49.6
Mining and quarrying	48,203	2.6	7,073	0.8	55,276	2.0
Manufacturing	178,881	9.5	73,058	8.5	251,939	9.2
Construction	55,624	3.0	4,238	0.5	59,862	2.2
Electricity, gas, water and sanitary services	18,732	1.0	1,024	0.1	19,756	0.7
Commerce	224,993	12.0	49,611	5.8	276,604	10.0
Transport, storage and communication	93,852	5.0	4,117	0.5	97,969	3.6
Services	332,158	17.7	140,468	16.4	472,626	17.3
Industry not adequately described	71,875	3.8	73,279	8.5	145,154	5.3
Total experienced labour force	1,877,746	100.0	858,609	100.0	2,738,355	100.0
Looking for first job	80,542		54,052		134,594	
Total labour force	1,958,288		912,661		2,870,949	

^aPercentage total may not add up to 100.0 because of rounding.

Source: Chander (1977: Table 7.10: 433).

Table 11.2
Change in distribution of experienced labour force by industry
and sex, Peninsular Malaysia, 1957-70

Industry	Absolute change, 1957-70			Percentage change, 1957-70		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
Agriculture, forestry, hunting and fishing	- 10,440	48,997	38,557	- 2.5	30.7	6.7
Agricultural products requiring substantial processing	20,391	55,427	75,818	4.7	22.9	11.3
Total agriculture	9,951	104,424	114,375	1.2	26.0	9.2
Mining and quarrying	- 823	- 2,400	- 3,223	- 1.7	- 25.3	- 5.5
Manufacturing	66,044	50,513	116,557	58.5	224.1	86.1
Construction	- 7,148	- 1,124	- 8,272	- 11.4	- 21.0	- 12.1
Electricity, gas, water and sanitary services	7,561	626	8,187	67.7	157.3	70.8
Commerce	48,435	30,977	79,412	27.4	166.2	40.7
Transport, storage and communication	20,593	2,621	23,214	28.1	175.2	31.1
Services	73,460	79,421	152,881	28.4	130.1	47.8
Total experienced labour force	262,845	333,008	595,853	16.3	63.4	27.8

Source: Chander (1977: Table 7.11: 434).

(weeding, tapping) are carried out by hand. Unlike the situation prevailing in so many other industries, women rubber tappers have enjoyed equal pay with men since 1953. There is thus no immediately apparent economic advantage to an employer for giving a job to a woman rather than a man. Despite this, in 1970 the number of women amongst rubber farm workers (employees) was greater than the number of men, and the proportion of the female labour force so engaged was considerably higher (24 per cent) than the proportion of the male labour force (11 per cent) in this occupational area (Chander 1975: Table 4.21).⁴ One reason for the large number of women amongst rubber estate workers is related to the practice of giving employment to family units.⁵ The high proportion of women may also reflect a belief in the greater 'manual dexterity' of women, their particular suitability for this occupational role, thus a pattern of preferential employment of women. In the final analysis, however, the high proportion of women amongst rubber estate workers, indeed in the agricultural sector as a whole, is probably more a consequence of the more limited educational opportunities for women than men; women's lesser mobility, due to family responsibilities, than of any other factors. Despite an expansion in the number of women performing occupational roles in the 'modern' labour force, they are still less likely to do so than men because they lack access either to education as such or the means of acquiring the more marketable skills.

Women, employment and unemployment

In the rural areas of the third world, part-time or occasional wage labouring, or small-scale business activities, may yield a woman her only cash income, but subsistence activities provide her and her family with sufficient to eat. Movement from village to town, such as is presently occurring in Malaysia, changes the economic occupation of the family and the way of life, as well as placing additional strains upon women. With the spread of capitalism and increasing use of industrial technology, goods and services provided by subsistence activities in the villages must, in the towns, be purchased for cash. Wood is no longer something that is gathered but becomes a commodity; accommodation must frequently be rented, as materials to build with must now be purchased, and few families own their own land; finally, leisure activities change and increasingly even entertainment must be bought, as people become less attracted to production/performance and more interested in consumption. Of course such problems are not unique to the towns. Rural inhabitants too are drawn into the wider society and its attendant complications. They too are socialized into the need for new commodities through the spread of education, the extension of communications to remote areas (McGee 1971), must cope with rampant landlessness and other consequences of the penetration of capitalism into the periphery. In the rural areas, however,

options are more likely to be available than in the urban zones and — with obvious environmental variations — poverty is probably easier to handle outside the towns. The need to pay for goods and services in the urban milieu places a strain on the family budget. This in turn creates a need for women to 'work' in order to contribute to the family income, or as is so often the case, to provide for their own economic wellbeing. Unlike the rural women, such undertakings for the urban woman are less likely to be supplemented by (or supplements for) subsistence activities, and more likely to be the sole means of economic survival.

Economic and technological developments lead to an increase in the division of labour, as well as demanding increasingly specialized skills from those who would participate in 'modern' occupational activities. Women are generally the least well equipped to participate in the labour force of non-subsistence economies. The female disadvantage is reflected in the higher rates of unemployment for women (7.5 per cent) than for men (4.2 per cent) in the labour force of the peninsula in 1970 (Chander 1977: Table 7.3). In the urban areas, where most 'modern' occupational roles are located, and where formal education is increasingly a condition for employment, the rate of unemployment for women (12.6 per cent) is exactly double the rate for men (6.3 per cent). In the rural areas, where more 'traditional' productive activities are still undertaken, the rate of unemployment for women (5.8 per cent) is still higher than for men (4.2 per cent) but the difference is less marked (Chander 1977: Table 7.6).

One major difficulty in examining the participation of women in production is that many of the activities performed by women are not socially recognized as labour. This applies particularly to what is generally termed 'housework' but also encompasses a variety of other tasks, especially those related to subsistence. In addition to the non-recognition of much 'women's work', many of the other activities performed by women do not result in any direct economic reward for them. For example, in 1970 a full 38 per cent of the female labour force of Peninsular Malaysia was classified as 'unpaid family workers' (compared with 10.9 per cent of the male labour force) (Chander 1977: Table 7.7). As 94 per cent of these women were from the rural areas, most working on family farms, their employment status is as much a consequence of underdevelopment as of sexism.

Women in small-scale business

In Malaysia, the lower-level of economic and technological development compared with the advanced capitalist countries means that there are insufficient employment opportunities for the unskilled members of the labour force. Living within a system based upon commodity production, many women resort to self-

employment in small-scale trades, services and industries. In 1970, a relatively high proportion of the female labour force was classified as 'own account workers' (18 per cent) or 'employers' (2.3 per cent). By comparison, only 4.2 per cent of the male labour force worked as 'own account workers' but 31.9 per cent were 'employers' (Chander 1977: Table 7.7). This would appear to be a reflection of the higher proportion of men than women operating within the cash economy and probably includes some medium- and large-scale business enterprises. Thirteen per cent of the female labour force (presumably from amongst those with one or the other of the two above employment status classifications) were engaged as 'working proprietors of wholesale and retail trade', which we may translate to mean that the majority conducted small-scale business enterprises. (The proportion of the male labour force so engaged was 4 per cent: Chander 1975: Table 4.21.) Labour force statistics do not allow for the identification of those women engaged in small-scale craft activities, but we may assume a sizeable number do work in this occupational area, at least on a part-time basis. Petty trade, craft and personal services usually yield a very low, often less than a bare subsistence living, for such occupations are of low productivity, hence low return, compared with the large-scale and capital intensive enterprises against which they must compete. Women in small-scale industry and trade — like men in these areas — command very limited capital for their business ventures. We may assume that those men and women who are similarly placed within the division of labour share the same socio-economic backgrounds and low-level educational attainments. Unlike the men, these women are often deprived of access to credit and loan facilities on account of their gender status (United Nations 1973). Women who are active in independent trading and production on a small scale generally have few, if any, alternative means of earning a living. The majority lack the training required or lack the skills which would enable them to venture into other types of business enterprises (United Nations 1973). Just as men, not women, gain control of modern agriculture because men are taught the new methods of production, all too frequently it is men not women who are given the opportunity of modernizing and expanding the small-scale business enterprises they both participate in. With time, women may become less competitive and eventually be forced out of production (United Nations 1973). Data concerning the extent to which this type of economic transformation has occurred or is occurring in Peninsular Malaysia are not available. Manderson (1979a) reports the existence of a number of co-operative societies established and run by and for women to meet their credit needs, and suggests that such associations are a response to demands women are unable to fulfil through non-gender specific organizations. From this one may infer that there are ways and means of transcending limitations but the extent to which the female co-operatives meet the needs of women in small-scale business, or the degree to which they are inhibited in their developmental efforts, is an area basically unresearched but more than worthy of future attention.

Women in manufacturing industries

The degree of industrialization of a society is highly correlated with both the type of occupational roles undertaken by women and the sector of the economy in which they are most commonly employed (Boserup 1970; United Nations 1973). Where industrial manufacturing has not been long established, few jobs are likely to be open to women because of the tendency for men to monopolize all new opportunity structures (see O'Brien 1979 for elaboration). When women are hired, it is generally in the less skilled, less well paid positions towards the bottom of the occupational hierarchy. In the West, women entered the modern sector of the workforce in industries manufacturing the types of goods traditionally produced by women, or by family enterprises (e.g. food, clothing, beverages: Baker 1964; Pinchbeck 1969). In Malaysia, a similar pattern seems to prevail, with heavy concentrations of women employed in such labour-intensive areas as the manufacture of textiles, wearing apparel and the food and drink processing industries. In those instances where women are employed in non-traditional areas (e.g. light electronics, the manufacture of chemicals and chemical products) it would appear that one of the motives behind their recruitment in large numbers is to obtain skills traditionally associated with women as a gender group (e.g. manual dexterity, accuracy, passivity and patience) as well as their greater exploitability. As in the West, few women are engaged in industries manufacturing transport equipment, metal products or heavy machinery (see Table 11.3).

In 1970, men accounted for 67.7 per cent of the labour force of Peninsular Malaysia and women the remaining 32.3 per cent. All the industry categories employed more males than females, although their shares in each category show different patterns. As we have seen, with a 58.9 per cent share of the agricultural sector, women were over-represented, whilst men were under-represented at 45.4 per cent. In the remaining industries, the pattern for males follows closely the pattern of the whole economy but that for females shows some variation. Employment for women was particularly small in the mining and quarrying, construction, electricity, gas, water and sanitary services, and the transport, storage and communication industries. The female employment in these industries was less than 2.0 per cent of the total female labour force (see Table 11.1).

Whilst women in Malaysia display a pattern of employment by industry not dissimilar to that of women in the West, they do seem to perform a wider range of work roles than many of their Western counterparts. An examination of the occupational undertakings of the 45,019 Malaysian women engaged as 'production workers', for example, revealed that 6.8 per cent worked as 'miners and quarrymen' (*sic*), occupations no longer considered suitable for women in the West. There were 49 women engaged as foundry

Table 11.3
Employment by sex and industry, manufacturing
sector, Peninsular Malaysia, 1970

Industry	Males	Females	Total
Food manufacturing industries	23,401	10,701	34,102
Beverage manufacturing industries	2,199	530	2,729
Tobacco products manufacturing	3,193	4,088	7,281
Manufacturing of textiles	5,402	7,308	12,710
Manufacture of footwear, other wearing apparel and made-up textile goods	11,607	19,055	30,662
Manufacture of wood, rattan, mengkuang, attap and cork products (except furniture and footwear)	34,251	12,271	46,522
Manufacture of furniture and fixtures	8,385	442	8,827
Manufacture of paper and paper products	1,724	1,398	3,122
Printing, publishing and allied industries	8,187	2,588	10,775
Manufacture of leather, fur and leather products (except footwear and wearing apparel)	386	318	704
Manufacture of rubber products	5,822	3,608	9,430
Manufacture of chemicals and chemical products	5,783	2,566	8,349
Manufacture of products of petroleum and coal	918	56	974
Manufacture of non-metallic mineral products (except petroleum and coal products)	7,498	1,851	9,349
Basic metal industries	7,467	418	7,885
Manufacture of metal products (except machinery and transport equipment)	8,452	1,441	9,893
Manufacture of machinery (except electrical machinery)	5,280	403	5,683
Manufacture of electrical machinery, apparatus, appliances and supplies	5,080	895	5,975
Manufacture of transport equipment	24,936	585	25,521
Miscellaneous manufacturing industries	8,910	2,536	11,446
Total manufacturing	178,881	73,058	251,939

Source: Chander (1975: Table 4.22: 300).

workers, 16 worked as blacksmiths, 281 worked as machine-tool operators or tool makers, 129 worked as machinery fitters and mechanics, and 18 worked as 'electrical wiremen' (*sic*). There were 123 women welders and flame cutters, 356 sheet-metal workers, 458 compositors and typesetters, 160 painters, 65 bricklayers and stonemasons and 240 carpenters, joiners and parqueters. Nearly 5 per cent of all female 'production workers' (2098 women) were engaged as 'cabinet makers and related workers' (Malaysia, Federation 1973).

Despite such variations as detailed above, overall the gender stereotyping of occupational roles in Malaysia is remarkably similar to that which prevails in the West. We can attribute this to a number of factors, prominent amongst them the colonial heritage and the impact of capitalism, both male dominated social events. Patriarchal ideas concerning the role of women in society in general and in the labour force in particular were imported into the Malay Peninsula, reinforcing the pre-existing gender-role division of labour. Today such beliefs and values are maintained by a multiplicity of institutions, such as the law, the system of education, the political system and the mass media. Such variations as do exist in the range of job opportunities available to women in Malaysia as compared to the West can be attributed to the existence of some different ideas concerning work for women, as well as to the greater reliance upon manual labour and relatively low-level rather than complex machine technology. The structural similarities between the two situations however outweigh such differences as do exist: there is a generalized shortage of vocational training and apprenticeship opportunities in Malaysia, but the short-fall is more pronounced for women than men (O'Brien 1979). Like their counterparts in the West, women in Malaysia are more likely to be trained for motherhood, or apprenticed to a hairdresser, than to participate in schemes aimed at improving their level of skill and understanding of industrial technological processes, such as could open the way for their entry into middle or upper level work roles in that sector of the economy. Power and authority too are scarce resources, and only a small proportion of any group of workers reach supervisory positions. There is little evidence that women in Malaysia have any greater access to decision-making functions than women elsewhere, and considerable proof that the sedimentation of women towards the bottom of the various occupational hierarchies is more pronounced than the concentration of men at that level. For instance, in the employment category 'production workers' in 1973, only 589 women (1.3 per cent of the female labour force in this sector) worked as 'production supervisors or general foremen', compared with 9947 men (or 6.1 per cent of the comparable male labour force) (calculated from Malaysia, Federation 1973).

Employment in government service in Malaysia is covered by General Orders, which specify equal pay for women performing tasks of equal value with men. Labour laws governing employment

in the private sector of the economy make no such provision. Indeed, even if there was legislation, it could be circumvented by employers. The fusion of gender-status and economic function allows for the differential classification of jobs performed by men and women, thus making it hard to demonstrate that women receive lower rates of pay. Women workers in manufacturing industries in Malaysia, like women workers in other sectors of the economy, lack skills and training, are concentrated in certain jobs and in certain industries. This, in combination with their lack of independent unions or any affiliation with trade union organization (which is actively discouraged by the government) leaves them open to exploitation. High rates of unemployment for women, in association with female socialization into acquiescence, means that they are extremely unlikely to take any action which might improve their wages and/or conditions of work.

Education and labour force participation

Despite a marked expansion of the parameters of female education in recent years, the majority of women presently in the labour force of Peninsular Malaysia have had little or no formal education. As we have seen, most work in the agricultural sector of the economy as wage labourers or unpaid family workers, some are engaged in small-scale trade and business enterprise, others work as domestic servants or un-/semi-skilled factory labourers. Some women, on account of their class background or ethnic status, do continue their education beyond the primary level. A small percentage of the total female population go on to upper secondary, even higher education, although even these educated women suffer occupational disadvantages compared to their male counterparts. Despite the generalized belief that in the underdeveloped societies of the third world those with post-secondary education possess a readily marketable skill, there is considerable evidence to the contrary. Government statements (Malaysia, Federation 1976) and my own research (O'Brien 1979) point towards occupational opportunities being dependent upon such factors as the type of education received and the gender and ethnic status of the recipient. Within the schools, colleges and universities, girls tend to choose subjects and be directed to disciplines of a generalist rather than a specialist nature; to be educated in a literary or academic manner, rather than in the fields of science and technology. This, in combination with the normative assumption that even educated women will eventually marry and thenceforth sublimate their career aspirations to their marital obligations and motherhood, creates employment difficulties even for educated women in the modern labour force.

Studies in the West have shown that there is a positive link between education and labour force participation for women; that women in the workforce are likely to have had slightly more schooling than women in the population as a whole (US Department

of Labor 1969; Epstein 1970). Since most men are in the labour force, there is less differentiation between the educational attainment of those in the labour force and those in the population. In the third world this relationship is more complex than in the West and certainly less well researched. Minkler (1970), for instance, found that, in India, education — a privilege only available to the middle and upper socio-economic groups — was negatively correlated with labour force participation. Her findings confirm a pattern of preferred seclusion of women amongst those who can afford this. Many Indian women with middle and higher levels of education do, of course, work outside the home. In the upper echelons of the Indian social hierarchy however such women are encouraged to involve themselves with unpaid voluntary activities, rather than to work for a salary or wage.

In Malaysia, women of working age who had ever attended school were marginally more likely to be in the labour force (or enumerated in that way) than women of working age in the population as a whole (Choudhry 1970: Tables 7.0.0, 13.0.0, 54.0.0). Although the differences were very slight, the trend was towards the Western model. This tendency was further supported by the sex and educational differences in labour force participation as illustrated in Table 11.4. There are no official statistics

Table 11.4

Percentage participation in the labour force, by educational attainment and sex, Peninsular Malaysia, 1967-68

Level of education	Percentage participation in labour force	
	Males	Females
No formal education	73	41
Primary education	91	41
Lower secondary education	96	48
Middle secondary education	96	64
Upper secondary education	95	71
University education	95	66

Source: Calculated from Choudhry (1970: Tables 7.0.0, 13.0.0, 54.0.0).

which detail labour force participation by educational attainment, sex and ethnicity, nor is there any way of cross-tabulating such data as are available to obtain this information. We must assume some variation along ethnic lines, although it is impossible to gauge the level of significance of such differences as do exist. We can also assume that despite variations between the Malay, Chinese and Indian patterns of labour force participation, if we were to compare the pattern for Malay women with that of Malay men, or Chinese women with that of Chinese men, we would find a

similar distribution as regards education and labour force participation as pertains for the gender groups overall.

The number of educational opportunities available within a society generally correlates with such factors as the strength of the economy, as well as with official educational policies. Since 1957, the government of Malaysia has viewed the provision of education as a strategy for 'development'. Education has also been used as a means for the preservation of class, sex and ethnic differentials within the society, a legacy of the colonial administrative tactic of 'divide and rule' (Puthuchearry 1973; Crouch 1974; Stevenson 1975; Chai 1977; O'Brien 1980). This emphasis upon education is manifest in government expenditure upon education (9 per cent of Public Development Expenditure under the Third Malaysia Plan, 1967-1980 (Malaysia, Federation 1976: Appendix 1), which allows for such schemes as the abolition of school fees in National (Bahasa Malaysia medium) schools at the primary and secondary levels, as well as explaining the proliferation of educational institutions. Since 1957, literacy and numeracy have become more widespread, at least amongst the younger members of the population;⁶ whilst post-primary education is still a scarce resource, at the lower levels of the educational hierarchy there have been some considerable improvements in the years since the granting of political independence.⁷ Indeed the spread of education at the lower levels seems to have outpaced the number of suitable job opportunities for those so qualified: those with no formal education are generally prepared to, and often must, accept any wage labouring offered to them, whilst those with the highest and most marketable skills can be expected to find some form of employment, even if it is not their occupation of first choice, and even if it takes time (see O'Brien 1979 for details for Malaysia). Those with middle levels of education, however, or those whose education has been of a 'generalist' nature, are often the most difficult to 'fit' into the labour force. In Malaysia, as elsewhere in the third world, the expectations engendered by a few years of education are often unaccompanied by the availability of a sufficient number of clean, white collar jobs students aspire to (Myrdal 1973; Dore 1976; O'Brien 1979). Structural difficulties such as these are more pronounced for women than men, and female 'deference' to male demand is often forced upon women in times of occupational shortages. Even in those instances where a woman does have the appropriate educational qualifications, the same or better training than a man, he may be hired in preference to her because of the patriarchal assumptions that men have the primary responsibility for the economic wellbeing of 'their' families.

In the West, occupations such as sales work, clerical work and teaching at the primary and secondary levels were once performed almost exclusively by men. Throughout the twentieth century, as occupational horizons have expanded, men have vacated

a large number of these work roles, creating opportunities for an influx of women. In the United States, for example, women now account for approximately 68 per cent of clerical staff, and in other industrialized societies the pattern is similar, with women accounting for between 60 and 70 per cent of the clerical labour force (US Department of Labor 1969). In many Western societies, the proportions of men and women in teaching are now approximately the same, although it should be noted that most women are located at the lower levels of this occupational hierarchy (O'Brien 1979).⁸ In many parts of the third world, including Malaysia, men gained access to such 'modern' occupational roles as teaching and clerical work during the colonial period — a consequence of their pre-existing advantages compared to women. These advantages were reinforced by the patriarchal attitudes and practices of the colonial administration and have been perpetuated in the post-colonial era.

The comparatively low level of industrialization in Malaysia has meant that there has been an insufficient expansion of new job opportunities such as would enable men to vacate their more traditional work roles, thus creating employment opportunities for women. In Malaysia in 1970, men comprised 75 per cent of all 'clerical and related' workers. This reflects the numerical domination of the labour force by men. An additional indicator of the struggle between men and women for scarce occupational resources however is the fact that the proportion of the female labour force amongst clerical and related workers (3.7 per cent) was lower than the proportion of the male labour force so engaged (5.2 per cent) (Chander 1977: Table 7.14). Whereas in the West it is common for girls who have been educated beyond the age of 14 years to enter clerical occupations, in Malaysia such girls frequently find themselves adding to the statistics of the 'youth unemployed'.⁹ Teaching too is numerically and proportionally (57 per cent) dominated by men (Malaysia, Federation 1973). The proportion of the female labour force engaged in this occupational area — as in the West — is, however, approximately the same as that of the male labour force. The educational requirements of those who would become school teachers are generally compatible with the form and content of female education. In addition, teaching involves contact with and the care of children, particularly at the lower levels of the teaching hierarchy (i.e. in the pre- and primary schools) where most women are located. This accords with the cultural image of women as mothers. Finally, teaching involves a delimited number of hours away from home, as well as holidays which coincide with those of any school-age children of the woman teacher. These factors work towards the creation of a certain number of teaching opportunities for women — albeit at the level where they are in contact with young children — and of women wanting to enter this field (see O'Brien 1979 for empirical details of the situation in Peninsular Malaysia).

Women and higher education

The situation as regards job opportunities for those with higher education is better than for those with only middle levels of educational training, although educated women have a narrower range of occupational opportunities and lower career 'ceilings' than educated men (O'Brien 1979). This state of affairs is related to a number of factors, foremost amongst them the form and content of female education in the secondary schools and at the tertiary level; the patriarchal belief that a woman does not 'need' a career because she is always someone's daughter, later someone's wife; and to the preferential granting of employment opportunities to men.

Most men with higher education find employment in the professions, or else in the fields of administration and management. The proportion of women in professional occupations usually reflects the proportion of women in tertiary education (always less than the proportion of men, and overwhelmingly comprising women of upper middle and upper class family backgrounds). The proportion of women amongst administrative and managerial personnel however is always lower than the proportion of women amongst students at the tertiary level. Even in societies with a history of seclusion of women, there is generally a demand for women to perform certain professional roles, particularly in the fields of health, welfare and education. Boserup (1970:127) has noted that if custom requires a girl to be educated, then she should be educated by women teachers, in special schools for girls. If it is thought, for example, that decency requires some women to be taken care of by female health personnel, female social workers etc., then the employment of a limited number of women in these professions makes it possible for the great majority of women to avoid exposure to contact with male professional staff. Few women in Malaysia, or elsewhere, are to be found in administration or management. These occupational roles are more manifestly concerned with the exercise of power and authority than say teaching¹⁰ or social work, and their performance would be a greater contravention of the societal norms concerning the 'appropriate' place for women in society and of the patriarchal belief that men should dominate women, not the reverse.

As at other levels of the labour force, women in 'professional, technical and related' occupations tend to be concentrated in a narrower range of work roles than men (O'Brien 1979). In 1973, 92 per cent of all women categorized as being in the 'professional, technical and related' sector of the workforce of Peninsular Malaysia were concentrated in just two fields, health and welfare and education. Whilst 64 per cent of all men engaged in occupations at this level were also to be found in these fields, overall they had a broader job horizon than did women (see Table 11.5).

Table 11.5

Percentage distribution of male and female labour force
in 'professional, technical and related' occupations,
by area of employment, Peninsular Malaysia, 1973

Occupational field	Percentage males (N = 78,069)	Percentage females (N = 45,310)
Health and welfare	6.38	23.71
Education	57.72	68.69
Science	7.21	2.41
Engineering	15.53	0.47
Architecture and building	5.36	0.64
Commerce	3.12	0.84
Law	0.81	0.16
Religion	0.50	0.15
Arts/entertainment	1.69	0.52
Miscellaneous 'professional, technical and related'	1.68	2.41
Total	100.00	100.00

Source: Calculated from Malaysia, Federation (1973).

An examination of the internal structure of the various occupations detailed in Table 11.5 revealed that men dominated the upper echelons or 'true professional' work roles, whilst women were concentrated in the lower level ancilliary or 'semi-professional' occupations. This applied even in the fields of health and welfare and education, where women are well, if not over, represented, as illustrated in Table 11.6. An examination of the proportionate representation of women in some of the better-recognized professional occupations, as illustrated in Table 11.7, further serves to emphasize the above point.

In terms of type of work role performed and the level at which such a role is located, there is clearly a close association between educational attainment and occupational opportunities. The concentration of women in semi-professional rather than professional occupations is a reflection of their lower level educational attainment compared to men. The employment of women in a limited range of occupational areas in the 'professional, technical and related' labour force is likewise related to the form and content of female education. At the post-secondary level of education in Malaysia, women tend to be concentrated in the academic Form Six classes, teacher training institutions and diploma courses offered at the universities. When women are enrolled in degree courses, they are more likely to be studying in the fields of arts, education or humanities than in the areas of science and technology (O'Brien 1979: Appendix A). This

Table 11.6

Percentage distribution of men and women within 'Grade 1' professional occupations in selected occupational fields, Peninsular Malaysia, 1973^a

Occupational area	Percentage males (N = 7931)	Percentage females (N = 1125)	Total (N = 9056)
Health and welfare	80	20	100
Education	81	19	100
Science	92	8	100
Engineering	99.5	0.5	100
Architecture and building	96	4	100
Commerce	87	13	100
Law	89	11	100
Percentage distribution of males and females in all 'Grade 1' professional occupations	88	12	100

^aIn my doctoral dissertation I developed a three-point 'scale of occupational importance' as a means of examining differentials in the career-development potentials of men and women. The basis of classification was extant information and an 'educated estimation' of the amount of education and training required to perform the various work roles, and the estimated incomes that would accrue to those who performed them. A 'Grade 1' occupation would be one that demanded the highest level of education and training, and would be rewarded with the highest level of income, as well as accorded the greatest societal prestige within the particular occupational field. See O'Brien (1979) for details.

Source: Calculated from Malaysia, Federation (1973).

means, of course, that there is a limited 'pool' of women eligible to be recruited into those work roles based upon science and technology — generally considered to be the 'frontiers' of the labour market. In addition to these structural considerations, other related factors of a more ideological nature also determine the gender role division of the labour force. Over time, the characteristics of jobs, for example, come to be seen as the characteristics of job holders. Not only do women lack the educational prerequisites for entry into non-traditional occupational fields, but few women aspire to such work roles because they are 'unfeminine'. Women are believed, and believe themselves, to lack technical ability, to be incapable of independent judgment and rational decision making, to lack physical strength, to lack

Table 11.7

Percentage of women in selected professional occupations,
Peninsular Malaysia, 1973 (as a proportion of
all persons in these professions)

Occupation	Percentage of women
Medical doctors	20
Dentists	20
Engineers and technologists	1
Scientists (physical and life)	8
University teachers	19
Primary and secondary teachers	43
Accountants, economists & statisticians	13
Surveyors and architects	5
Barristers, solicitors and lawyers	11
Social welfare workers	23

Source: Calculated from Malaysia, Federation (1973).

the dedication required of those performing a number of professional work roles. As at other levels of the labour force, women in the 'professional, technical and related' sector are more likely than not to perform work roles which accord with their private domain responsibilities of nurturing the young and tending the sick and aged than to be working in 'male' occupational areas.

Conclusion

Economic and technological developments lead to an increase in the division of labour, as well as demanding increasingly specialized skills from those who would participate in 'modern' occupational activities. The concentration of women in the less prestigious, less well paid positions throughout the labour force of Peninsular Malaysia is at once a reflection of the lower status of women in society and related to the maintenance of female subordination. It has been argued in the foregoing that the assignment to women of the prime responsibility for child-minding and domestic labour which, under capitalism, are structurally located in the private domain, serves to limit their access to formal roles in the public sphere; that because the majority of the formal roles assigned to men are, by comparison, structurally located in the 'outside' world, men not women are best placed to gain access to and eventually monopolize most scarce societal resources as well as enabling them to control social change. Education, for instance, is the principal means of recruitment to the more socially valued and better rewarded positions in the modern labour market. As a gender group, women residents of the Malay Peninsula have had fewer and more limited

educational, hence occupational opportunities than men. Furthermore, as owners and controllers of the means of production, men as a gender group are able to disseminate a system of belief which legitimates their privileged position, and thus structurally and ideologically maintain their advantage over women from one era to the next. So long as patriarchy exists, no matter what the strictly male tasks in society are, they will be defined as more honorific (Goode 1964:69-70). If economic rewards, privilege and power accrue to male activities simply because men perform them, then no matter what changes are made in the structure of occupational opportunities in Malaysia, women will always be at least 'four paces behind'.

Notes

1. For details of recruitment into work roles at the top of the occupational hierarchy in Malaysia (both legal requirements and societal conventions) see O'Brien (1979: Appendix F).
2. The participation rate for females aged 15-64 years was 30.8 at the time of the 1957 Census of Population but had risen to 37.2 by 1970 (Chander 1977: Table 7.2: 416).
3. In manufacturing industries, for example, female employment increased from 22,545 in 1957 to 73,058 persons in 1970, an increase of 224 per cent; in commerce the increase was 166 per cent and in services 130 per cent. In the categories of transport, storage and communication, and electricity, gas, water and sanitary services, where female participation is low, the expansion of female employment was proportionately large, with increases of 175 per cent and 157 per cent respectively (Chander 1977:435).
4. As we might expect, the proportion of the male workforce engaged in rubber planting on their own farms was higher (6 per cent) than the proportion of the female labour force so engaged (4 per cent) (Chander 1975: Table 4.21).
5. Section 17 of the Employment Ordinance, 1955 even provides for the joint dismissal of the husband or wife of a labourer when the contract between the labourer and employer is terminated, unless the husband or wife concerned notifies the employer, within 48 hours, of his or her desire to continue in employment.
6. In 1970, the literacy rate for the population as a whole was 60.8 per cent. For males, the rate was 72.1 per cent overall, compared with the considerably lower rate of 49.6 per cent for females. Amongst the younger members of the population the literacy rate was the highest (80.2 per cent for those aged 15-24 years), and the male-female

differential was less marked (85.7 per cent for males aged 15-24 years, 74.9 per cent for females in the same age group) (Chander 1977: Table 4.4).

7. At the time of the 1957 census, only 37.1 per cent of the population had completed primary school; by 1970, the proportion had risen to 44.6 per cent. In the age group 5-9 years (those most affected by changes in access to primary education), the proportion changed from 46.5 per cent in 1957 to 62.4 per cent in 1970. At the next level, whilst only 5.7 per cent of those aged 10-14 years, and 14.7 per cent of those aged 15-19 years had completed lower secondary school in 1957, the comparative proportion for those in these age categories in 1970 was 23.9 per cent and 30 per cent respectively (Chander 1977: Table 4.15). Despite an increase in educational opportunities for women, the enrolment of girls at the primary and lower secondary levels of the educational hierarchy still fell below the enrolment figures for boys (for details, see Manderson 1978; O'Brien 1979).
8. The decline in the world economy during the 1970s has led to a slow-down in the movement of men from teaching, and in some instances an increase in their proportionate share of this profession.
9. An examination of the types of occupations performed by these women revealed that a large percentage work as stenographers, typists, cashiers or telephone and telegraph operators (14 per cent), or correspondence and reporting clerks, or clerks not elsewhere classified (52 per cent). Only 1.5 per cent work as clerical supervisors or government executive officials, compared with 9 per cent of their male counterparts (calculated from Malaysia, Federation 1973).
10. The prohibition against females exercising power over males is not contravened when a boy student is young enough to be a classificatory 'son'. Women teachers are encouraged at the primary level but find greater difficulty in gaining appointment at the secondary level, where they have charge of 'young men'.

Chapter 12

The feminization of the teaching profession in Singapore

Christine Inglis

During the colonial period, a variety of subordinate white collar occupations were undertaken by indigenous men. With independence many of these positions, including typing and other secretarial and clerical work, were reclassified as 'women's work', while men took over the more senior and prestigious occupations hitherto the domain of the colonists. A number of professional as well as service jobs were increasingly to be dominated by women. As Leslie O'Brien demonstrates above in the case of Malaysia, men were employed in a wide range of technical, semi-professional and professional occupations, whilst the majority of women in professional employment were to work in the fields of health, education and welfare. By 1970, nursing and teaching combined accounted for some 83 per cent of female professional employment in the ASEAN region (Manderson 1979b). The recruitment of women to these jobs relates, again, to the assumed capabilities and interests of women.

Singapore differs from Malaysia and Indonesia both because of the relatively low incidence of women in the workforce and at the same time the greater degree to which they participate in industry. However, as in neighbouring countries, women have been limited to a certain range of occupations and have tended to dominate them. As Christine Inglis discusses below, women now outnumber men in the teaching profession although, significantly, men continue to dominate senior positions within schools. The following chapter discusses the increasing numerical domination of women as teachers and government response to it. The failure of the government to encourage men back into teaching highlights the ways by which occupational status is determined in part by the sex of its workers. At the same time it provides us with an insight into the status ascribed to women in Singapore.

Singapore has been widely regarded as one of the success stories in economic development because of the way in the last twenty years it has developed a highly urbanized and modernized economy from a limited set of physical resources. Associated with

this economic development there have been changes in the nature of women's participation in the economy. These changes have been outlined in a number of studies which have considered women's economic participation (Fong 1975; A.K. Wong 1976a; Cheng 1977; Chiew 1977). There have also been studies of women's participation in specific sectors of the economy such as manufacturing (Heyzer 1979 and in press; Deyo 1976). The present chapter examines the changes which have occurred in women's participation in the teaching profession and the way these are related to developments in other areas of the economy and society.

Teaching is a particularly interesting occupation to examine in Singapore for a number of reasons. Since employment as a teacher requires a relatively high level of demonstrated competence in skills taught in formal schooling, the participation in teaching of a social group such as women indicates that they do have some access to the higher levels of education. In Singapore, as in other industrializing nations, the professional occupations are ones which attract the rewards of higher social status such as prestige and income. The largest occupational grouping classified as professionals in Singapore in 1970 were primary and secondary teachers. Participation in teaching is therefore a potentially important indicator of high social status. In most industrialized nations there is ample documentation of women's numerical domination of the teaching profession (Boulding 1977:24-8; Byrne 1978: 212ff.). Yet, associated with this domination is the connotation of teaching being 'women's work' and a tendency for teachers to receive lower pay and status compared with those in other occupations with similar entry requirements. Whether similar patterns exist in Singapore is therefore clearly relevant to discussions concerning the nature and direction of social and economic change. A major feature of Singapore's changing society has been the government's desire for planned change in social and economic areas. Education has been regarded by the government as playing an important direct, and indirect, role in bringing about the desired changes. As a result there has been an extension of direct government control over all areas of education including the training, recruitment and career provisions for teachers. Because of this extensive control an examination of the government's policies relating to teachers highlights certain more general governmental ideas about the role of women in Singapore society.

Women's involvement in teaching

The characteristics of women's participation in teaching in Singapore are illustrated in Table 12.1 which shows how, at a time of absolute increase in the number of teachers, women have become increasingly important in the teaching profession. By 1970 women teachers outnumbered men. Women's prominence however varies with the level at which they teach, for women are less likely to be employed at the secondary and tertiary levels than they are at the

primary level. Figures for 1978 (Singapore 1979d:220) indicate, for example, that whereas 64 per cent of primary school teachers are women, only 51 per cent of the secondary teachers are and, for the tertiary level institutions, the proportion is only 17 per cent. The differential participation of women in teaching relates not only to the level at which they teach but also to their occupation of more senior positions within the teaching profession. Data from the 1970 census show that only 26 per cent of teachers who were classified as school inspectors or principals were women. Information contained in the official 1980 listing of schools in Singapore indicates that the situation has changed little since then as still only 26 per cent of the 463 primary and secondary school principals in 1980 were women and, among the vice-principals, only 31 per cent were women (Singapore 1980). Another indication that women are employed in less senior positions than men is provided by a comparison of male and female wages, for Singapore teachers receive equal pay for equal work, regardless of sex. In 1978 the average monthly basic wage of male teachers was some 5 per cent higher than that of their female colleagues at both the primary and secondary levels (Singapore 1978:47).

Table 12.1

Women's participation in teaching, Singapore

	Total teachers excluding university and higher education	Women (%)	Total all 'teachers'	Women (%)
1921	-	-	984	30
1931	-	-	1890	32
1947	-	-	3142	45
1957	9522	47	9675	47
1970	21980	56	23167	55
1980	25337	63	26497	61

Sources: Nathan (1922), Vlieland (1932), del Tufo (1949), Chua (1964), Arumainathan (1973), Khoo (1981).

The increasing involvement of women in teaching has coincided with a general increase in women's participation in the labour force and in their level of literacy, as Tables 12.2 and 12.3 show.¹ However, the increasing prominence of women in teaching cannot be explained simply by reference to their higher levels of literacy and of participation in the labour force, for, as Table 12.4 indicates, women have for long been somewhat over-represented in teaching and the professions in comparison with their general representation in the labour force. Since 1957 the occupations which have shown most rapid expansion in Singapore have been those classified as professional ones (Neville 1979:150; Singapore 1979a:21). However, women's relative prominence in the professions

Table 12.2

Women's participation in the labour force, Singapore

	Women over age 10 in labour force (%)	Women over age 15 in labour force (%)
1921 ^a	23.0	19.0 ^d
1931 ^b	13.0	12.8 ^d
1947 ^c	16.0	18.1 ^d
1957 ^d	19.3	20.4 ^d
1970 ^e	24.6	29.5 ^f
1978 ^f	-	40.1
1980 ^g	39.3	-

Sources: ^aNathan (1922), ^bVlieland (1932), ^cdel Tufo (1949), ^dChua (1964), ^eArumainathan (1973), ^fSingapore (1979a), ^gKhoo (1981).

Table 12.3

Literacy rates for women, Singapore

	Women literate in any language (%)
1921 ^a	13
1931	14
1947	20
1957 ^b	34
1970 ^b	60
1978 ^b	77
1980 ^b	76

^aFigures only apply to the town of Singapore.

^bFigures are for the population 10 years of age and over.

Sources: Nathan (1922), Vlieland (1932), del Tufo (1949), Chua (1964), Arumainathan (1973), Khoo (1981).

Table 12.4

Women's involvement in various occupations, Singapore

	1921	1931	1947	1957	1970	1980
Percentage of teachers who are women	30	32	45	47	55	61
Percentage of professionals who are women	18	22	33	37	39	39
Percentage of labour force who are women	7	7	13	18	24	34

Sources: Nathan (1922), Vlieland (1932), del Tufo (1949), Chua (1964), Arumainathan (1973), Khoo (1981).

has remained stable since 1970, indicating that they have been less successful than men in establishing themselves in the new professional occupations, for example as architects, engineers, surveyors and related technicians. Teaching is an exception to the general expansion of professional occupations and it is significant to understanding the nature of women's participation in teaching that women's increased prominence has coincided with the contraction of teaching jobs and women's failure to maintain their level of representation in the professions.

A fuller understanding of the changes which have resulted in the present patterns of women's participation in teaching and the reason why their numerical dominance is not equally reflected at the primary and the secondary levels of education and in positions of authority requires an examination of the institutional changes which have taken place in Singapore education and society since the beginning of the century. These changes have occurred in a society whose population consists predominantly of the descendants of immigrants who came to Singapore in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These immigrants came from a variety of different cultural backgrounds of which the major ones were Chinese, Indian and Malay. In 1978 the largest group in the population was Chinese (76 per cent), with Malays 15 per cent and Indians 7 per cent. The proportions of the three groups in the population had actually changed very little since 1901. Associated with these ethnic divisions in the population there have, historically, been separate educational and economic institutions whose existence is important in our understanding of the participation of various social groups in the labour force, since rather different employment markets related to language and ethnicity have existed in Singapore (Pang 1976:327-8). Three main areas of change which directly relate to the nature of the teaching profession will be examined in the next part of the chapter. These areas are the structures of schooling, the provisions for teacher training and, finally, the recruitment policies which directly and indirectly affect teacher recruitment.

The structures of schooling

The significance of the structures of schooling provisions is twofold. First, the structures relate directly to the numbers of teachers needed and to the type of personal and educational qualifications that are sought in prospective teachers. Second, they are important for the way in which access to education and educational achievement may not be equally distributed throughout the population. As a result, certain groups may be less likely to have the skills and qualifications necessary for entering teaching. The major changes which have occurred in Singapore schools during the past century include the expansion of the schooling system to provide more children with education, and to a higher level; the extension of government control over the

operation of schools which has had as one of its consequences the effective decline of the non-English-language schools; and a shift towards coeducational education (Doraisamy 1969; Wong and Gwee 1972; Gopinathan 1974; Loh 1975; Wilson 1978). These changes have come about in a society where the earliest provisions for education were mainly the result of individual initiative by private individuals and Christian religious groups. Government intervention was restricted to providing limited financial assistance to selected schools and a small number of schools for the Malay population. The *ad hoc* approach by the various groups resulted in schools which used a variety of the local languages or English as the medium of instruction, while their curriculums were even more diverse. By the 1900s only a very small number of pupils, mainly boys, were attending the existing schools.

There was, however, a gradual expansion of educational opportunities up until the Japanese occupation of Singapore in 1942. The expansion resulted in part from the increasing numbers of children in the population. There were also certain incentives for obtaining English education, as it was the major avenue for obtaining jobs with the administration or in European commercial firms. In keeping with this vocational orientation the government both provided its own English medium schools and gave financial assistance to private ones. In terms of enrolments in this period the Chinese medium schools included more pupils than the English ones.² Many of these Chinese schools had been founded by private individuals and groups in response to the belief that education was an important means of achieving the political, social and economic changes they considered desirable in China. This orientation made the Chinese medium schools a matter of concern to the government, whose strategy became one of controlling rather than encouraging them (Inglis 1980). In contrast to the situation of the English and Chinese medium schools there was less popular demand for either Tamil or Malay medium education and, unlike the English and Chinese medium schools, none of those which did exist taught at the secondary level. Except for Malay boys who lived close to the school, schooling was not compulsory in Singapore or the other Straits Settlements of Penang and Malacca. With the variations in provisions and support for education between groups, wide differences existed in the access to schooling of children from the various ethnic groups, as the figures in Table 12.5 indicate. Although these figures are for all the Straits Settlements and not merely for Singapore, the trends indicated would seem to have been applicable to Singapore. Girls were less likely to attend school than were boys, regardless of ethnic group. The disparities were greatest for the Chinese and the Malays and the latter, regardless of sex, were also far less likely to be attending English medium schools. Especially in the English and Malay medium schools there were coeducational classes, but the actual numbers of coeducational and non-coeducational classes is unknown. Among many of the ethnic groups there was, however, a preference for girls attending separate classes.

Table 12.5

Percentage of school age population by ethnic group
attending school in the Straits Settlements, 1936

Ethnic group	Percentage of estimated age group		
	English school	Chinese/Malay/Tamil school	
	6-17 years %	6-12 years %	12-18 years %
European and Eurasian			
Males	70.8		
Females	65.9		
Malay			
Males	4.7	92.1	
Females	0.5	30.3	
Chinese			
Males	21.7	59.8	3.0
Females	9.5	22.3	2.2
Indian			
Males	27.3	31.4	
Females	16.0	21.6	
Others			
Males	29.4		
Females	24.1		

Source: Jackson (1939:105-12).

Schooling was extensively disrupted during the Japanese occupation of Singapore (Akashi 1976) and after it ended there was a great demand for school places which proved difficult to satisfy, given the lack of buildings and other physical resources and the lack of teachers. Following the end of World War II, the future of the colony of Singapore became an important political issue. After the re-establishment of the British civil administration in 1946, Singapore was administered separately from the other Straits Settlements, which were incorporated with the Federated and Unfederated Malay States. It was envisaged that Singapore would soon gain independence, but a major issue for the administration to resolve was how this could be achieved in a manner which would avoid communal conflict and promote national unity. Education was seen as playing a major role in achieving such goals and the way in which this was to be done was outlined in the 1947 Ten Year Programme and the 1949 Five Year Supplementary Plan. The policy, while allowing government support for primary vernacular schools, in fact had as its underlying rationale the use of English language

education as the unifying force in Singaporean society. The explanation for this strategy lay largely in the long-standing fear within the authorities of the dangers posed by the Chinese medium schools which, as Table 12.6 shows, had greatly expanded after 1945 by comparison with the English schools, and which were seen as indoctrinating their students with pro-Chinese and anti-British sentiments. In the postwar period these fears were compounded by the establishment of the communist government in China and the outbreak of communist insurgency in Malaya. Although there were continuing modifications to the educational policy to cope with objections which came not only from the Chinese but also the Tamil and Malay medium schools, the conflicts did not end. Indeed, in the period preceding independence in 1959, there were sometimes violent and bloody riots and strikes involving the Chinese medium schools and their students. In 1956, following the Report of the All-Party Committee, major changes began to be made in the educational system. The reorganization had as its most significant result the provision of greater support and acceptance of the non-English medium schools. This was done by means of extending financial support to those private schools willing to receive governmental funding in return for government control, and also by direct government involvement in other areas, such as providing new schools and teacher training. As part of these changes, government control over all aspects of schooling, including the teaching force, was extended.

Table 12.6

Enrolments in Singapore schools by language stream

Year	Total	Language stream			
		English	Chinese	Malay	Indian/Tamil
1941 ^a	71,800	27,000	38,000	5,800	1,000
1949 ^a	115,544	38,302	68,065	7,862	1,315
1957 ^b	259,997	127,853	117,374	13,419	1,351
1968 ^c	384,392	232,376	122,368	27,980	1,668
1972 ^c	365,606	236,072	115,991	12,527	1,016
1978 ^c	311,510	249,676	60,123	1,581	130

Sources: ^aMason (1959:15); ^bSingapore (1959:37); ^cSingapore (1979d).

A major concern of the government of independent Singapore has been to establish the viability of the economy and, given the limited physical resources, the emphasis has been placed on developing the country's human resources. The way to achieve this has been seen as developing a workforce with the training and skills necessary to provide the technical and tertiary services — whether in finance, manufacturing, medicine or education — suitable to Singapore's role as a service and manufacturing centre

for the Southeast Asian region. An important element in achieving this goal has been the raising of the educational level of the population and, as the figures on school enrolments in Table 12.6 illustrate, the government has been extremely successful in this regard. The increased enrolments represent a larger proportion of the population receiving education than was the case in 1936 (Table 12.5), for in 1978 84 per cent of those aged between 5 and 11 were in primary school and 53 per cent of those aged between 12 and 17 were attending secondary school. In the expansion of education girls have achieved far greater access than was previously the case. Indeed, as the figures in Table 12.7 illustrate, by 1978 females were a larger proportion of enrolments at the secondary level in all except the Chinese language stream schools. The level of the government's success is considerable when it is realized that education is not compulsory in Singapore beyond the primary level. An important element in the government's success has been its use of economic inducements to encourage the raising of educational standards. In addition to using these inducements to raise the level of education the government has also been extremely successful in using them to achieve the shift of students into the English medium schools. Whereas in 1957 49 per cent of all students were in English medium schools, by 1978 the figure had increased to 80 per cent. Since then, the trend has been continued with the Tamil and Malay language streams now either closed or about to be closed because of the falling enrolments (see Table 12.6).

Table 12.7
Percentage of female enrolments in various language streams

Schools	1978 ^a %	1972 ^a %	1968 ^a %	1957 ^a %	1936 ^c %
<u>Primary level</u>					
English	47.2	46.9	46.0	42.0	30.7
Chinese	46.8	45.7	44.7	40.5	26.4
Malay	54.4	60.5	59.2	46.1	25.6
Tamil	53.6	59.9	66.4	61.3	36.5
Total	47.1	47.0	46.6	41.7	27.7
<u>Secondary level</u>					
English	52.2	50.4	47.0	34.1	
Chinese	48.9	45.0	42.6	36.0	
Malay	70.2	64.5	58.0	-	
Tamil	66.7	66.8	72.9	-	
Total	51.6	49.6	46.1	36.0	

Note: The figures for 1936 are for the Straits Settlements which included Penang and Malacca as well as Singapore. The figures are not available separately by level, but the numbers enrolled at secondary level in the Chinese and English medium schools would have been small by comparison, e.g. of Chinese medium school enrolments only about 4 per cent of the boys and 6 per cent of the girls were of secondary school age (Jackson 1939:106).

Sources: ^aSingapore (1979d:222, 226); ^bSingapore (1959:48-9); ^cManderson (1978:117, 119).

One factor in addition to the better job prospects which has encouraged the shift of pupils to English medium schools has been the government policy on bilingualism. Although this has taken many forms,³ it has involved the pupil not only in learning two languages but also being taught in two languages. One of the languages is English and the second has been the pupil's own choice from Chinese, Malay or Tamil. As a result of this policy, parents could send their children to English medium schools in the knowledge that they would also acquire a second language. This emphasis on students studying a second language was given even greater importance by the 1979 decision that they would need to pass the General Certificate of Education 'O' Level exam at the end of the lower secondary course in English and another language if they wished to continue with their education.

Over the last century the growth in pupil numbers, which continued until the 1970s when the effects of the government's family planning policy became evident in new school enrolments, has created an increased need for teachers. Even though fewer children are now entering primary school, they are continuing further with their education and this has increased the need for teachers trained to teach junior and senior levels of secondary school. In catering for the increased numbers of pupils, and especially those seeking education in the English language stream, the government has been involved in building many new schools, all of which have been coeducational. Now the majority of Singapore schools are coeducational and, even in those schools which are not, both male and female teachers are employed. With only 1 per cent of all primary and secondary schools neither 'government' nor 'government-aided' the majority of Singapore teachers are now effectively government employees. Even although those working in the government-aided schools are employed by the school board of management, the government is responsible for certifying all teachers and, also, controlling the numbers and types of all teachers employed in these and the government schools. The massive decline in enrolments in non-English medium schools has created an enormous staffing problem because of the oversupply of teachers equipped to teach in Malay, Chinese and Tamil and the undersupply of teachers equipped to teach in English. The solution adopted has been the retraining of teachers to teach in English and the training of new teachers for the English language stream. Now, with the recent decision to require all students to pass the G.C.E. 'O' Level exam in two languages a new need has been created for Chinese, Malay and Tamil language teachers.

Teacher training provisions

The provisions, or lack of them, for teacher training in Singapore have varied extensively both over time and for the different linguistic streams. Furthermore, the nature and quality of the training provided has been very much a result of

the exigencies of the need for extra teachers. Local training of teachers is only one way of meeting this need since immigrant teachers may be used together with those who lack specific teacher training qualifications. Indeed, as late as 1958, half of the registered teachers in Singapore schools lacked recognized teacher training qualifications (Singapore 1959:40-1). In the early days in Singapore the teachers in the local schools were virtually all educated overseas and had migrated to Singapore. The exceptions, who had been educated in the colony, had however only received a general education without specialist teaching.

In the prewar period, government sponsored teacher training courses were mainly provided in the Malay and English language streams where the government had the highest level of commitment. The first actual course provisions for teacher training were made for Malay teachers in 1878 (Wong and Gwee 1972:12). This course ceased in 1895 but in 1901 a training college was opened at Malacca. In 1922 the Sultan Idris Training College for male Malay teachers was opened in Perak and later on a similar college for women was opened in Malacca. These colleges could only train a small number of students each year yet they were the major means for training all the Malay teachers for British Malaya.

Initially, in the English medium schools, provisions were made for pupil-teacher schools which were later replaced by a series of Normal courses. The graduates of these courses were prepared primarily for primary teaching. Unlike the Malay schools, the English medium schools also offered secondary classes which meant a need existed for more highly trained teachers. Until 1928 when Raffles College was set up in Singapore to prepare secondary school teachers, a small number of students were sent for training each year to the University of Hong Kong.

By comparison with the training of Malay and English medium teachers governmental provisions for Chinese, and particularly Tamil, teachers were limited. During the 1930s the government provided a limited number of teacher training courses. The major provisions for training teachers locally were made by the individual Chinese high schools which set up Normal classes. The first of such classes was set up in 1918 in a girls' school and this system continued until 1941 (Kan 1964:172). Whereas Chinese women were trained locally it was more usual for Chinese men to be sent to China for their teacher training. As in the English schools, immigrant teachers played a major role in Chinese schools. In 1941, for a brief period before the Japanese occupation, a privately sponsored Chinese teacher training college enrolled a substantial number of students.

The Tamil medium schools have been described as the poor relations of the educational system in Singapore and British Malaya and this is as true of the provision made for Tamil teacher training as it is for other areas of their operation. The

schools, which were only at primary level, were set up mainly in rural areas under the requirements of the 1923 labour code and the 'teacher' was usually a literate member of the local community who taught what he could to the children. The only regular prewar provision for teacher training was made in 1937 when the government set up a number of part-time courses for those already working as teachers (Arasaratnam 1970:181-2).

In the immediate postwar period, the urgent need for teachers was met by a series of *ad hoc* arrangements which included the provision of Normal courses by the government and the Chinese high schools and a variety of part-time courses. The inability of these courses to cope with the need for trained teachers was indicated by the way in 1958 half of the Singapore teachers still lacked recognized teacher training qualifications. In 1950 the government set up the Teachers' Training College to provide regular teacher training courses. Initially, the College only offered courses in English but in 1954 it offered its first Chinese teacher training course which was followed by a Malay course in 1957 and courses in English and Tamil and then entirely in Tamil from 1962. These Tamil courses replaced a Tamil course set up by the government in 1947 (Gopinathan 1974:15).

For a number of years during the postwar period the training of graduate secondary school teachers was undertaken mainly by the University of Malaya which was set up in Singapore in 1950. Except for a brief period it offered courses only to teachers for the English medium schools (Wong and Gwee 1972:65). Nanyang University also very briefly ran graduate teacher training courses for its own Chinese medium students. From 1960 the Teachers' Training College provided a one-year course for university graduates in both Chinese and English. In 1969 the University of Malaya and the College combined in offering such courses and, when the TTC became the Institute of Education in 1973 and the University of Malaya's Department was closed, the Institute took over responsibility for all teacher training in Singapore.

Since independence, part of the government's economic strategy has been an emphasis on manpower planning which has had widespread effects on education (Skolnik 1976:35). In the case of teacher training the effect has been to limit the intake of students to teacher training courses to those which the system can expect to employ immediately. The numbers to be trained for any one course are advised to the Institute of Education which then selects the appropriate number of trainees from the applicants. With the massive increase in English language pupils the major focus of the Institute's activity in pre-service courses in recent years has been on the training of English medium teachers. In July 1980, however, it again recruited Chinese graduate students in an effort to meet the needs for extra teachers which had resulted from the recent changes in the operation of bilingualism in the schools. Because of the variations in course offerings,

Table 12.8
New enrolments in pre-service teacher training courses for selected years

	Non-graduate courses			Graduate courses			Total	
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F
1979 ^a	186	1348	1534	121	498	619	307	1846
1978 ^a	111	821	932	128	504	642	239	1325
1977 ^a	126	710	836	118	497	615	244	1207
1976 ^a	76	344	420	71	292	363	147	636
1975 ^a	24	113	137	37	185	222	61	298
1974 ^a	19	116	135	14	78	92	33	194
1967 ^b	551	883	1434	123	95	218	674	978
1966 ^b	578	842	1420	147	81	228	725	923
1965 ^b	629	1162	1991	149	91	240	978	1253
1964 ^b	621	848	1469	59	52	111	680	900
1963 ^b	894	1248	2142	121	47	168	1015	1295
1962 ^b	819	601	1420	102	57	159	921	658
1961 ^b	492	305	877	106	58	164	598	443
1960 ^b	375	386	761	82	47	129	457	433
1958 ^b	1315	1172	2487	-	-	-	1315	1172
								2487

Note: Figures for 1976-79 refer to total enrolments during the year and so include students who are new enrolments together with those previously enrolled.

Sources: ^aSingapore, Republic, Institute of Education (1973/74-1978/79).

^bSingapore (1959, 1960-67).

only English stream students have been able to anticipate that a teacher training course will be provided each semester. Students from other language backgrounds have, in recent years, had no such certainty about the possibility of training as teachers.

While the Institute has operated within very rigid guidelines in selecting the numbers of students for training in the various language streams, it has generally been less constrained in its selection of students according to their sex. As an examination of the figures on teacher trainees in Table 12.8 shows, women have, since 1963, consistently outnumbered men in the teacher training courses, particularly those preparing students for primary school teaching. In the courses designed for university graduates, women only began to outnumber men from the 1970s. However, within this group of students there were marked differences between those training to be English stream teachers from the University of Singapore, as it had been renamed, and those from Nanyang University training for work in the Chinese language stream. Among the latter group of students men markedly outnumbered women, whereas among the English stream students the numbers were more nearly equal. The preponderance of women among graduate students from the 1970s is in part related to the limited numbers of Chinese stream students then being trained. Given these figures on student enrolments one begins to wonder why women have not established a greater numerical presence in the teaching profession. The increasing preponderance of women joining the courses can be linked to their increasing numbers at the higher levels of secondary school. However, it is clear that this is not the whole explanation. An important contributing factor lies in the recruitment policies for teaching positions and the way these policies are a response to choices being made in the labour market by potential recruits to teaching.

Recruitment policies

The third major factor which directly affects the characteristics of the teaching profession is the recruitment policies of the employing bodies. Recruitment policy is here used in a broad sense to refer not only to whom is selected but, also, to the level of remuneration and other conditions of employment such as fringe benefits and career prospects. Inevitably, recruitment policy for a particular occupation is related to the whole labour market structure and the relative attractiveness of, and the opportunities which exist for, entering other occupations. An important characteristic of the Singapore economy which has already been mentioned is the existence of alternative, linguistically based, labour markets with rather different characteristics. Although with modernization and economic development the distinctiveness of these markets is declining, nevertheless they do still retain an importance for examining recruitment into teaching.

In the colonial period information on the policies of the diverse bodies recruiting and employing teachers in Singapore is difficult to establish. However, one important feature of their policies was that in single sex schools staff of the same sex as the pupils were preferred. The effect of this preference was that, from the earliest stages of women's education, openings existed for women teachers. Initially, the openings for women in English medium schools were filled by European and Eurasian women who in the earlier period had far greater access to educational opportunities than women from the other groups. However, their relative importance declined as education spread more widely among other groups in society. Another feature of employment policies was that in the vernacular schools teachers educated in the same language as the school's medium of instruction were sought and this inevitably favoured teachers of the same racial background; the major exception was perhaps those teachers employed to teach English in the vernacular schools. For these various reasons it is not surprising to find that Chinese women have been most prominent among the women teachers, since not only were they the largest racial group in the population but the Chinese schools were also the most numerous. The relative over-representation of Indian women teachers compared to their general role in the labour force is partly related to the way women from certain sections of the Indian community had relatively high levels of access to education and, especially, English language education (see Table 12.5 above).

As might be anticipated, the conditions of service varied considerably from one employer to another, though it was standard practice for men to be paid more than women and for 'Europeans' to be paid more than 'Asians'. Malay medium teachers and those English medium teachers employed by the government had the greatest security and, probably, pay. Teachers in the Chinese schools were employed on half-yearly or other short-term contracts and their security of tenure was very limited. Finance was frequently a problem for the Chinese schools and this also affected the teachers' conditions of employment. Of all the teachers, those in the Tamil medium schools had the least satisfactory conditions and few were even employed on a full-time basis (Arasaratnam 1974:180-1).

Towards the end of the colonial period the government increasingly acquired control of the schools and became the sole body formulating policy on recruitment. In examining its policy it is necessary also to consider how the government organized teacher training courses, since with its emphasis on manpower planning the intention was that all students who were admitted to courses, and passed them, were assured of employment as teachers. This policy applied as much to student teachers who opted for employment in the government-aided schools as it did to those who sought employment in the government schools. The former students were in theory appointed by the individual

school whereas the latter were allocated by the Ministry of Education. However, with the changing enrolment patterns affecting the viability of many vernacular schools and the changes in the medium of instruction to involve greater use of English, teachers were frequently moved between government and government aided schools. As a result of the organizational changes which had taken place, by 1980 most teachers perceived little difference in the conditions of service, career and retirement prospects of either set of teachers regardless of language stream or sex for, since 1962, equal pay had existed in the civil service (Cheng 1977:373). This was a great advance on the situation of 30 years previously, for one of the major difficulties facing the government in its attempt to establish control over the non-government schools was the incorporation of teachers from these schools into the system, since many of them either had no qualifications or ones not recognized by the government. Hence they were extremely concerned about their career prospects.

In 1979 a major enquiry was held into Singapore's education system. One important conclusion of the enquiry was that the language strategy underlying the education system had been unsuccessful (Singapore 1979b). The significance of the report lay in the way it stressed the critical need to remedy the faults it saw in education. The resulting attention devoted to remedying the defects in education indicated the crucial role which it was seen to play in social and economic development. One area which the report addressed itself to was the status and allegedly low morale of teachers. One cause of the difficulties in this area was seen in the report to be the relatively poor promotion prospects for non-graduate and, to a lesser extent, graduate teachers by comparison with their peers in other areas of the civil service. Another area concerned the standard of teacher qualifications. While the report made certain recommendations about providing teachers with opportunities to improve their qualifications, many of the major changes in policy were announced separately. Thus, in 1979, there was a major review of the salary and promotion structures for teachers which was designed to make the job more attractive. Another move in this direction was the announcement in 1980 that payments to trainee teachers would be increased, especially for those with graduate qualifications. At the same time, the training course became a full-time instead of mainly part-time course. The clear aim of these changes was to improve the status of teaching and so attract into teaching a better quality person.

No mention was made in the report of the role of women in teaching, yet this was an issue which had concerned the government for some time. At one stage in the course of economic development women were exhorted to take over various economic tasks such as teaching so as to leave men free to undertake more important tasks. As we have seen, women had little hesitation in moving into teaching, while many men left it to

seek the better job prospects they saw elsewhere in the economy. The relative absence of men from teaching soon began to cause concern to the administrators. One reason given for this concern was that women were less ambitious and so less willing to apply for promotions to more senior positions.⁴ As a result, there were some fears about the future supply of school principals and administrators. Another reason was that boys should have male authority figures to look up to in the school (*Straits Times*, 13 March 1978).

In an attempt to overcome the shortage of men it was decided to ease the entry requirements for men entering non-graduate teacher training courses. This was done by waiving the requirement that the qualifications necessary for entry were all to be obtained at the one exam (*Straits Times*, 3 March 1979). The relaxation and certain salary inducements however had little effect on the numbers of men applying to enter the teacher training courses.

The lack of government success in currently attracting men into teaching indicates that the social and economic situation of teachers today is somewhat different from earlier periods. Traditionally, in the cultures from which Singapore's population came, teachers were, as men of learning, accorded considerable respect. In the early years of settlement this respect still existed for teachers who were one of the few professional groups in the society. Teaching was thus an attractive occupation to men while, for the limited number of educated women, it was one of the few 'acceptable' occupations, even though the conditions of service were variable.

In the postwar period independence and the economic expansion have created many new job opportunities in both the public and private sectors. These opportunities have, in practice, been more readily available to men, especially those with an English language education (Clark and Pang 1970; Pang 1980). A survey of students at the Chinese language Nanyang University in the early 1970s demonstrated that they felt they were disadvantaged in obtaining jobs by comparison with graduates from the University of Singapore (Lind 1974:169). The material already considered on the predominance of women graduates and, earlier, male Chinese-language graduates in the teacher training courses would fit in with an interpretation that these groups entered teaching because of lack of opportunities in other areas. A somewhat similar conclusion was reached in an extensive survey of trainee teachers in 1965 (Teachers' Training College, Singapore 1967:42). In the case of the women, lack of alternatives may be supplemented by a rather more positive attraction to teaching because of the way it is seen as either fitting in with feminine traits such as an interest in children or giving the women an opportunity to combine their work and family roles as mothers and wives.

For some time now, girls in Singapore have been more highly represented in secondary school than boys, yet a much smaller proportion of these women go on to tertiary level, and especially to the universities. Among those who do not proceed to university are a number who enter primary or lower secondary level teaching. For this group, the relative economic and social attractions of teaching may be somewhat greater than for those who obtain a university degree. Thus in the other large white-collar or semi-professional occupations for which average monthly salaries are given in the *Yearbook of Labour Statistics* (Singapore 1979d) the salary of female primary teachers is very high. For many years there has been extensive debate in Singapore about the low social status of teachers (Phua 1971) which many commentators link to a lack of professionalism (Lee 1971). This lack of professionalism often relates to the performance of the considerable range of tasks which teachers are expected to undertake and which vary from supervision of teeth-cleaning to ensuring the preservation of the moral fibre of the nation's youth. Nevertheless, teaching as an occupation still also retains not only economic attractions but has somewhat more prestige than many other alternative jobs. Another major attraction in teaching is the hours of work for, with two sessions operating in most schools, teachers usually teach for only half a day. In addition, teachers are usually also able to have the school holidays free of teaching commitments.

None of the attractions of teaching mentioned so far are unique to women. In Singapore though teaching has typically been seen as a job well suited to a working woman who can at the same time fulfil her role as a wife and, later, a mother. The extensive acceptance of the latter role has been described as characterizing Singaporean society (A.K. Wong 1975:78-90; 1976a: 307-7; 1976b:214-15). However, the importance of teaching's attractions is more relevant to discussions, not of entry into teaching, for few women are married when they start their training, but of continuation after marriage and motherhood. A comparison of the proportion of married women teachers with married women in the workforce generally does indicate that an above average proportion of teachers are married. The figure was 50 per cent in 1970 compared with 31 per cent among the whole female workforce and, by 1978, the comparable figures were 58 per cent and 36 per cent. While noting these figures it is at the same time interesting to compare the figures for men and women teachers. These show that a larger proportion of men than women teachers are married. This observation suggests that women are less likely to find it desirable, or possible, to continue to teach after marriage. The reasons typically given for why teaching is an appropriate occupation for a married woman relate to the longer holiday periods and the shorter hours of work which allow a woman to fulfil her domestic roles. The ready availability of domestic servants previously made such considerations less important for a woman who could afford to employ them (F. Wong 1964:419)

but in recent years their availability has lessened and child care centres are also fairly limited in number (A.K. Wong 1976b: 214). It is in organizational features such as this as much as in the perception of links between child care and teaching, that teaching has been viewed in Singapore as appropriate 'women's work'.

In the 1970s, the significance of teaching as an occupation for women had changed considerably from the prewar period. At that time when a woman working outside the home was unusual, especially for women from higher socio-economic status families who were the ones best placed to provide daughters with an education, teaching was almost the only acceptable occupation for a woman from such a background. This point was illustrated on her retirement by the Chinese principal of a prominent girls' school who noted in her reminiscences how, in 1939 when she started teaching, it was the only alternative her family allowed her apart from getting married or continuing to remain unemployed (*Straits Times*, 16 February 1978). As she described, the acceptability at that time of teaching lay in the way it was possible to work as a teacher in the relative seclusion of an all female environment. Such an explanation for the acceptability of teaching applied as much to the Malay and Indian women as it did to the Chinese. Even given the limitations implicit in such an acceptance of teaching, the women who chose to enter teaching at that time can be viewed as pioneers who were extending the range of roles available to women. In some cases, as with many of the early women teachers who came from China, their aim was to bring about social change through education. In other cases, it seems women were more concerned with personal independence.

By the 1970s, however, women's participation in the workforce had increased substantially, as had the range of white-collar jobs they occupied. In addition, a much larger proportion of women had sufficient educational qualifications to become teachers. As a result, the women who now enter teaching are no longer pioneers in the same sense as their prewar predecessors. For many of them, teaching may well be just another job, albeit one with certain desirable features. If these women continue to work after marriage there is, nevertheless, evidence that their attitudes to work and family roles will differ from those of the women who leave the workforce on marriage (A.K. Wong 1975: 78-90; 1976b:215).

Government policy and changes in the status of teachers

At the beginning of this chapter it was noted that a feature of the predominance of women in teaching in other countries has been the generally low status of teaching as indicated by the relatively poorer pay and conditions of service for teachers. The observation of its relevance to Singapore was raised as an issue

for consideration. As the preceding description has indicated, the parallels in the Singapore case are limited since, in conjunction with a predominance of women, major efforts have very recently been made to raise the status of teachers by improving their pay and conditions of service.

These efforts have been largely initiated by the government and may seem somewhat paradoxical in view of patterns elsewhere. However, they in fact are far less so when it is realized that they result not from a valuation of teachers' (and hence very much women's) contribution to education but, rather, an assessment of it as unsatisfactory and in need of improvement by making teaching more attractive to the best type of person. Earlier sections have already indicated how education is assigned an important role in producing the highly skilled workforce considered critical to the realization of the further economic development of Singapore. This workforce, in addition to having certain basic technical skills is seen, equally importantly, as having certain personal characteristics which include 'ruggedness' and the 'moral fibre' which underlies respect for authority and self-discipline. The right type of teacher is clearly a person who is able to inculcate the appropriate knowledge and values into the pupils. It is therefore a highly significant indicator of the government's views on women that the ideal person they seek to attract to teaching is clearly a man.

It is too simple to see the emphasis on the importance of attracting men as merely an indicator of the vitality of the profession because of how it signals the ability of teaching to attract those with a large range of job offers. More important is the insight it provides into the implicit ideas that are held about the characteristics of women which render them unsuitable for undertaking many necessary tasks. The widespread criticisms of Singapore teachers as lacking professionalism are usually accompanied by specific examples which often relate to a lack of 'commitment', and of social responsibility which may be evidenced by 'clock-watching', and unwillingness to take on tasks outside the classroom, or to keep up with recent developments in teaching. Such criticisms are often seen as being most appropriate to married women whose family role is seen as conflicting with their role as teachers. Women in other professions are also apparently seen in a similar way for in explaining the decision to restrict the proportion of women admitted to medicine to one-third in 1979 mention was made of how they were less willing to undertake the duties required of a newly trained doctor and, also, were more likely to discontinue practising as doctors (*Straits Times*, 11 March 1979).

Another characteristic of women, which is implicitly seen as making them less than satisfactory in promoting the not-so-hidden curriculum underlying Singaporean education, is their lack of 'ruggedness' and the difficulty they thus face in

promoting it in their pupils, especially through the various extra-curriculum activities (a compulsory and assessable part of all schooling) involving certain types of sport and other outdoor activities. The importance placed on 'ruggedness' is well illustrated in the comments made by the then Minister of Education, who had headed the enquiry into the Singapore education system, on the receipt of a report from the committee set up to examine the provisions for moral education in the Singaporean schools. Dr Goh said, 'There is a reference in your annex to the need to avoid dangerous games. Literally interpreted, this would mean the discouragement of manly games such as football and rugby. We will not have a rugged and robust society if we discourage children from playing such games' (Singapore 1979b:iii).⁵

The stereotyped beliefs about 'women's' characteristics can often be supported by reference to women's actual behaviour. Yet, to do so, omits consideration of how the behaviour developed within the context of conservative views on women's behaviour. As a well-known commentator pointed out in a more general discussion on the position of women, 'The progressive males of the later 40's and through the 50's were able to fight for the political freedom in Singapore, then ruled by the British ... Today, as the Government, they hold enlightened views about almost everything, but strangely enough, when it comes to women, the line is, up to a point, but not further' (Tan 1972:76). The conservative views also have a close affinity with the traditional cultural values which members of the government frequently cite as providing the moral and cultural ballast necessary to sustain the society in its move into new technologies and economic structures (A.K. Wong 1976b:216-17). Once the strength of these views is appreciated it becomes more apparent that the strategy of the government in seeking to improve the status of teachers is also aimed at reducing the 'feminization' of teaching in Singapore.

Notes

1. Figures for labour force participation and literacy should be treated with caution as they are not strictly comparable for different years because of the different bases for estimation which are available from the census. Estimates for labour force participation for 1921, 1931 and 1947 for women aged 10 and over are based on the formula used by Fong (1975:5-6).
2. Doraisamy (1969:38) cites figures of school enrolments in Singapore before 1941 which show that of a total of 72,100 pupils, 27,000 were in English schools, 5800 were in Malay schools, 38,000 were in Chinese schools, 1000 were in Tamil schools and 300 were in the trade school operated by the government.

3. A brief summary of the changing bilingual provisions is contained in Singapore (1979b:2-3).
4. A survey of the reasons why teachers declined an interview for promotion gives some support to these views. Of those who declined, 56 per cent were described as married women and 16 per cent as single. Among the reasons given for their refusal to apply was that they considered themselves too junior, they were content with being classroom teachers, they had only recently been promoted, they did not want more responsibility, and, finally, they did not want to upset the equilibrium between their family and official roles (*Straits Times*, 10 Jan. 1978).
5. Another example of how the government seeks to encourage desirable traits is through its incorporation of 'measures' of them in the criteria for promotions. Often such criteria may involve traits which are not able to be displayed by women. Such an example was a proposal that performance in military reserve training (which women do not compulsorily undergo) should be taken into account in decisions about promotion in civilian jobs such as the public service (*Straits Times*, 25 May 1980).

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