

NOTA-NOTA PENYELIDIKAN/ RESEARCH NOTES

DEVELOPMENT, MALAY WOMEN AND ISLAM IN MALAYSIA: EMERGING CONTRADICTIONS

by Nilufer Narli

[Increased educational opportunities - which is an extension of rapid economic development in Malaysia - and the Islamic resurgence are significant social forces, operating in divergent directions, in bringing about changes to the position of Malay women. At this conjuncture, tertiary education, which has been observed in some societies to be a vital "liberating" force, is counterposed to Islamic resurgence. The traditionally prescribed role of Malay women has been both reinforced and reconstituted by the values, morals and norms generated from the Islamic resurgence. Under such circumstances, Malay women students are caught in a cognitive dilemma and respond in a variety of ways in an attempt to reconcile the values of one to the values of the other.

Peningkatan peluang pelajaran--yang bersangkutan dengan pembangunan yang pesat di Malaysia--dan kegiatan agama Islam adalah kuasa-kuasa yang bergerak mengikut beberapa arah untuk membawa perubahan kepada kedudukan kaum wanita Melayu. Setakat ini peningkatan tinggi, seperti yang terdapat di dalam beberapa buah masyarakat, adalah kuasa "membebaskan", iaitu bertentangan dengan peningkatan kegiatan agama Islam. Peranan tradisional yang di tetapkan ke atas kaum wanita Melayu telah diperkuat dan dipadankan oleh nilai, moral, dan norma kehendak agama Islam. Di bawah keadaan ini, penuntut perempuan Melayu adalah terperangkap di dalam satu dilema kognitif dan bertindak dalam beberapa cara untuk menyelaraskan nilai seseorang dan nilai orang lain.]

INTRODUCTION

This paper focusses on the changing role and status of women in Malaysia. This issue of women should be put in a larger and more general frame of reference: can it be expected that in rapidly developing Asian countries the process of capitalist development, industrialisation and urbanisation would, as in the West, be accompanied by the sort of "ideological" change (viz., departure from traditional, old values and ideas:

'In the context of the paper, the concept of "culture" is conceived as synonymous with the concept of "ideology". Culture is an ideological medium, through which personality formation, interpretation and justification of the social actor's action, operate. See Clifford Geertz, 1973 "Ideology As A Cultural System", in *The Interpretation of Culture*, Clifford Geertz, New York: Basic Book, Inc. Publishers, pp. 193-234. See too, Clifford Geertz "Rituals and Social Change: A Javanese Example" in *ibid.*, pp. 126-142.

emergence of secular culture and conception of man as a rational individual; emphasis on individual achievement, material improvement and related work ethic; greater application of scientific method to various phases of life, including daily life; and the idea of women's liberation? Or can we expect a different ideological change - perhaps a revival of indigenous culture and/or religion from within which is seemingly in dissonance to the rapid socio-economic development taking place?

At first glance, it appears as if the first scenario is unlikely to take place with regard to the position of women because of the difference between women in Malaysia and their Western counterparts in terms of their specific structural, social, cultural and historical conditions. In particular, the social context for women in Malaysia - the socio-cultural-religious nexus of traditional customs, beliefs and relations - is quite different from that of Western culture. Further-more Malaysia, like Indonesia, India and Pakistan has experienced a recent history of colonialism. Finally, the tempo of capitalist development, industrialisation and urbanisation in Malaysia is faster than the Western experience which was, a gradual historical process, influenced largely by forces from within.

If indeed the first scenario does not emerge, then we should ask ourselves instead what are the implications of a revival of culture and/or religion for the position of women in a rapidly developing country? And how has the recent experience of rapid socio-economic change, industrial development and the accompanying ideological change affected women, their response to change and the 'ideational elements'⁴ which define gender relations?

²The economic transition of the West through industrialisation and urbanisation acted as a catalyst in changing the old socio-cultural system and structure, and led to achieving equality among sexes. According to Mill, the consequences of modernisation and economic development are essentially liberating for women. See John Stuart Mill, 1980, "The Subjection of Women" in *Essays in Sex Equality*. Alice Rossi, ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 123-242.

³Joseph R. Gusfield examines the assumption of the linear theory of change and indicates the difficulties in its use in the context of Asian countries. See Joseph R. Gusfield, 1967, "Tradition and Modernity: Misplaced Polarities in the Study of Social Change", *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 72 (January): 351-62.

Also see W.F. Wertheim, 1964, *East-West Parallels*, Netherlands: W. Van Hoeve Ltd., The Hague.

⁴In the context of the paper "ideational elements" refer to the social, cultural and religious values.

Malay women in tertiary education form the basis of this research because the particular situation and experience of these women provides a good example of responses to the question above. Presently, Malaysian society is undergoing rapid economic development and change. However, while increased educational opportunities, increasing participation of women in the labour force (see appendix) and greater access to communication media are evident, other trends of change are manifested in the form of religious resurgence. The number of young Malays involved in the Islamic Movement⁵ seems to be increasing rapidly and they, as compared to those from the older generation constitute a majority. Presently, the Islamic Movement functions as a challenging social force for the younger Malay generation and it has been said that "the Islamic culture is becoming an alternative ideology for living, perceiving and rationalising their life"⁶.

In Malaysia, the religious beliefs and values are potentially a key influence upon Malay women's response to challenges generated by rapid economic change mainly because of two reasons. Firstly, the traditional Malay socio-cultural system was based on the system of customs and practices which comprise of *Adat* (The customary law) and *Islam* (religion). Even though there are differences between different states, all Malays share a common basic custom (*Adat*) and the common religion, Islam, which draws Malays together in sympathy"⁷. Following this, the role and status

⁵Islamic resurgence has been a phenomenon since the late 1970's in Malaysia. Presently it has become a nationwide movement through the activities of "Revivalist organisations - MAM, Darul Arqam, Jamaat Tabligh". Young Malays are experiencing a new awakening of Islamic consciousness. The reasserted Islamic consciousness functions as an ideology in politics, economic, culture and social life. See, M. Abu Bakar, 1981, "Islamic Revivalism and Politics in Malaysia", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 21 (October); 1040-1059.

⁶See M. Abu Bakar, 1981, "Islamic Revivalism and Politics in Malaysia", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 21 (October): 1040-1059, pp. 1042.

⁷Wazir Karim also draws attention to the attitudes of the younger Malay generation to the Islamic Movement. She observed that

"Islam is being increasingly used as a source of moral education reducing the importance of indigenous Malay social values as a basis for social identity and organisation. Religious knowledge and Islamic rituals have become the guide to everyday living..."

"For men and women who are members of these movements or associations (viz., MAM, Darul Arqam, Dakwah Tabligh, ABIM and PERKIM), religious activities have become a basis for socialisation and cultural identity..."

See Wazir-Jahan Karim, 1984, "The Status of Malay Women in Malaysia: From Culture to Islam and Industrialisation", *International Journal of the Sociology of the Family*, Illinois. Forthcoming.

⁸See P. Wilson, 1962, *A Malay Village and Malaysia*, New Haven: Hraf Press.

of Malay women are clearly affected by what is prescribed by *Adat* and about socio-Islam.⁸ Secondly, Malay women are very much exposed to religious teachings and ideas. The religious teachings (i.e. Koran reading courses at the society. the age of early childhood) are an integral part of the process of early of sosio-eco socialisation among Malays.⁹ Even though the religious resurgence does not recognised a specifically focus on women, it can affect them both directly and indirectly in Malay w due to the potential of Islam in reinforcing the partriarchal elements in the how wo Malay socio-cultural value system. arising from

The Islamic Resurgent Movement can give a direction and also control THE RESE the Malay women's response to change by providing a new set of values and moral codes which reinforce the maintenance of traditional standards (eg. Current the ideal Malay women as a loving mother and wife, ideal Malay girl as a modernising shy (*malu*) and obedient (*kepatuhan*) virgin (*Anak dara*)).¹⁰ It can especially hi strengthen the pre-existing inequitable gender-relations and social situation of Malay women through acceptance or reinforcement of their nominally other resea inferior status, exclusion of women from the public domain and limitations changing vai on women to exert formal power.¹¹ It can also directly influence social rules developed W in the public domain through restrictions on women's freedom of move growing bod ment. changes in w

Under these circumstances, Malay women experience social tension arising out of differing perceptions among various groups (i.e., religious education a leaders, political leaders, community members, women's organisations cross's stud aspirations c appropriate themselves.¹² changes)

⁸See L. Manderson, 1980, "A Woman's Place: Malay Women and Development in Peninsular Malaysia", in *Issues in Malaysia Development*, James C. Jackson and Martin Rudner eds./Kuala Lumpur: Heinemann Educational Books (Asia Ltd.), pp. 233-237. p. 234.

⁹See William Wilder, 1970, "Socialisation and Social Structure in Malay Village" *Socialisation: The Approach from Social Anthropology*, Philip Mayer, ed., London Tavistock Pub..

¹⁰See Judith Djamour, 1959/*Malay Kindship and Marriage in Singapore*, London: London School of Economics, Monographs on Social Anthropology, No. 21, Athlone Press, 109.

¹¹In relation to traditional rural Malay women and their role and status in the society and the socialisation of Malay girls, see Rosemary Firth, 1966, *Housekeeping Among Malay Peasants*, New York: Athlone Press; Ronald Provencher, 1921, *Two Malay Worlds: Interaction in Urban and Rural Settings*, Berkeley: Research Monograph No. 4, University of California, especially pp. 139-147, 176; Malliha V. Narendran "Women of Perupuk", M.Sc. Thesis, USM, Penang, 1975; William Wilder, "Socialisation and Social Structure in a Malay Village" in *Socialisation: the Approach from Social Anthropology*, Philip Mayer ed., London Tavistock Publ., 1970; Teoh Jim Inn, "Marriage, Family and Education in Malaysia", paper read at seminar on *Planning For A Better Family Life*, Genting Highlands, 2-5 May, 1974

¹²The development of communities are externalities are extension and urbanisation

¹³See UNESCO Draft Report, N Development Strategy Reference to Women

¹⁴See K.P. Chednick, S.S. Thirumanian and K. Thirumanian and K. Thirumanian, "Working Women in Malaysia", O. Ramir, Institute

at and about socio-economic change and the direction of future developments, including the ways in which these changes affect women's role and status in society. Thus, within the context of the study which concerns the impact of socio-economic change on Malay women, the Islamic resurgence is to be recognised as a significantly influential social process in patterning changes in Malay women's role and status. It is also vital to answer the question as to how women can cope with the conflict - both social and individual - arising from diverse social forces.

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM: WOMEN AND EDUCATION

Currently, research in the area of women's studies has emphasised the modernising influence of urbanisation, industrialisation and education - especially higher education¹² - on the status and role of women, in developing countries, with reference to changes in their attitudes and values.¹³ Other researchers have focused on the relevance of tertiary education to changing values and attitudes underlying gender relations, in the context of developed Western countries, Middle East countries and Asian countries. A growing body of literature reveals that in the United States, the significant changes in women's values and ideas concerning their traditional role, and career aspirations occur as a response to the gradual extension of tertiary education and the re-socialising influence of university education. K.P. Cross's study showed that higher education increasingly raises the career aspirations of America female students and changes their concept of the appropriate role of women', and also developed consciousness of themselves.¹⁴ M. Lansing's study showed that higher education dramatically changes political attitudes and increases the active participation of

¹²The development of education and increased expansion of tertiary education opportunities are extensions of rapid economic development. They are also related to industrialisation and urbanisation taking place in developing countries.

¹³See UNESCO, 1982, *Regional Expert Meeting on Women Studies and Social Science*, Draft Report, New Delhi: Indian Council of Social Science Research Centre for Women's Development Studies, p. 41. And also see APCWD, "Notes on Data Collection with special reference to Women", Bangkok, p. 8.

¹⁴See K.P. Cross, 1975, "Women As New Students" in *Women and Achievement*, M.T.S. Mednick, S.S. Tangri, L.W. Hoffman, eds., New York: John Wiley and Sons, pp. 339-353; D. Coleman and K. Terrel, 1975, "Sex and the Process of Status Attainment: A Comparison of Working Women and Men", *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 40 (April): 174-200; J.A. Weiss, O. Ramirez, T. Trancy, 1976, "Female Participation in Occupational System: A Comparative Institutional Analysis", *Social Problems*, Vol. 23 (June): 593-608.

women in the political domain.¹⁵

In the Middle East countries, where social pressure to conform to social, religious prescriptions is very strong, especially when it concerns women, similar findings were reported by Nadia Youseff. Youseff concluded that university education has fostered career aspirations and modified values concerning marriage, mother - role and work.¹⁶ Culpan's and Marzotto's study on the attitudes and expectations toward work and marriage of male and female university students in Turkey concluded that college-educated Turkish women are becoming more career-oriented and they give relatively less importance to marriage.¹⁷

In the sixties, Ruth F. Woodsmall, drawing on her research on women in Asia: Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Afganistan, Indonesia and India, pointed out the "liberating force" of tertiary education, especially its potential to provide economic independence to women which, in turn, brought about profound changes in the traditionally prescribed role and status of women.¹⁸ In relation to the situation of Malay women in the sixties, Hashimah Roose observed that compared to the previous years, "nowadays, the number of Malay girls at university, either locally or abroad, is increasing yearly". She also asserts that due to this factor, there is a change in these women's attitudes towards their traditional role. "They do not want to accept their subservient and relatively minor role in the home".¹⁹

¹⁵See Marjorie Lansing, 1976, "Political Change for the American Women" in *Women in the World*, L.B. Iglitzin and R. Ross, eds., Oxford: Elio Book, pp. 175-185; Marjorie Lansing, 1973, "Women: The New Political Class", in *A Sample of Women's Studies*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Marjorie Lansing, 1974, "American Women: Voter and Activist" in *Women in Politics*, Jane S. Jaquette ed., New York: John Wiley and Sons, pp. 5-25.

¹⁶See Nadia H. Youseff, 1974, *Women and Work in Developing Societies*, Berkeley: University of California Institute of international Studies; Nadia H. Youseff, 1970, "Women in the Muslim World" in *Women in the World*, L.B., Iglitzin and R. Ross eds., Oxford: Elio Books, pp. 203-219.

¹⁷See O. Culpan and T. Marzotto, 1983, "Changing Attitudes Toward Work and Marriage: Turkey in Transition", *Signs*, 8 (Winter): 337-351.

¹⁸See Ruth F. Woodsmall, 1960, *Women and the New East*, Washington D.C.: The Middle East Institute, p. 363. Also see p. 364-5.

¹⁹See Hashimah Roose, 1963, "Changes in Position of Malay Women", in *Women in the New Asia*, Barbara, E. Ward, ed., Paris: UNESCO.

For my paper, the research will concentrate on the impact of the broader socio-economic changes - structural changes - on gender relations in conjunction with the overall ideological changes. The research problem is to investigate the influence on Malay women students of tertiary education in conjunction with the potency of the Islamic resurgence, especially the re-socialisation and ideologising influence on the process of discarding or retaining the traditional, pre-existing values and ideas, and the process of conceiving different aspirations and redefining the image of the ideal woman and of the self.

The research strategy adopted in this study incorporates the phenomenological approach on the one hand, and a macro-level analysis on the other hand.²⁰ The phenomenological approach aims to capture the essence of social reality through perceiving particular social phenomena as "subjects perceive/feel it".²¹ This approach allows the researcher to focus on the processes of change in the micro dimension of the social system and to understand in depth, the social phenomena (Malay women's response to social change) at the individual level. It can increase the sensitivity of the researcher to the individual crisis, conflicts and dilemmas which are manifested in a "veiled form". Through this, the researcher can be better understand the various strategies open to Malay women to cope with the conflict, and in adjusting the religious, traditional values within the context of their changing life.

However, even though the point of entry is the individual, the individual dilemmas, and crisis will be explained in terms of the conflict and tension within the larger social setting.²² In this way, the link between the changes at the level of the individual can be related to overall socio-cultural and ideological change. Similarly, the process of socio-economic change at the individual level - as a result of the New Economic Policy, introduced by

²⁰Even though we prefer a phenomenological approach here, the qualitative or soft data obtained via it, will eventually be converted into a more or less quantitative form.

²¹The phenomenological approach enables the researcher to understand and to perceive social phenomena (in question), from the "actor's own frame of reference". See R. K. Yin and S.J. Taylor, 1975, *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods*, New York: John Wiley and Sons, p. 2; see B. Smart, 1976, *Sociology, Phenomenology and Marxian Analysis*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; Harold Garfinkel, 1975, *Studies in Hermeneutic Methodology*, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc. Eaglewood Cliff.

²²For Adorno, Marcuse and From, the crisis and conflicts of politics are to be explained in terms of personality disturbances and conflicts, individual conflicts and personality disturbance, in turn, are to be explained in terms of social structure.

See Adorno, 1950, *The Authoritarian Personality*, New York: Harper and Row; H. Marcuse, 1955, *Eros and Civilisation*, Boston: Beacon Press; E. From, 1956, *The Fear of Freedom*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

the Malaysian Government in the 1970's and the overall expansion of the economy, will be explained in terms of overall structural changes.

Respondents in this study were final year female Malay students drawn from the five universities in Malaysia. A simple random sampling method was used to select the respondents. Sample size was 150 students out of a total number of 1326 final year female Malay students in 1984.²³ There were two main reasons for the selection of female Malay final year students. The first was to investigate if access to tertiary education was associated with higher career aspirations and the changes in the concept of the appropriate role and place of women. Secondly, this group constituted one which has had a long experience (four or five years) of being the target of opposing socio-cultural forces. (viz., the process of socialisation through informal, religious agents versus the process of undergoing scientific modern education). The difficulties and dilemmas in confronting these opposing forces provide an opportunity to discover the main areas of social conflict between modernity and tradition in Malaysia.

The data was collected through participant observation and interviews, during the five months in the 1983-1984 academic term. Both structured and unstructured interviews were used. Each interview lasted from one and a half hours to two hours. The final form of interview schedule was developed from the experience of previous informal interviews, participant observation and a pilot study which comprised ten respondents. Respondents were interviewed individually in their dormitory rooms. This allowed the researcher to communicate with the respondents in a more friendly and informal way.

REFLECTION OF THE STUDY: THE MALAYSIAN EXPERIENCE

As a general overview, some tentative generalisations can be drawn on the direction of socio-cultural change among Malay women students.

With regard to the influence of tertiary education, it can be observed that a significant number of female Malay students are not willing to agree that women's place is in the home or that their primary role is that of mother and homemaker. They feel that there are opportunities for them in the public domain to advance as men do and to enter into occupations which had hitherto been closed to them. However even though they are able to

²³The number of final year female Malay students was obtained from the records of each university provided by the Registry of the five universities, namely Universiti Malaya, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Universiti Pertanian Malaysia, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Universiti kebangsaan Malaysia.

ate these opportunities with the access to education and development they have received, most of them perceive that these opportunities are *only* possibilities. These women do not insist on the actualisation of these possibilities, because according to some, they lacked personal capacities and ambitions to actualise the potential open to them. This was evidenced by their 'average' or 'poor' academic achievement for example as stated by several of them: "I am a *sederhana* (average) student". Others believed that there is discrimination against women and obstacles to the socio-economic development of women.

What are these obstacles? What is the source of these obstacles? Firstly, some respondents talked about structural obstacles (eg. difficulties for promotion, inability to enter the primary labour market, absence of leadership positions in the public domain). The other perceived obstacles are the additional values or customs which do not reinforce active participation in the social, economic and political fields among Malay women. Thirdly, individual obstacles can be recognised. Many respondents believed that women should give primary importance to their family and that women are not supposed to compete with their husbands or other men in the public domain. The other individual obstacle is their conviction that the chances of finding a husband are negatively correlated with the increase in their socio-economic status.

Other obstacles may be identified as arising from a narrowly interpreted version of religion. This version of religion would oppose any sort of modernisation or change concerning women's status and role by branding it 'haram'. It calls on women to be obedient to husbands and not to participate in employment as soldiers, ministers, directors or leaders in the community. But employment as clerks, teachers, nurses, and doctors (for women patients) are seen as suitable. This interpretation of religion is seen as emphasising the responsibilities and moral obligations of a "good Muslim woman" especially in upholding Islamic faith, supporting and encouraging their men either in the domestic sphere or in the socio-political sphere and reproducing and educating new generations of Muslims. In addition, it emphasises the veiling of women and seclusion from the public domain especially away from the company of men, other than the husbands.

All the moral injunctions and prescriptions are imposed on Malay women students either through religious books, magazines (*risalah-risalah Dakwa*) and tapes (which are recorded by religious groups) or through religious meetings (*ceramah Dakwa*). Malay women have access to such information because most of them attend religious meetings, read Islamic publications and listen to these tapes (in their rooms).

This narrowly interpreted version of religion could have several consequences. It could work as a process of subordination and confinement of

female labour in the domestic domain and marginal sector, and in the fields which have been defined as orthodox feminine (i.e., teaching, health care, secretarial jobs). It could also limit Malay women from exercising power in the public domain, and prevent the development of female leadership. This version of religion does not encourage women to play roles as agents of power (minister, director, manager, leader) or agents of control (police, army), but encourages them instead to accept patriarchal and religious authority through obedience to husband and Allah, and through obedience of women supporters to male leaders.

In a significant number of cases, behavioural norms required by the patriarchal authority and /or religious authority, are internalised in the modes of self-presentation (passive, shy (*malu*), obedient (*kepatuhan*), modest/moral (*maruah*), a good Muslim woman), and self-image, role and position in society. The ideal Malay woman is defined as a good mother, a serving and pleasing wife who is satisfied in the family rather than in society and a bearer of the responsibility to spread Islam among other women and to give Islamic education to children.

It is also pertinent to examine here the nature of university education and its potential in bringing about attitudinal and ideational change. University education seems to be geared more towards values and attitudes underlying career or work rather than towards encouraging traditional standards such as men are superior to women or women's place is in the home and their primary role is that of mother/homemaker. What are the implications of such a situation? It may be an indication of the discrepancy between the so-called formal, modern institution - the university education which is supposed to be a state apparatus to implement the values, ideas and behavioural norms that can lead to development of the country - and the informal institutions (i.e., youth and religious movements).

The other area of tension is the conflict between *Adat* and Islam, which are two major integral dimensions of the traditional Malay social system. This conflict can be illustrated by referring to the field-work experiences of the researcher. I found that some of the respondents objected to a particular question. The question was "what are the characteristics/qualifications that best define an ideal Malay woman?". These response was "there is no such thing as Malay women; there is Muslim women (*Wanita Islam*)". Further, it was mentioned by some that "we do not answer this question, unless you change the question and replace 'Malay women' with '*Wanita Islam*'. In other cases, it was stated that "nowadays, there is only one tradition, that is Islamic tradition/culture and we like to follow and practice it". However, in some cases, the respondents did emphasise the importance of Malay tradition and *Adat* for themselves and for the Malay society, and they stated that "Malays should preserve *Adat*".

So it appears that for a particular group of Malays, the process of individual identity formation operates through the "new ideological medium" of Islamic culture and ideology. When they say "I am Muslim rather than Malay", they justify their preference in terms of the belief that "Islam is the best system among alternatives, and the true salvation of society. The Koran is the best guidance for individuals and society". In fact, this ideological medium is culturally linked to the indigenous, pre-existing ideology of peasants Malays, where it has always had a strong base. Recently, this Islamic ideology has been cherished both on the individual level and "officially", and offered as a more comprehensive value system, one better able than the indigenous value system to help Malays to cope with the rapid socio-economic change taking place in Malaysia.

The third area of conflict is the discrepancy between the so-called materialistic values, and other worldly values or "*akhirat*-oriented values". One of the main appeals of the religious group is in its call for "actualisation of the spiritual self" rather than "actualisation of the social-material self". It sets a low value on material achievement and a high value on religious morality (i.e., emphasis on being a good Muslim, having a strong faith (*beriman kuat*) and salvation in other world).

I observed that some respondents who support the Islamic Resurgent Movement internalised the other worldly values, and strive to become perfect Muslims. They expressed this desire by saying that "The most important thing for me in my life is Islam. My main aim is to prepare myself for *akhirat* (hereafter) and to strengthen my *iman* (faith)". Through this rationalisation they could be rejecting values which are essential for the social and economic development of Malay women.

In contrast to this group, some women conceived the idea of equality between sexes and a desire to achieve success in their profession. They believe that besides performing religious duties, they should obtain knowledge and work hard towards their future. However, not many of them welcomed new modern values without ambivalence, and they experienced tension between religious morality and social reality.

The third group, who constituted the majority of respondents, tend to be responsive to the appeal of the Dakwa Movement but at the same time they (not many) have developed critical attitudes and a questioning stance towards the present position and role of Malay women in society. Further, they hold more or less higher life-expectations and desire to achieve socio-economic development. More significantly, some of them are conscious of their dilemmas due to discrepancies within their own consciousness (i.e., conflicting ideas, desire, perceptions). They have resolved their dilemmas by modifying and redefining new values within an Islamic framework. This is done by referring to the Koran or 'Hadith' whenever they need to rationalise

their particular ambition or action which can be considered "haram". They believe that women can achieve success in their careers and "work is not 'haram' ". But for them, the qualities of what is an ideal Malay women are intricately linked up with the qualities of being a good Muslim, responsible mother, obedient wife and being prepared for *akhirat* as well. All these responses²⁴ may reflect the general consensus on Islam as an alternative ideology and true salvation of Malay women and of society.

So far, it is evident that most Malay women have been pulled back into their traditional domain. Patriarchy has become more subtle and elaborate through the ideological support generated by the Islamic Resurgent Movement. Obviously, Malay women are supporting this movement even though most of them realise that the ideology of Islamic movement cannot be relevant to feminist demand and 'women's emancipation'. In the context of this paper, women emancipation refers to the ability of women to exert direct or indirect power and influence on important decisions at the social, political and individual levels and the ability of women to realise herself and determine the important decisions in her life. From that viewpoint of women's emancipation, it can be concluded that these Malay women are not in favour of women liberation. In their mind, it is a threat linked with decadent Western influence.

Most Malay women students share ambivalent feelings and suspicions about socio-economic changes, modernisation and women liberation. At the same time, they also experience economic and other pressures in adjusting to the changing Malaysian life. They have to work to provide financial support to the other members of their families; they desire to raise their socio-economic situation and to satisfy their families who want to have a university educated son or daughter.

These ambivalent feelings, individual crises and social tensions need not necessarily set up a 'static block' on the ways towards social change and economic development. They might function as a 'challenging momentum', a process towards the end in a dynamic way. In other parts of the world, the forces of conflict between tradition and modernity has been regarded as functioning as a dynamic force. Indeed one author has argued that:

"The desire to be modern and the desire to preserve tradition operates as significant movements in the new nations and developing economies. It is our basic

²⁴The variations in the responses to Islamic resurgence will be examined in terms of the class, geographical background - urban or rural - education (i.e. medium of instruction, type of school) as well as individual factors as family or personal.

²⁵See Josep
dy of Social

points here that these desires, functioning as ideologies are not always in conflict; that the quest for modernity depends upon and often finds support in the ideological upsurge of traditionalism. In this process, tradition may be changed, stretched, and modified, but a unified and nationalised society makes great use of the tradition in its search for a consensual base to political authority and economic development".²⁵

It remains to be seen whether this creative fusion of tradition and modernity will emerge in Malaysia.

²⁵See Joseph R. Gusfield, 1967, "Tradition and Modernity: Misplaced Polarities in the Study of Social Change". *American Journal of Sociology*, 72 (January): 351-62, p. 358.

APPENDIX 1: FEMALE EDUCATION AND LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION IN CONTEMPORARY MALAYSIA.

In 1947, the first college for Malay women, Tunku Kursiah College, was established. The curriculum, however, emphasised domestic science.

After Independence, in 1957, Malaysia women were provided with increased educational opportunities. Statistical data reveals that from 1950-1974, the number of women in education rose. In 1950, the enrolment of women in tertiary education (in the University of Malaya in Singapore) numbered 146 out of the total enrolment of 830. In 1961, the enrolment of females in tertiary education (in the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur) was 2.38 of the total enrolment of 1010.² In 1974, the proportion of women had increased to more than 30% of those enrolled in tertiary education in Malaysia.³

Since 1970, there have been significant changes and improvements in Malay women's opportunities for tertiary education, due to the changing educational policies. The New Economic Policy, which was initiated in 1970 and aimed both to eradicate poverty and eliminate economic function with race, has led to improvements in Malay's opportunities for tertiary education. Malay women too benefitted from these improvements.

The percentage of Malay students registered for the various certificate courses at the various local institutions of higher learning increased from 41% in 1971 to 62.4% in 1980. The percentage of Malay students enrolled in degree courses in local universities increased from 40% in 1971 to 66.7% in 1980. By 1980, Malays constituted 47.3% of the total local and overseas university student population.⁴ For further details, see TABLE I.

¹See KANITA/NACIWID, 1983, *Forum on the Development of Women in Malaysia* Universiti Sains Malaysia: 30th. November, p. 35.

²See UNESCO, 1970, *Higher Education and Economic Growth in South-East Asia* Singapore: Regional Institute of Higher Education and Development, Tables 15, p. 47.

³See L.N. O'Brien, 1970, *Class, Sex and Ethnic Stratification in West Malaysia*, with particular reference to Women in the Professions. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Monash University Appendix A. Tables AL-A14, pp. 610-618

⁴See Toh Kim Woon, 1984, 'Education as a Vehicle for reducing Economic Inequality', *Ethnicity, Class and Development in Malaysia*, S. Husin Ali, ed., Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Sains Sosial Malaysia, pp. 224-265, Table 15, p. 253.

⁵See Charles ... and Socio-Economic ... Table I.

TABLE I
NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF
TERTIARY QUALIFICATIONS BY ETHNIC GROUP,
PENINSULAR MALAYSIA, 1970 AND 1980.

	University Degree		Other Tertiary Diploma		Total Tertiary	
	No. (000s)	%	No. (000s)	%	No. (000s)	%
Malays	2.3	19	7.6	33	10.0	28
Chinese	6.3	50	10.8	47	17.0	48
Indians	2.5	20	3.1	14	5.6	16
Others	1.4	12	1.4	6	2.8	8
TOTAL	12.5	100	22.9	100	35.4	100
Malays	21.9	38	17.2	54	39.1	44
Chinese	24.2	42	10.8	34	35.0	39
Indians	7.5	13	2.5	8	9.9	11
Others	3.5	6	1.4	4	4.9	6
TOTAL	57.0	100	31.9	100	88.9	100

SOURCE: Population and Housing Census of Malaysia, 1980. Department of Statistics, Kuala Lumpur. Table 6.7, p. 98.

The New Economic Policy has brought concomitant changes in occupational structure as well. The proportion of Malays who were in the professional, technical and related workers' group increased from 46% in 1970 to 55% in 1980. (see TABLE II). It will be seen that changes in the socio-economic development of Malaysia have influenced the labour force participation of women. Hirschmann observed a significant growth in the economic production of Peninsular Malaysia from 1960-1970, measured by gross domestic product (GDP) at factor cost.⁵

⁵See Charles Hirschmann, Akhbar Aghajanian, 1978, "Women's labour Force Participation and Socio-Economic Development: The Case of Peninsular Malaysia, 1957-1970". Paper presented at the *Annual Meeting of the Rural Sociological Society*, San Francisco: August, p. table I.

TABLE II
PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE EXPERIENCED LABOUR FORCE, AGED 10 AND OVER, BY
OCCUPATIONAL GROUP AND ETHNIC GROUP, PENINSULAR MALAYSIA, 1970 AND 1980

Occupational Group	Number 1970	(000s) 1980	Malays		Chinese		Indians		Others	
			1970	1980	1970	1980	1970	1980	1970	1980
Professional, technical and related workers	129.4	261.9	46	55	39	34	13	10	3	1
Administrative and managerial workers	20.3	38.2	23	26	65	64	8	6	4	4
Clerical and related workers	133.3	304.5	36	50	48	39	15	10	1	1
Sales Workers	236.7	357.3	23	29	66	63	11	8	-	-
Service Workers	225.4	331.2	46	59	39	29	13	12	2	1
Agricultural, animal husbandry, forestry, fisherman and hunters	1322.1	1256.6	69	70	21	18	9	11	1	1
Production and related workers, transport equipment operators and labourers	542.8	993.5	34	42	55	46	11	12	-	-
Occupation uncertain	126.3	250.2	56	54	33	35	10	10	1	1
TOTAL	2736.4	3793.1	52	54	36	35	10	11	1	1

SOURCE: Population and Housing Census of Malaysia, 1980. Department of Statistic, Kuala Lumpur. Table 7.18, p. 132.

*See, *Ibid*, p.

*See, *Ibid*, p.

The over
64, rose fr
ked to the

"The Ma
an averag

"The Malaysian economy grew by two-thirds over this ten year period, implying an average annual growth rate of over five percent."⁶

The overall women's labour force participation rate, for those aged 15 and over, rose from 31% in 1957 to 37% in 1970. This increase may be directly linked to the significant socio-economic development during this period.⁷

⁶See, *Ibid*, P. 10. Figure 1

⁷See, *Ibid*, p. 7.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adorna, T., 1950, *The Authoritarian Personality*, New York: Harper and Row
- APCWD, 1980, *Notes on Data Collection with Special Reference to Women*, Bangkok.
- Bogdan, R. and Taylor, J.S., 1975, *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods*, New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Cross, P.K., 1975, "Woman As New Students" in *Women and Achievement*, M.T.S. Mednick, S.S. Tangri and L.W. Hoffman, eds, New York: John Wiley and Sons, pp. 339-353.
- Culpan, O. and Marzotto, T., 1983, "Changing Attitudes Toward Work and Marriage: Turkey in Transition". *Signs*, Vol. 8 (Winter): 337-351.
- Djamour, J., 1959, *Malay Kinship and Marriage in Singapore*, London: London School of Economics, Monographs on Social Anthropology, No. 21, Athlone Press.
- Department of Statistics, 1980, *Population and Housing Census of Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur.
- Garfinkel, H., 1975, *Studies in Ethnomethodology*, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs.
- Geertz, C., 1973, *The Interpretation of Culture*, New York: Basic Book, Inc. Publishers.
- Gusfoeld, K.J., 1967, "Tradition and Modernity: Misplaced Polarities in the Study of Social Change", *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 72 (January): 351-62.
- Firth, R., 1966, *Housekeeping Among Malay Peasants*, New York: Athlone Press.
- From, E., 1956, *The Fear of Freedom*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Hirschmann, C. and Aghajanian, A., 1978, "Women's Labour Force Participation and Socio-Economic Development: The Case of Peninsular Malaysia, 1957-1970". Paper presented at the *Annual Meeting of the Rural Sociological Society*, San Francisco, August.
- Inn, J.T., 1974, "Marriage, Family and Education in Malaysia". Paper read at the Seminar on Planning For Better Family Life, Genting Highlands: 2-5 May.
- KANITA/NACIWID, 1983, *Forum on the Development of Women in Malaysia*, U.S.M. 30th. November.
- Lansing, M., 1973, "Women: The New Political Class" in *A Sampler of Women's Studies*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- , 1974, "American Women: Voter and Activist" in *Women in Politics*. J.S. Jaquette, ed. New York: John Wiley and Sons, pp. 5-25.
- , 1976, "Political Change for the American Women" in *Women in the world*, L.B. Igitzu and R. Ross, ed., Oxford: Clio Book, pp. 175-185.
- Manderson, L., 1980, "A Woman's Place: Malay Women and Development in Peninsular Malaysia". in *Issues in Malaysian Development*, James C. Jackson and M. Rudner eds., Kuala Lumpur: Hieneman Educational Books (Asia Ltd.), pp. 233-273.
- arcuse, H.
J.S., 19
Chica
hamad A.
21: 10
endran, V
Brien, L.,
Refere
ty.
vencher, I
Resear
ose, H., 19
E. Wa
art, B., 19
Kegan
eman, D. a
of Wo
174-200
ESCO, 19
Region
ESCO, 19
Report
Develop
zir, J. Kari
Industr
Forthco
kiss, J.A., R
A Com
nheim, F.V
der, W., 19
Approa
son, P., 19
odsmall, F,
stitute.
on, K.T., 1
Develop
Malaysia
seff, H.N.,
Californ
976, "Wom
eds., Oxi

- Mcuse, H., 1955, *Eros and Civilisation*, Boston: Beacon Press.
- J.S., 1970, "The Subjection of Women", in *Essays on Sex Equality*, Alice Rossi, ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 123-242.
- Hamad A. Bakar, 1981, "Islamic Revivalism and Politics in Malaysia", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 21: 1040-1059.
- endran, V.M., 1975 "Women of Perupuk", M.Sc. Thesis, U.S.M., Penang.
- Brien, L., 1979, "Class, Sex and Ethnic Stratification in West Malaysia with Particular Reference to Women in the Professions", Ph.D. Thesis, Melbourne: Monash University.
- wencher, R., 1971, *Two Malay Worlds: Interaction in Urban and Rural Settings*, Berkeley: Research Monograph No. 4, University of California.
- ose, H., 1963, "Changes in Position of Malay Women", in *Women in New Asia*, Barbara E. Ward, ed., Paris: UNESCO.
- art, B., 1976, *Sociology, Phenomenology and Marxian Analysis*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- ewoodman, D. and Terrel, K., 1975, "Sex and the Process of status Attainment: A Comparison of Working Women and Men", *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 40, (April): 174-200.
- ESCO, 1976, *Higher Education and Economic Growth in Southeast Asia*, Singapore: Regional Institute of Higher Education and Development.
- ESCO, 1982, *Regional Expert Meeting on Women Studies and Social Science*, Draft Report, New Delhi: Indian Council of Social science Research Centre for Women's Development Studies.
- ir, J. Karim, 1984, "The Status of Malay Women in Malaysia: From Culture to Islam and Industrialisation", *International Journal of the Sociology of the Family*, (November). Forthcoming.
- ess, J.A., Ramirez, O.F., Trancy, T., 1976, "Female Participation in Occupational System: A Comparative Institutional Analysis", *Social Problem*, Vol. 23 (June): 593-608.
- theim, F.W., 1964, *East-West Parallels*, Netherlands: W. van Hoeve Ltd., The Hague
- der, W., 1970, "Socialisation and Social Structure in Malay Village" in *Socialisation: The Approach from Social Anthropology*, Philip Mayer, ed., London: Tavistock Pub..
- son, P., 1962, *A Malay Village and Malaysia*, New Haven: Hraf Press.
- odsmall, F.R., 1960, *Women and the New East*, Washington D.C.: The Middle East Institute.
- on, K.T., 1984, "Education as a Vehicle for Reducing Inequality", in *Ethnicity, Class and Development in Malaysia*, S. Husin Ali, ed., Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Sains social Malaysia.
- seff, H.N., 1974, *Women and Work in Developing Societies*, Berkeley: University of California Institute of International Studies.
- 1976, "Women in the Muslim World", in *Women in the World*, L.B. Iglitzin and R. Ross, eds., Oxford: Clio Books, pp. 203-219.