

*Visible Women in East Coast Malay Society: On the Reproduction of Gender in Ceremonial, School and Market* by Ingrid Rudie. Oslo, Norway: Scandinavian University Press, 1994, 337 pp. ISBN 82 00 21919 4.

Reviewer: Nor Faridah Abdul Manaf, Department of English Language and Literature, International Islamic University Malaysia.

Norwegian Professor Ingrid Rudie is not a new name in social anthropological research on Malay women. She has researched and published extensively on women in Islamic societies, changing roles of Malay village women and Malay female leadership. In the *Visible Women in East Coast Malay Society*, Rudie describes her research (done over the period of 8 months between visits in 1986 and 1988) as a follow-up study of her earlier research in Kelantan in 1964-5. The second study investigates changes in gender relations especially concerning women who in 1965, were seen as having wider and freer roles as wives, mothers and businesswomen. They owned, inherited, bought and sold land. They dominated the bazaar and had more say on family economy and family politics.

As Rudie charts changes and development of Malay women in Kelantan in the 1960s and later 1980s, one is reminded of an assertion brought forth by Malaysian anthropologist, Professor Wazir Jahan Karim in her book *Women and Culture: Between Malay Adat and Islam*. Karim argues that the Malay *adat* (custom/tradition) liberates Malay women and gives them freedom to say and act. Rudie seems to share this belief but observes that the long established customary laws favouring women continue to thrive despite the Islamic revival in the 1980s:

According to customary law, women have had as much right to land as men, and this principle has tended to be a major one even after Islamic law gave people the idea that men could or should be favoured (p.202).

The general theme of this book is of change and continuity in gender relations in a rapidly developing society. Rudie is an acute observer and she gives a balanced and interesting account of Malay women in Kelantan in their roles as wives, working women and women in community. There are two chapters in the book which explore how women form and shape their identities through interactions and good networking. However, she observes that the Malay women in Kelantan are still restricted in their thoughts and actions especially within the domestic sphere of marriage and family life:

The Islamic rhetoric about the rights and duties of men and women in marriage has gained more influence. The idea of the male as the main provider was not very salient in 1965; it is now. The rule of the husband's right and duty to sanction the woman's movements is stated very explicitly now; there is nothing in my old field notes to indicate that this was as clear in the 1960s (p. 289).

The impact of Islamic revival in the 1980s is hinted at as something regressive in this passage. However, the book is useful in the sense that it records changes in Malay women in Kelantan over the period of 20 years. The issue to be raised here is Rudie's simplified and often inaccurate accounts of certain Islamic religious practices. The methodological and theoretical framework used by Rudie may not be relevant or sufficient to interpret certain norms and behaviours of Kelantan Malay women. Rudie's misconceptions of the business transactions done Islamically (doing the *akad*/statement of intention) or the position of female family members in a mass prayer led by a male family member (on pages 220 and 247 respectively) are a couple of examples which illuminate the limitations of anthropologists who spend a few months or years in between flights home but often emerge triumphant as an authority on a people and/or a location.

The book nonetheless makes an interesting reading. The language is clear and there are diagrams which help make an argument lucid. Rudie's affection for and fondness of Kelantan and Kelantan Malay women is nicely conveyed in this book. The title may be a little bit misleading for the book does not sing the praises of visible women in East Coast Malay society as one would have expected. The book also speaks of why Malay women remain invisible in Kelantan.

The book will be most useful for researchers who are interested in the study of gender relations and construction of identities in a complex and changing society.

*Study on Second Language Learners of Arabic: An Error Analysis Approach* by Jassem Ali Jassem. Kula Lumpur: A.S. Noordeen, 2000, pp 410. ISBN 983-065-093-6.

Reviewer: Haja Mohideen Mohamed Ali, Department of English Language and Literature, IIUM.

The learning of Arabic as a second or foreign language has gained much importance among Muslims, emphasizing the importance of