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Laura Summers and William Wilder (eds), *Gender and the sexes in the Indonesian Archipelago*. (complete issue of Indonesia Circle 67 (November 1995), pp. 165-359.)

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The articles in this volume, first presented as papers at a conference of the Association for South-East Asian Studies in the United Kingdom, add to the literature on gender in Southeast Asia. Although that literature may seem extensive by now, this publication is certainly not repetitive or redundant. On the contrary, besides presenting a wealth of data, it attests to how useful and refreshing an approach which focuses on gender and gender relations can be, even when examining seemingly well-known facts.

Following an introduction by Laura Summers and William D. Wilder, there are eight articles – all by anthropologists – each relating to one single area within the 'Indonesian Archipelago'. The latter must be seen in a broad perspective here, as southeast Madagascar and the Malay peninsula are also included. The titles of the contributions reflect the themes discussed. They are: 'Orang Laut women of Riau: an exploration of difference and the emblems of status and prestige' (Cynthia Chou); 'Gendered possession and communication among the Rejang of Sumatra' (Enid Nelson); 'The circulation of men: marriage practices and gender relations among the Bajau of Sabah, East Malaysia' (Jean Morrison); 'Transgressing boundaries: the changing division of labour in the Balinese weaving industry' (Ayami Nakatani); 'Hierarchy or complementarity? Gendered expressions of Minangkabau adat' (Carol Davis); 'Rethinking the mother's brother: gendered aspects of kinship and marriage among the Northern Lio, Indonesia' (Signe Howell); 'More on madness: the case of Malay divorce' (William D. Wilder); and 'Of houses, hearths, and granaries: some aspects of gender among the Temanambondro of south-east Madagascar' (Philip Thomas).

The volume contains some fine ethnography, such as Nelson's description of various occasions of spirit possession among the Rejang. Not surprisingly in a work on gender relations, several authors (Davis, Howell, and, most extensively, Morrison) give accounts of wedding ceremonies, their preparations and aftermath. Many of the theoretical issues discussed – the position and role of the mother's brother, for instance, and the so-called circulation of women – have been the concern of generations of anthropologists. The contributors, however, have rather original viewpoints on these issues. On the figure of the mother's brother, traditionally considered to be of eminent importance in matrilineal societies, Signe Howell suggests that it might be worthwhile to examine his functioning in patrilinear societies more closely. She does so on the basis of her findings among the Lio of Flores, where matri-

groups have a subtle but fundamental function alongside the prominent patri-groups. Lévi-Strauss' well-known concept of the 'circulation of women' is reversed by Jean Morrison to become 'circulation of men', when she shows the female-centredness of relations in household and kinship among the Bajau. Carol Davis also questions Lévi-Strauss' approach, particularly on the strength of the Minangkabau case. In contrast to most authors, who have presumed that there is a male-dominant system in Minangkabau, Davis (referring to adat as reflected in traditional historiography, sayings, kinship roles and life cycle ceremonies) observes a complementarity between the genders.

Apart from such innovations and addenda to long-established theories, themes which have aroused interest among anthropologists more recently are also addressed. Prominent among these is the concept of the 'house', which has a special role in the articles of both Thomas and Nelson. Here, however, illustrations would have enhanced the clearness of the arguments – a remark which also holds true for some of the arguments on kinship in other articles. Wilder's approach to divorce fits into the contemporary interest, in the social sciences, in emotions and intimacy, as is evident from his specific question: '[A]re there gender-bound emotions associated with Malay divorce?' (p. 318). His attempts to find an answer, however, seem to be flawed. The author presents us with various case histories, most of which narrate the marriage and divorce histories of individuals and their feelings regarding them, but he does not relate these explicitly to their gender. Overall, there appears to be no adequate analysis from the gender perspective, and thus no clear ground for the conclusion that 'largely gender-neutral sentiments of *halus*, *malu* and *susah hati*' are involved here (p. 333).

Another contemporary question, that of 'identity', is addressed more than once. The Orang Laut are becoming more conscious of being different (with regard to gender roles, for example) from the Malays who reside in the same area as they are confronted with the pressures of the Indonesian government, which tries to control nomadic groups through its programme for the 'Management of Isolated Populations'. This is one instance of 'change' and its effects on gender relations; another is to be found in the article by Ayami Nakatani about Bali. Modifications in the technical and processual aspects of weaving, in demand for various types of cloth, and in economic conditions, have contributed to the development of new types of labour division, not only regarding the sexes but also regarding the *warna* ('castes'). Weaving is not, as before, the exclusive domain of women (or of men considered 'feminine'), and this 'indicates the breakdown of conventional gender ideology' (p. 264). However, this breakdown appears only partial, as the same 'traditional gender ideology discourages women from opting for a wider variety of occupations, especially those requiring higher education and mobility' (p. 250). A historical perspective on the weaving industry, and a consideration of the

impacts of development, 'modernization', are also discussed.

In the other context, the differentia of the Rejang, for instance, in the changing world of monetarization, colonialism, and traditional materialism. However, they are merely a reader. The prohibitions on cousins, for example, in the social system of the Rejang, and the daughter were fundamental, either implicitly or explicitly, in the form of relations between them, which at the end of the day, were more conflict than those of the Rejang.

If one thing bears in mind, and the flexibility of the question posed by the author, men are 'categorical' in their difference or because of their flexibility. Spaces and roles for Lio people in the context of the Rejang, corresponding to the different ways of becoming more prominent in Bali recent development of such borderline established order in the Rejang. Howell's attitude regarding the application, at all levels, of descent, and suggestive significance.

It is hard to discuss the creative attempts and implications of conference. The fact that all of the above, with gender in some way, is not sufficient as a measure of its own merits – a

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impacts of developments such as the Japanese occupation, tourism and 'modernization', are noteworthy features of this article.

In the other contributions change is less prominent, but it is always a factor. The differential forms of spirit possession for males and females among the Rejang, for instance, appear to be related to their differing contacts with the changing world. In all articles, relatively recent developments such as monetarization, conversion (to Islam or Catholicism), and the replacement of traditional material and objects by modern ones play a role. Sometimes, however, they are mentioned only in passing, which can be frustrating for the reader. The prohibition by the Catholic missions of marriages between first cousins, for example, must surely have had profound consequences for the social system of the Lio, in which marriages of sister's son with brother's daughter were fundamental. How do the Lio cope with this? Various articles deal, either implicitly or explicitly, with other symptoms of 'change' in the form of relations between generations and between ethnic groups – relations which at the end of the twentieth century might well carry more potential conflict than those between men and women.

If one thing becomes clear from this volume, it is the fluidity of boundaries, and the flexibility of dichotomies. Regarding gender, the answer to the question posed by the editors as to whether in Southeast Asia women and men are 'categorically different kinds of persons, either because of biological difference or because of relations of dominance' (p. 173) appears to be negative. Spaces and roles are hardly gender-bound among the Orang Laut, while for Lio people in certain circumstances it is appropriate to perform roles not corresponding to their sex. Borderlines between sexes among the Rejang have become more pronounced through the intervention of state and Islam, while in Bali recent developments have contributed to an increase of transgression of such borderlines (which in any case were never completely closed). That established ordering principles should not be automatically accepted is also Howell's attitude regarding kinship analysis. She questions the viability of the application, at all costs, of categories and concepts such as clans and double descent, and suggests instead an analysis that 'takes account of the interpretative significance of gendered ideas, values, practices' (p. 296).

It is hard to discover a clear focus of the volume as a whole, despite the creative attempts of the editors to help us here. That typical ailment of publications of conference papers, a lack of coherence, has not been avoided here. The fact that all of the articles were written by anthropologists, and all deal with gender in some rural area somewhere in the Indonesian culture area, is not sufficient as a point of convergence. We can better assess each article on its own merits – and these are, in most cases, abundant.