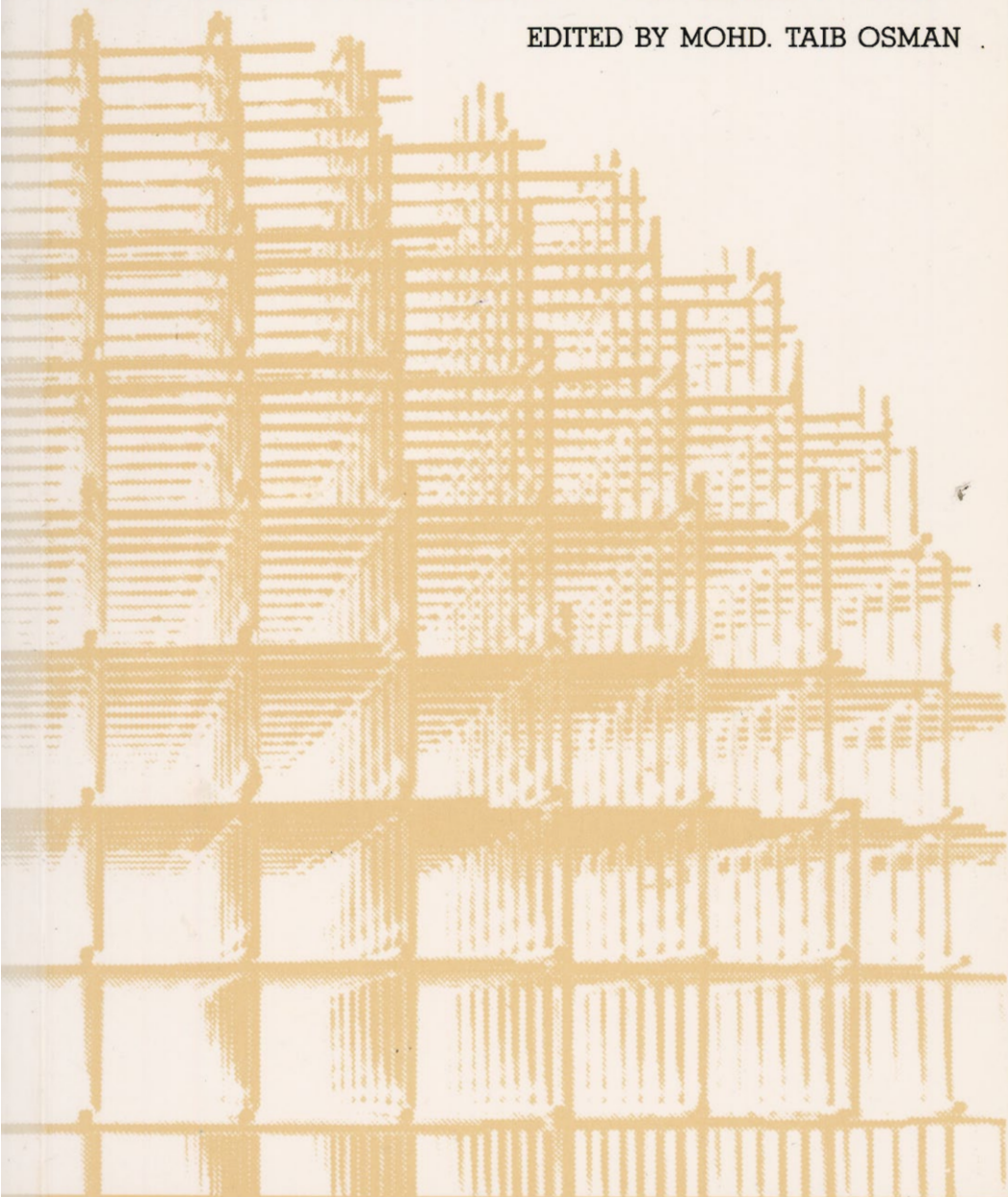
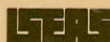


MALAYSIAN WORLD-VIEW

EDITED BY MOHD. TAIB OSMAN



SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES PROGRAM



INSTITUTE OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES

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INTRODUCTION

MOHD. TAIB OSMAN

The essays collected in this volume arise from the need to introduce the world-view of the peoples of Southeast Asia to the outside world as much as to the Southeast Asians themselves. It is a myth that Southeast Asians know themselves or about each other, for after the experience of thousands of years of history, and being truncated into many states and kingdoms over the past hundreds of years, and further subjected to various colonial rules and Western influence in recent times, the peoples of Southeast Asia are as varied in their background as ever in spite of the efforts to bring them together with the formation of ASEAN. It is to foster better understanding between the Southeast Asian nations, whose creations were very much a colonial legacy in the region, that the project to describe and discuss the world-view of each people or nation was envisaged.

Malaysia gained its independence from the British in 1963, as a result of the unification of three colonial territories -- British North Borneo, Sarawak and Singapore -- and the independent states of the Federation of Malaya. In 1965, Singapore left Malaysia, thus leaving the eleven states in the Malay Peninsula and the territories of Sabah (North Borneo) and Sarawak to forge a new nation. There are many factors that make Malaysia a viable nation, an important factor being that more than half of the people are indigenous and most of them adhere to Islam as a religion. Because of the background of the nine Malay

states which formed the backbone of the new nation and which had Islam as their official religion, the Federation of Malaysia adopted Islam as the official religion of the state, although it does not make Malaysia a Muslim state.

Bearing this fact in mind, the first essay presented here deals with the Islamic world-view of man, society and nature among the Malays of Malaysia. In it, one finds an exposition of how a universal religion like Islam finds expression in the books of kitabs as written by Malay scholars in the past. Although Islam provides the inviolable tenets through Allah's revelation to Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be unto him) as found in the Qur'an, Islam has encouraged man to enquire and research further, to seek the truth of His word. The Malay scholars during the Islamic period had written a great number of works dealing with the teachings of Islam, and this "kitab literature" as it is known amongst scholars, has influenced the Malay mind over the last 500 years. It is not in keeping with reality therefore to ignore Islam from the Malay's world-view, for it forms the very essence of his personality. Thus, Mohd. Nor Ngah's essay is placed first in the present volume.

However much the Malay is imbued with Islam, he has as part of his cultural heritage, the traditions he had with him before he was converted to Islam. To-day, although Islam provides him with the foundation of his life, as a human being he still has his cultural roots to contend with. In reality, many facets of his life are still dictated by his pre-Islamic past, a combination of his indigenous and Hindu heritage. Realising the importance of this, the second essay by Mohd. Taib Osman attempts to deal with the traditional Malay socio-political world-view. As stated in the essay, the unifying factor in the constitution of Malaysia, the Yang Di Pertuan Agong, was born out of a contemporary political necessity, yet the institution is an old one, going way back to the early history of the Malays. Besides