

BOOK REVIEWS

FAMILY LAW IN SINGAPORE. BY LEONG WAI KUM. [Singapore: Malayan Law Journal. 1990. xxiv + 431 pp. (including index). Hardcover: S\$185.00.]

IN 1976 Kenneth Wee wrote an introductory survey on *Family Law* in the Singapore Law Series. In 1978 Professor Ahmad Ibrahim wrote a more substantive textbook on *Family Law in Malaysia and Singapore*, and produced a 2nd edition in 1984. Associate Professor Leong's new work charts a different course from the other two by setting out the subject in the form of cases and materials from Singapore accompanied by the author's commentary.

It is therefore not a textbook but it is also not simply a case book. The commentary is substantial and incisive, increasing our understanding of the cases as well as pointing out the problems raised by them. Indeed, the author's remarks are so penetrating that one longs for a more comprehensive exposition of the law so that the reader may have a more complete understanding of the subject from this book. The author raises many tantalising questions, most of which are not answered. Perhaps this is inherent in the difficulties of the subject itself, but the author's views would undoubtedly have been enlightening.

However, one of the aims of this book is to function as a textbook for students of Family Law in Singapore, and in that context the value of questions without answers may be appreciated. On the other hand, Associate Professor Leong also indicates in her preface that the work is intended as a contribution to legal learning in Singapore, politely indicating that it may be used by lawyers "seeking to refresh their minds" (if truth be told, many of the questions raised by her were never considered by our present generation of lawyers in the first place!). From this point of view, having regard to the fact that Family Law is no longer a compulsory subject for the LL.B. course, a more expository and less Socratic approach would have proved more useful for practising lawyers. But the author has given us so much that is praiseworthy in this book that it seems churlish to ask for more.

Some other criticisms:-

- * The table of contents could have been expanded to list all the materials included rather than simply enumerating the topics covered. While there is a table of cases there is no table of other materials.
- * Inasmuch as the work seeks to be a sourcebook of Singapore Family Law it would have been helpful to have had a comparative table of the Women's Charter showing the changes in the section numbers through the various amendments to the Charter. A further valuable addition would have been a tabulation of all the cases where the various sections have been interpreted or discussed.
- * For the same reason, a bibliography of articles and treatises on Singapore Family Law (such as the one set out in Kenneth Wee's book) would have been extremely valuable. No doubt the author has good reasons for omitting selections from certain articles and even textbooks on Singapore Family Law. But the usefulness of this work as a sourcebook is somewhat diminished by the lack of a bibliography.
- * The typeface and layout of the different materials leave something to be desired. In a book where source materials are combined with commentary, document design is all important for easy referencing and it is not always easy to distinguish between the source materials and the commentary.

These are but minor complaints against a stimulating work of scholarship, which is to be warmly welcomed.

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