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Book reviews


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Over the last 45 years Myanmar/Burma has attracted worldwide attention. In October 2004 the prime minister, General Khin Nyunt, was suddenly dismissed. The State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) thereby lost its third pillar. The chairman, Senior General Than Shwe, and the vice-chairman, General Maung Aye, a very professional military officer, remain in power.

The editor of this book, Trevor Wilson, served as Australia’s ambassador to Myanmar for three years, leaving just before the 2004 political turning point. Wilson is one of the main architects of the Myanmar Update Conferences, the goal of which is to produce a series of books like this one. The volume reviewed here consists of an overview and 14 essays focusing on political developments, economics and agriculture, and national reconciliation.

In parallel with the dramatic change in the country’s leadership, Sean Turnell explains that ‘in 2004 Burma’s economy was convulsed in a monetary crisis’ (p. 77). This malaise is partly explained by the collapse of the nascent private banking system in 2003, which was triggered by counterproductive economic policies and unrealistic official statistics. As a result the most important current challenge, Turnell argues, is to restore trust in Myanmar’s financial institutions. Furthermore, the agricultural sector needs a restoration of confidence through sustainable national development programmes.

What are the prospects for agriculture? Around seventy per cent of the country’s estimated population of 52 million in 2004 is involved in the agricultural sector, which constitutes one of Myanmar’s economic pillars. Kyaw Than and John Copland are optimistic about the status and the potential growth of this sector. During the period 1994-2004, Burma received limited international assistance, mainly through United Nations agencies and from Japan, China, and Thailand. The aim of the aid was to encourage reform and to improve rural welfare through higher paddy yields, cultivation of pulses (the main export crop in 2002), expansion of fisheries, improved seeds for planting, and pest control. However, Myo Win argues, Myanmar’s farmers lack financing and capital to buy the best seeds, fertilizers, and farm machinery (pp. 121-2).
National reconciliation and ‘civil society’ development constitute the third theme of the book. ‘Civil society’, a concept coined by Adam Ferguson in 1767 and inspired by Montesquieu, has been ‘modernized’ and is currently in fashion. ‘Civil society’, David Steinberg notes, ‘has been considered in official circles a pejorative term’ (p. 149). The growth of Burmese civil society and political liberalization, in short, seems a distant hope. Martin Smith contributes an interesting paper on ethnic participation and national reconciliation. Quoted in the New Light of Myanmar, the government’s official mouthpiece, Senior General Than Shwe referred to the ethnic ceasefires as the most defining feature of the ‘policy of what the military government terms “national reconciliation”’ (p. 40). Smith argues that many actors in Burma’s politics compare the present time of uncertainty to other post-colonial periods such as 1947-1949 and 1962-1964.

Remarkably, the Karen National Union (KNU) conflict has continued virtually uninterrupt ed since 1949. And peace negotiations were abruptly interrupted by the dismissal of General Khin Nyunt in 2004. David Taw, a KNU leader, thinks that the Karen have come to feel like second-class citizens. This is also true of the Muslims of Rakhine State, who are stateless – something legally impossible in, for example, China, where all minority people are citizens.

In agreement with most of the essays in this book, Robert Taylor, David Steinberg and Morten Pedersen independently conclude that Myanmar needs national reconciliation, as well as political and economic reform. The next crucial step is ‘proceeding down the route of constitutional government’ (p. 22). Following clashes between protesters and Tatmadaw troops in September 2007 (analysed in December at the last Myanmar/Burma Update Conference in Canberra), national reconciliation and the creation of a truly new type of constitutional government still seem a distant hope.


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With Between tongues, editor Jennifer Lindsay presents a welcome effort at addressing several issues of key concern for performance studies: how translation of (and in) a performance transforms the sense of the performance, how translation affects the audience’s experiences of a performance, and the
politics of performance translation. These topics are especially relevant in Southeast Asia, where issues of multilingualism, diglossia (two languages existing side by side where each has a distinct function), and polyglossia (more than two languages existing together in an often stratified way) are readily apparent in much traditional and contemporary performance. As Lindsay’s introduction makes clear, the idea of translation is complicated: there are many different kinds of ‘translation’ in performance in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and India. These include internal translations in which clowns or other characters translate into contemporary vernacular from the older or more arcane languages used by characters of higher rank; translating verbal language into gesture; translation of one or more languages when the spoken text is multilingual though the audience is not; and translation for audiences who do not speak any of the languages used in a particular performance.

This diversity of situations calling for translation helps provide the collection’s richness, but it also leads to conceptual blurring. I was perplexed by the variety of ways different authors make use of the term ‘translation’; through this multiplication of meanings and definitions, ‘translation’ becomes something like a terminological black hole, gravitationally pulling into its event horizon processes we would more frequently designate by other terms: interpretation, adaptation, explanation. In a way this is helpful, as it serves to focus our attention on the similarities of translation to these other practices. And yet, by being used in such broadly brushed ways, the term also loses clarity. For example, Lindsay herself is at several points concerned to examine how translation (as in the case of Hardja Susilo’s simultaneous performance translation of Anom Suroto’s wayang kulit performance into English) can help the audience capture something of the original meaning and feeling of what a Javanese audience might experience, as well as how the non-Javanese listener’s experience may differ. Elsewhere, Pornrat Damrhung, in a fascinating essay detailing the history and various aspects of the Thai masked drama form khon, appears to deploy the term ‘translation’ to describe different techniques for conveying meaning to an audience, but also to designate adapting and reshaping a performance so as to make it more relevant and enjoyable for a contemporary Thai crowd. Or take Goenawan Mohamad’s brilliant essay on the Javanese/Indonesian Srimulat comedy troupe in which ‘translation’ is a matter of misunderstanding and play with signifiers that indicate differences in class, in social background, and in levels of cultural capital or education. Across these examples, and others included in the volume, the term ‘translation’ seems to relentlessly pull every kind of communicative act into its orbit.

Yet if there is a gap in definitional coherence among the articles which Lindsay’s introduction valiantly attempts to bridge, this lack is compensated by the descriptive and intellectual richness of many of the contributions. A fair number of the authors are indeed performers, practitioners, and writers,
so one should not insist on academic rigour where theory and definition are concerned. They are more concerned with how to fashion particular texts and performances that achieve specific aims in relation to implied and real audiences. Their reflections (for example, Ong Keng Sen, Alfian Sa’at, Leow Puay Tin) on their experiences make for stimulating reading and reveal the complexities of the choices creators must make, as well as the varied composition of Southeast Asian audiences with which creators must reckon linguistically.

The collection also offers insights on the complexity of language policy and politics in relation to translation in and of performances (Anmol, Quah); on shifts in cultural epistemes that may diminish the pleasure of polyglossic translation between a hierarchical arrangement of languages (Keeler); and on the ways in which multilingualism in performances of Chinese Opera in Singapore or comic songs in Malaysia offer little substantive problem to audiences already conditioned to hear and comprehend other languages, or with access to a unifying script or familiarity with shared conventions (Chua, Tan). Furthermore, Hardja Susila’s piece on his own relationship to *wayang kulit*, and his preparation and framework for simultaneous translation of shadow plays, followed as it is by Jennifer Lindsay’s fine-grained analysis of the ways in which Susilo’s translation performance simulates the oral composition techniques of the *dalang* themselves, provides a valuable case study of performance translation and its mechanics.

In such ways, this volume has much to offer anyone interested in really understanding Southeast Asian performances, their audiences, and the ways in which the region’s wealth of languages stimulates a variety of kinds of performance translation.


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This study, according to its title, is a contribution to the population history of Lan Na, a region now part of northern Thailand. However, the book has much more to offer. It deals with the long-term interaction between the various states of mainland Southeast Asia between, say, 1250 and 1900, and with their internal processes of state formation. The author focuses on the states in the
area constituted by the modern countries of Myanmar (Burma), Thailand and Laos, albeit mainly in terms of their relationship to the development of Lan Na, a sometimes contracting, sometimes expanding polity at the crossroads of these states.

The population history of pre-modern and early-modern Southeast Asia is a fascinating topic, though not particularly fashionable among the scholarly community at large. It is generally accepted that population growth rates were low, and reasons for these low rates are avidly discussed among a small group of specialists, who will welcome this book with open arms, even though the author does not position his findings in this ongoing debate.

A recurring theme in this book is the forced migration or resettlement (Umsiedlungen) of large groups of people after defeat in war, a feature typical of Southeast Asia prior to the modern era. Southeast Asia was always sparsely populated, and rulers were more interested in the acquisition of people than of land. A ruler, therefore, would go to war with a neighbour, defeat him, and then carry off a large share of his population. Entire villages and districts would be depopulated, all men, women and children being resettled in the core area of the victorious state. The defeated state might become a tribute-paying or vassal state of the victor, but was often not fully incorporated, as expansion of territory was not the aim of such expeditions.

Although most students of pre-modern and early-modern Southeast Asia are aware of this phenomenon, this is, to my knowledge, the first book-length study of it. Forced resettlements are mentioned in this study throughout the history of (mainland) Southeast Asia, but detailed information is not available until the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, the tail end of this phenomenon. These accounts make clear that this type of migration was often a source of great suffering to those concerned. People fell ill and died during the long trek from their village of origin to their new destination. Although some assistance may have been available to the new settlers, the early years were often difficult, and harvests substandard, resulting in high morbidity and high mortality. In sum, frequent forced resettlement must have been one of the factors that kept population growth low in Southeast Asia prior to, say, 1850.

Those students of mainland Southeast Asian history with little or no interest in the region's population history may nevertheless find much useful information in this book, such as a detailed political history of Lan Na. Emerging as an ‘early state’ about 1300 around the capital Chiang Mai, it remained independent until 1558, when it was conquered by Burma. It then remained under Burmese suzerainty until 1775, when Lan Na came under Siamese overlordship. In 1884 it was fully integrated into the Siamese state (now Thailand).

But the book can also be read as a social and economic history of a small inland and upland state in pre-modern and early-modern mainland Southeast
Asia. It was a rugged area where small rice-growing valleys with equally small towns were surrounded by high, heavily forested mountains. In addition to rice, commercial crops were grown, minerals mined, and forest products collected, all these products leaving the region via the important trade routes that crisscrossed the area, either as tribute to Burma or Siam or as merchandise.

The volume is highly informative, packed with data, based on extensive research in archives and libraries in the region and elsewhere (the author has mastered many of the local scripts and languages), providing the reader with new perspectives on various topics. As this rather voluminous book is written in German, it will fail to reach many readers potentially interested in the topics dealt with here, and one cannot help but hope that the author will be willing to prepare a shorter version in English.


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At long last an edited and annotated edition has been published of Marchand’s famous voyage around the world at the end of the eighteenth century. The first volume, *Journal de bord,* contains Marchand’s journal, with annotations and, where necessary, extracts from the journals of those who travelled with him. The second volume, called *Annexes,* contains a great number of additional extracts and short, previously published texts about the voyage.

In just twenty months Etienne Marchand sailed from Marseille around Cape Horn, entered the Pacific Ocean, anchored a few days at the Marquesas Islands, visited the northwest coast of North America, crossed the Pacific on his way to China (to sell the furs he had obtained from the Northwest Coast Indians), went from there to the Isle of Mauritius, and then around the Cape of Good Hope to France, where he reached Marseille in good order. Here his extraordinary voyage came to an end. He had lost only one man during the trip, had recorded interesting details about the peoples he had met, and had proved himself to be a competent and efficient sailor. In terms of trade, however, the voyage was a failure. The furs he had not been allowed to sell in China he brought to Marseille, and the ship owners decided to store the
furs till after the tempestuous times of the French Revolution had passed by – which took too long to keep them in good condition.

Marchand’s journal was lost for many years, but finally turned up in the municipal library of Marseille. It is this manuscript that is published here. Much earlier, the history of the voyage was published by Admiral C.P. de Fleurieu in 1797 and 1800, using the journal of Prosper Chanal, one of the officers of the *Solide*. As several extracts from the Chanal manuscript have been added to Marchand’s journal by the editors of the present publication, there are no great discrepancies between the two texts. Fleurieu’s edition was reprinted several times, and until recently was considered to be the only existing formal account of the voyage. The only text written by Marchand to have been published was a short one giving his account of the discovery of the then unknown northern Marquesas Islands, which he named the Islands of the Revolution. This text is reprinted in the *Annexes* (pp. 57-77).

There are reasons to think that Fleurieu – with perhaps the best of intentions – embellished the simple prose of the sailors’ accounts, by adding numerous references to Greek gods and goddesses; these references have not been found in the original journals. This is the sort of ‘editing’ procedure the British scholar John Hawkesworth used when he published the journals of Byron, Wallis and Cook in 1773. Whatever Fleurieu’s intentions were, the embellishments make his works less than suitable for scholarly work. It is strange that the present editors do not point this out. It is also strange they let Fleurieu’s negative judgement on the Dutch voyager Jacob Roggeveen (Vol. II, p. 183) pass without comment. The only evidence Fleurieu had to go on was an anonymous transcription of a highly inaccurate story told by a German sailor. One would expect Gannier and Picquoin to have been better informed, for Roggeveen’s original journal was published in 1838 (and several times subsequently).

In terms of anthropology, Marchand’s descriptions of the Marquesas Islanders and the Northwest Coast Indians are important. His lengthy descriptions of the Marquesans are invaluable, for one can safely say that he was the last voyager who saw their life and culture before traders, missionaries and whalers ruined their society. Interestingly, Marchand notes a clear difference between the very hospitable inhabitants of Tahuata, where he anchored in Santa Christina Bay, and those of the island of Uapu, in the northern Marquesas, which he visited a little later. The Tahuata girls were most eager to please the French sailors, there was much thieving, and a lot of trade. On the northern island, in contrast, people were most polite and courteous, but there were no stormy sexual adventures, and hardly any trade. Yet Marchand had a high regard for these islanders, who politely presented just a few girls to the French as a kind of welcome gift. The voyagers named the island after him.
Marchand’s stay on the northwest coast of America was somewhat dull. There was trade in furs, but nothing of further interest happened. Marchand gives short descriptions of the houses, the canoes and the people, but as the French stayed here for only a short time, it is all rather superficial. Yet there was apparently sufficient time for some of the sailors to have love affairs with girls who were apparently offered for this purpose (Vol. I, p. 373, note 69). It is not clear where the Solide anchored. According to Marchand they were in Norfolk Bay, but John Dunmore (French explorers in the Pacific, Vol. I, 1965, p. 330) suggests Sitka on the western coast of Baranof Island. In view of the many islands, bays and streets in this region, some confusion about the exact spot is inevitable.

Both volumes are well produced and contain a mass of information, not all of which seems useful. Why, for example, is the complete overview of the ‘Tables de Navigation’ (Vol. II, pp. 4-55) included, or the surgeon Roblet’s complete ‘Journal des Maladies’ (Vol. II, pp. 79-99)? The book contains a long list of literature (‘Bibliographie et sources’, Vol. II, pp. 203-19) – subdivided by chapter and section, which makes it rather laborious to find out whether a given book or article has been used, or to locate the works referred to in the text. Though Gannier and Picquoin consulted quite a lot of publications, there are some strange omissions in their lists. J.R. Forster and his son G. Forster are mentioned only in the list ‘Navigateurs, hydrographes et savants’ (Vol. II, pp. 170-84, in particular p. 178), with the comment that their works are cited in the journal. The works of James Cook are found in that same list, but are also included in the references. It is not clear to what extent the works of Cook or the Forsters have actually been consulted by the editors, and, if so, what edition was used: the one by Fleurieu, or the more recent English edition? That the standard work on the Marquesas Islands by Nicholas Thomas (1990, Marquesan societies, Oxford: Clarendon) is not mentioned at all is a serious omission. Neither is there any reference to studies by Patrick Kirch, Robert Suggs or Barry Rolett, works which could have been used to position Marchand’s ethnographical notions in a wider anthropological framework. The greatest lack of all is a good, modern map of Marchand’s voyage. The map reproduced on pp. 120-1 dates from 1800.

To criticize is easy, and in a work of such size and complexity it is not difficult to find some faults. These, however, should not blind us to the evident merits of the book. Odile Gannier and Cécile Picquoin deserve our heartfelt thanks for having finally made available the journal of Etienne Marchand.

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This edited volume focuses on two projects in which visual artist and architect Stani Michels and artist Arjan van Helmond work out their experience (in every sense of the word) of the city of Jakarta. Blending drawings and stories of inhabitants, sequences of photographic images, and some compact guidance by the various contributors, into a single whole, the book attempts to bridge the divide between art and architecture on the one hand and the social sciences on the other hand. The innovative approach makes this volume a unique experience, but comes at a high price in terms of the book’s suitability for scholarly use.

The editors’ overall objective is to reveal how Jakarta is quickly changing under the force of dramatic changes in demography, migration and urbanization, and what this implies for people’s daily perception of the city. In their introduction, Van Helmond and Michiels stress that the projects on which this book is based do not attempt to analyse the day-to-day chaos of Jakarta in a rational and objectifying manner. Rather, the idea is to evoke the city’s rich variety by using personal life stories and unfiltered images. Stani Michiels, for instance, attempts to grasp the density and the coherence of the city as a whole through a series of photographic images, while Van Helmond investigates the diverging experiences of ‘feeling at home’ in two very different apartment buildings. This was achieved by asking residents to describe the house they used to live in, both in words and in drawings, with the ultimate objective of gaining a notion of the personal meaning and importance these past places had to their former inhabitants.

The editors note that their own projects tell only part of the story of Jakarta. For this reason they have invited four other authors to present their impressions of the rapidly changing urban situation. The Indonesian curator and art historian Agung Hujatnikajennong sketches the many faces of the city in the postcolonial era: from its central role in displaying a new national identity, to modern-day features of globalization that add new points of reference in the city. The Indonesian architectural historian Abidin Kusno, in turn, draws attention to the heterogeneous layers of meaning that lie within Jakarta (as an expression of power, collective memory, and political and social identity), demonstrating that such a city cannot be ‘read’ unambiguously. Gerardo Mosquera, curator of the Havana Biennale, zooms out to look at the
massive urbanization that is taking place worldwide. And finally, Charles Esche, director of the Van Abbe Museum in Eindhoven, raises the question of how artists with largely Western backgrounds can relate to a subject like the Indonesian city without falling into the trap of multicultural relativism.

As a social scientist, I am not particularly well positioned to comment on the creative and artistic merits of the projects featured in this book. But I believe I am entitled to reflect on the book’s claim to be of scholarly value. After all, the editors say they hope that their creative take on Jakarta will help readers to actually learn something about the city. In this respect, the editors’ implicit criticism of what they dub ‘rational’ and ‘objectifying’ approaches is highly problematic. Their focus on ‘personal’ and ‘subjective’ experiences of the city inherently advances a postmodern stance littered by the temptations of phenomenology: they propose to retreat from considering reality as it is, because it is assumed that there is no other reality than the one that appears. At first sight, this approach may seem reasonable: it is simply true that people experience Jakarta in many different ways according to their particular circumstances, and it is simply true that they act on the basis of memories and impressions in which events from different periods are mixed. However, the editors propose removing the boundary between ontology (reality) and epistemology (knowledge of reality), thereby suggesting that their evocation of the multi-faced experience of a multi-faced city can be seen as a viable alternative to a genuine analysis of Jakarta. Scholarship, however, cannot only be a matter of expressive understanding, an attempt to get a grip on empirical phenomena by resorting to the evocative force of metaphors. Scholars try to explain facts that have a stable meaning beyond expressive understanding.

Having said this, I want to stress that I did find *Jakarta megalopolis* an interesting book. However, as a social scientist, I take issue with overconfident claims by artists as to the alleged shortcomings of ‘rational’ approaches, particularly when such claims seem to emanate from an entrenched postmodern stance that loathes claims to universal truth and objective analysis. What exactly is wrong with an analysis of urban change in Jakarta as the result of, say, uneven economic development on a global scale? Taken together, then, this book’s academic merits are limited at best, and it can only be used as part of an extensive reading list featuring analytical research. Jakarta enthusiasts, however, will certainly enjoy the mixture of pictures, drawings and stories with which *Jakarta megalopolis* attempts to capture the spirit of the city.

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In 1985 maakt Beb Vuyk, toen 80 jaar oud, in Loenen aan de Vecht de balans op van haar tropenjaren, en van de plaats die zij inneemt in de Indisch-Nederlandse letterkunde. In een interview vertelt ze:

Ik heb veel meer dan Maria Dermoût midden in de Indonesische wereld geleefd. Midden tussen de bevolking. Wij trokken op met boeven, schurken en de laagste groepen van de bevolking op Boeroe. Ik neem een heel eigen plaats in. Immers, ik ben de enige van de Indische auteurs, die niet uit nostalgie schrijft. De zaak is: ik schrijf over wat mijn ogen zien, en wat mijn hart beroert. Eigenlijk is al mijn werk autobiografisch. Er is geen verhaal, waarin ik niet voorkom, voor zover ik weet [...] 1


In 1949 kiezen Beb Vuyk en haar man voor de Indonesische nationaliteit. Die zal ze tot haar dood in 1991 blijven behouden.


In zijn Inleiding en Verantwoording stelt Scova Righini dat het te pretentieus is te denken dat een biograaf in staat zou zijn volledig te begrijpen hoe zijn held zich in zijn tijd gevoeld en gedragen heeft. Niet alleen kennistheoretische overwegingen (‘een objectieve, boven het individu en tijd staande kennis van de mens over zijn omgeving is onmogelijk’) maar ook de onvolledigheid van bronnenmateriaal van en over de schrijfster en de onevenwichtigheid in omvang en aard van de kennis van de verschillende levensperioden van Beb Vuyk (‘Rijen kolommen zijn oningevuld gebleven’) noodzaken hem zijn verwachting dat hij leven en werk van zijn object in een samenhangend geheel voor de lezer inzichtelijk kan maken, te temperen (pp. xi-xiii). Waarom dan toch een biografie? ‘Omdat ik [...] niet de faustiaanse verleiding heb kunnen weerstaan om dat wat mijn bijzondere interesse heeft, nader te willen kennen en beheersen’ (p. xiii). Wat nu precies Scova Righini’s bijzondere interesse heeft en wat hem uiteindelijk tot het promotieonderzoek gedreven heeft, wordt niet duidelijk. Het literaire werk van Beb Vuyk? Affiniteit met haar avontuurlijke leven in Indië? Affiniteit met haar weerbare, moeilijke karakter? De dissertatie heeft hem wel iets opgeleverd: ‘een grotere psychologische (zelf)kennis, [...] een meer algemene reflectie over het functioneren van mensen en van jezelf’ (p. vii).

Scova Righini stelt in zijn Inleiding en Verantwoording dat de biograaf een oordeel mag vellen over de literaire en maatschappelijke verdiensten van zijn held, mits maar duidelijk is van waaruit wordt geoordeeld en mits wordt vol- daan aan wetenschappelijk vereiste beginselen als streven naar volledigheid, evenwichtigheid, zorgvuldigheid en controleerbaarheid (p. xvi). Met deze laatste opmerking speelt Scova Righini mij een bal toe die ik er alleen nog maar in hoop te koppen: met het streven naar zorgvuldigheid, controleerbaarheid en volledigheid is het in deze dissertatie niet zo best gesteld.
De dissertatie: onzorgvuldig, oncontroleerbaar, onvolledig

Een leven in twee vaderlanden bevat hinderlijke onzorgvuldigheden die het leesgenot nogal in de weg staan. Een kleine bloemlezing uit de slordigheden – in het gebruik van (Indonesische) namen, begrippen en titels:

‘in het bij [sic] Bandoeng gelegen vrouwenkamp Tjihapit’ (p. 230, noot 88); Ambawara: Ambarawa (p. 321); Mundingrani: Mundingsari (p. 322); ‘bij Poentjak’ (p. 323); op de Poentjak; ‘Tienduizend eilanden van Maria Dermoût’ (p. 436): De tienduizend dingen van Maria Dermoût.

– in de lijst van afkortingen (p. 559):

– in het register:
Roeslam Abdoelgani moet zijn: Roeslan Abdoelgani; Herawatah Diah: Herawati Diah; Soeganda Djojopoespito: Soegondo Djojopoespito; Jan Eijkelboom: Jan Eijkelboom; Mount Livinia: Mount Lavinia; Pramoedya Ananda Toer: Pramoedya Ananta Toer; niet in de index, wel in de tekst: Konfrontasi, Soedarpo Sastroatomo, Noegroho.

Een voorbeeld waar het onbegrijpelijk mis gaat, vinden we in hoofdstuk VII. Daarin bespreekt Scova Righini de productieve jaren (1947-1953) van Beb Vuyk. Op p. 279 komen de naoorlogse tijdschriften Kritiek en Opbouw, Opbouw-Pembinaan en Het Inzicht ter sprake, waar Beb Vuyk in meerdere of mindere mate haar medewerking aan heeft verleend. In mijn proefschrift, waar Scova Righini ook naar verwijst, schrijf ik uitgebreid over deze periodieken. De geschiedenis van deze tijdschriften is, toegegeven, nogal ingewikkeld, maar Scova Righini weet in één alinea alles zo door elkaar te halen en verkeerd over te schrijven, dat de lezer geen idee meer heeft over welk tijdschrift het nu eigenlijk gaat. Tot de redactie van het naoorlogse Kritiek en Opbouw treedt voorts volgens de auteur onder anderen de heer Soedarpo Noegroho Notoesanto toe, maar deze meneer heeft nooit bestaan. Scova Righini plakt hier op een onverklaarbare manier de namen van drie personen aan elkaar, te weten de heer Soedarpo Sastroatomo en de heer Noegroho, (die overigens nooit in de redactie van Kritiek en Opbouw hebben gezeten, maar wel in Het Inzicht en Opbouw-Pembinaan) en de naam van een voormalig hoogleraar aan de Universiteit van Indonesië, Prof. Noegroho Notoesanto, die hij ergens gelezen moet hebben maar die met dit hele verhaal niets te maken heeft. In de index komen noch Soedarpo Sastroatomo, noch Noegroho, noch Soedarpo Noegroho Notoesanto voor, maar wel ‘Noegrono, Soedarpo’ (p. 569) die weer nergens in de tekst terug te vinden is.


Drie vragen hielden mij na lezing van dit proefschrift dan ook enige tijd uit de slaap: waarom schreef Scova Righini niet gewoon een mooi boek zonder wetenschappelijke pretenties? Wat gaf bij de promotie-commissie de doorslag om het manuscript in deze vorm als proefschrift goed te keuren? En ten slotte: waarom is het manuscript door de KITLV-redactiecommissie niet kritischer bekeken en zorgvuldiger geredigeerd alvorens het uit te geven?

2 Met dank aan Professor Bambang Hidayat, Bandung, bij wie ik dit vermoeden verifieerde.
Eerder citeerde ik Scova Righini waar hij stelt dat de biograaf een oordeel mag vellen over de literaire en maatschappelijke verdiensten van zijn held, mits maar duidelijk is van waaruit wordt geoordeeld. Anders gezegd, volgens Scova Righini: ik mag oordelen in termen van goed en slecht over mijn object, als maar voor iedereen duidelijk is dat ik zelf ook niet volmaakt ben, en ’de auteur de eerste zondaar is die een steen werpt’ (p. xvi). Ik ben het met hem eens dat de biograaf een oordeel mag vellen, maar zou daar eerder aan toe willen voegen: mits maar duidelijk is vanuit welke normen en waarden geoordeeld wordt. Voor een evenwichtig oordeel dient een biograaf kennis van de context te hebben en ook, daarmee samenhangend, een grote mate van inlevings- en relativiseringsvermogen. Scova Righini onderkent dat er – waar het zijn oordelen over Beb Vuyks opstelling in en opvattingen over Nederlands-Indië betreft – weliswaar onvermijdelijk ‘geredeneerd wordt vanuit de wetenschap en kennis van de huidige tijd’, maar hij stelt tegelijkertijd dat er ten tijde van haar leven in de kolonie ook al groeperingen en personen rondliepen met ‘gelijkluidende opvattingen als de mijne’ (pp. xvii-xviii). In hoofdstuk II schrijft Scova Righini bijvoorbeeld dat Beb Vuyk – die zich na de oorlog ‘regelmatic als socialist geafficheerd heeft’ – in het vooroorlogse Indië slechts op een passieve manier betrokken was bij de vaak deplorabele sociaal-economische positie van de inheemse bevolking. Nooit, zegt hij, heeft zij zich actief ingezet voor hun daadwerkelijke lotverbetering en nooit heeft zij zich gemengd in een discussie over de voor- en nadelen van de plantage-economie voor diezelfde inheemsen (pp. 65-7). In zijn Slotwoord bezielt de biograaf de wijze waarop Beb Vuyk en haar man voor de oorlog hun kajoe poetih onderneming op Boeroe leiden als een ‘strikt rationele, op een streng arbeidsethos gebaseerde, westerse bedrijfsvoering, met voorbijgaan aan inheemse economische en sociale tradities’ (p. 468).


(Historische) kennis van zaken en inlevingsvermogen behoedten de biograaf ervoor de plank al te zeer mis te slaan. Ik vind dat Scova Righini zich in zijn biografie nogal eens op aanmatigende, soms zelfs verwante, toon over de vermeende tekortkomingen en gedragingen van zijn object uitspreekt. Het gaat...

Uit niets blijkt dat Scova Righini ooit zelf in Indonesië is geweest, laat staan het eiland Boeroe heeft bezocht. Het lijkt mij voor een biograaf niets minder dan een *conditio sine qua non* om er zelf rondgekeken te hebben, ten einde iets te kunnen begrijpen van de sfeer van het (e)iland, van het gevoel van isolement en van de omstandigheden waaronder Beb Vuyk van 1930 tot 1958 met tussenpozen woonde en werkte. De biograaf moet de tijd van zijn held proeven. Nu maakt Scova Righini de indruk vanachter zijn studeertafel uitspraken te doen over een auteur voor wie de Wilde Groene Geur van het Avontuur een wezenlijk deel van haar leven uitmaakte.

Het leven en werk van een interessante, recalcitrante, boeiende Indische schrijfster en journaliste werd opgetekend door iemand die ook naar eigen zeggen ‘een buitenstaander van het Indische leven’ (p. 244) is, ‘onbekend met Indonesië’ (p. 364) en ‘de Indonesische wijze van uiten en argumenteren’ (p. 432). Beb Vuyk zou er niets van begrepen hebben en, zo zij tijd van leven had gehad, de heer Scova Righini met een aan zekerheid grenzende waarschijnlijkheid woedend op het matje hebben geroepen in haar huisje in Loenen aan de Vecht.

Is er dan niets goeds te melden over dit boek? Jawel. Aan de bibliografieën van en over Beb Vuijk is veel werk besteed. De biografie heeft een heldere structuur, het boek is op zich leesbaar geschreven, en Scova Righini heeft door inzage in de (nog niet door anderen onderzochte) nalatenschap van de schrijfster nieuwe biografische feiten naar boven gehaald en andere gecorrigeerd. Voor het overige knettert er voor de lezer veel hinderlijke ruis in en tussen de regels. Door de onnauwkeurigheden, de aanmatigende toon en het gebrek aan historisch en literair inzicht worden de mogelijke andere, inhoudelijke, kwaliteiten van het boek ondergesneeuwd. Een schrijversbiografie lijkt mij *Een leven in twee vaderlanden* in ieder geval niet. De kern van Vuyks schrijversleven, haar literaire werk, komt daarvoor naar mijn idee te weinig uit de verf.

In het slotaccordo van zijn boek maakt Scova Righini melding van een voorval dat volgens hem geheel in het teken staat van Beb Vuyks levensstijl: op haar crematie op 28 augustus 1991 voeren Rob Nieuwenhuys en

3 Archipel 8-3 (herfst 2006); met dank aan Kees Snoek.


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This is a magnificent and important atlas consisting of a unique compilation of rare maps, plans and historic drawings of buildings, town scenes, and panoramic views of Java and Madura originating mainly from archives in the Netherlands and Indonesia. The cartographic material focuses on the Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC, Dutch East India Company) from 1598 to 1816, that is until the British interregnum. The quality of the reproductions and the bilingual legends in Dutch and English is excellent.

More than half of the pages are devoted to the geographical footprint of the VOC’s expansion in Batavia and vicinity (pp. 94-328). The cartographic material shows the city of Batavia with its vast fortifications, including nearly all thirty bastions. The earliest plan showing landowners dates from around 1650 (pp. 104-5). The vast expansion of Batavia and vicinity is illus-
trated by later cadastral plans which show the owners, the years of acquisition (1668-1706), and the sizes of their plots in units of ‘Rijnlandse roeden’ (pp. 294-7). With a layout inspired by Dutch town planning with systems of canals, Batavia became an unhealthy place to live. The city magistrates imposed several environmental measures intended to improve the air and water quality, as shown on a plan dating from around 1780 (p. 111) and on another plan indicating ditches and canals to be filled up (p. 234). Numerous drawings by Johannes Rach (1720-1783) are reproduced, offering the reader lively pictorial images of the pomp of VOC officials as well as scenes of everyday life in the city.

The rest of the atlas is devoted to Java outside Batavia. The earliest town plans (1601-1670) of Banten show the glory of the royal city and its court during the days when Banten held the monopoly on spices (pp. 84-7). Later maps (1720-1790) reflect the situation after the VOC’s destruction of the city and the royal palace in 1682-1684 (pp. 90-1). The VOC was initially interested primarily in the coastal areas, but the maps of the interior become more detailed as the VOC becomes progressively more involved in Java. There is, for instance, a map of the route from Surabaya to Bangil which Govert Cnoll’s army followed while chasing Surapati in 1706. Several maps show the complex division of regions belonging to the Sultan of Yogyakarta and the Susuhunan of Surakarta after the Giyanti treaty in 1755 (pp. 35, 358-9, 372-3). The plan of the Kraton of Yogyakarta dating from 1770 is spectacular because it is detailed and geometrically faithful (p. 392). Major changes seem to have been made in the entrance to the royal palace which, according to the 1770 plan, originally appears to have been through the northern courtyards. Furthermore, all plans show that in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Java and Madura, the square in front of palaces and residences of the nobility in the centre of a town was called paseban, not alun-alun (pp. 362-4, 377-8, 392, 401-2, 407, 419, 429). Finally, reflecting an age before photography, drawings of panoramas accompany the topographic maps. H.J. Wardenaar’s drawings are beautifully detailed and topographically accurate. The reader may compare, for example, his panoramic view of the crater of the volcano Mount Bromo, as seen from its northwestern edge, with a satellite image from Google Earth in three-dimensional viewing mode (p. 418). In conclusion, this superb atlas is indispensable for every reader interested in the history and geography of Java and Madura.

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Scholars of colonial history have made increasing use of the possibilities that the sources offer to analyse the workings of so-called colonial cities. This applies equally to the towns and ports that flourished before the onset of a fully implemented colonial rule in Asia in the nineteenth century. The present work, originally a thesis, is a valuable addition to this line of research. The task that the author undertakes is an ambitious one: to compare the economic, administrative and social trends of the two port towns Melaka and Penang over a period of half a century. The period he chooses, 1780-1830, lies after the Southeast Asian ‘age of commerce’, and before the full implementation of Western colonial governance in the region. It can be seen as a period of transition: at its beginning the Southeast Asians themselves were still directing much of the trade pattern, but by its end the European powers had a steady grip on long-distance intra-Asian trade. A micro study of the two ports in the Melaka Strait – one of them recent, and one with a long history – can be expected to further our understanding of this transition.

Penang was occupied by the British in 1786, shortly after the conclusion of the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War, as a consequence of the needs of the British administration in India to secure a port for traders coming from the north-eastern monsoon, to monitor French activities, and to avoid dependence on Dutch port facilities. This was a time when the tea trade with China was steadily increasing in importance, blowing new life into the age-old importance of the Melaka Strait. Dutch Melaka, on the other hand, was relegated by Batavia to a second-rate importance in Southeast Asia. The British occupation in 1795-1818 did nothing to break the trend; on the contrary, the new masters were aware that they would very likely have to turn Melaka back to the Dutch in the near future, and thus had little interest in developing it. Even after the definite transfer of Melaka to Britain in 1825, the city continued to stagnate.

Using archival materials kept in the Netherlands, Britain and Malaysia, Hussin sets out to compare the two places from a number of angles: trade, geography, demography, administration and society. The author complains more than once about the patchiness of the materials available, but appears to work competently with what there is, and to ask the right questions. A major question guiding the work concerns the nature and role of the colonial
port town. Several theoretical aspects have been presented before, by scholars such as M.E.P. Bellam, Ronald Horvath, and Heather Sutherland. Among the colonial port town’s defining features were, according to one strand of research, ‘European-imposed urban concepts, the fort or castle as the central focus of the town, separate European and indigenous spheres, a seemingly pluralistic structure, the importance of ethnicity in the scheme of things, a large migrant population, the relative absence of females, a large slave population and an urban centre that was somewhat isolated and poorly integrated with the hinterland’. Hussin’s investigation, however, favours the alternative interpretation of Luc Nagtegaal that these elements could largely be found in non-colonial towns as well – a good example is Pontianak on Kalimantan, founded in 1772 by a half-Arab adventurer. Colonial towns, in this view, were simply examples of externally induced settlements, and it is problematic to speak of a distinctively colonial urban type.

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 follow the patterns of trade in the two cities in considerable detail. Melaka traditionally embodied the convergence of long-distance India-China trade and short-distance Archipelago trade. The outdated Dutch trade policies, in combination with British competition and the founding of Penang and Singapore, weakened the Dutch position. The network of the city shrank, as did its status. Penang, on the other hand, flourished because of the China trade, but its dominance soon proved precarious. Geographically it was less well situated than Melaka, and was outdistanced by Singapore after 1819, partly due to advancements in shipping technology. The process is illuminated by a wealth of data on exports, imports, and ship movements, which gives the text a rather uninviting appearance filled with numbers. Some of the data could usefully have been presented in tables, reducing the need for verbose treatment in the text.

The following two chapters treat the morphology and demographic development of the two towns. Both towns were cosmopolitan, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious, but their populations were never particularly large – at the end of the period under study they both stood at 12,000 to 13,000. Hussin attributes the modest size of the towns to the limited work available to the inhabitants – collecting and distributing goods for the intra-Asian trade. In line with the general pattern of colonial (or externally induced) settlements, a strong tendency to ethnic segregation was maintained. The policy of segregation, however, was more important for British Penang than for Dutch Melaka, and reflects conditions in British India at the time. Slaves were found in four-digit numbers in both places, in spite of the 1808 British ban on slave trade and slave-keeping.

The British and Dutch types of urban administration are investigated in Chapters 7 and 8, and significant differences are pointed out. Although the point is not explicitly asserted, Hussin’s study serves to qualify the Rafflesian
myth of the bad Dutch versus the good British colonialist. He points out that Melaka and other Dutch port towns made maximum use of limited resources, much of the running of local affairs being carried out by the communities themselves through councils and organizations. As a matter of fact, the British did not change much of the governing system of Melaka when they definitely took over the place in 1825, and even applied some of its administrative features to Penang. The latter town, on the other hand, lacked many of the social services that benefited the Melaka community. The British policy of liberal non-interference left many such matters to the various ethnic groups. Hussin concludes that the British administration did not fully utilize the talents of the local population, and made a haphazard impression.

Finally, Chapters 9 and 10 are devoted to the character of the societies that evolved in Melaka and Penang. Hussin returns here to the theme of ethnic segregation. In the context of cosmopolitan Melaka, he emphasizes the practical issues underpinning such segregation: the tendency of ethnic groups to congregate was often due largely to the pursuit of common interests or goals. Intermarriage was common, and even the wealthy and rather close-knit Dutch community accepted marriages to non-whites – the wife of the last Dutch governor was apparently a Portuguese-Eurasian. A great deal of trust and support between the various ethnic groups can be traced in the sources. British Penang was quite a different matter. While European men of low social standing might opt for a coloured partner, this was rarely the case among the elite. British life centred around the local club, and homeland culture and patriotism were nurtured through celebrations, dinners and other events. Even among non-Europeans in Penang, Hussin does not find too much mixing or social interaction. To sum up, the two places shared broad features, but they displayed considerable differences in terms of colonial and urban tradition, and historical experience. Both towns, however, would have a rather ambiguous future: while they continued as local economic centres, the coming era of steamships made well-protected harbours less vital to shipping.

The main criticism that can be lodged against this work is one of style. There is a tendency here to lengthy enumerations of statistical data, reminding the reader that this is basically an academic thesis – one which would have gained in readability through some slimming down. Furthermore, a glossary would have been most helpful given the wealth of terms for trading commodities, ethnic groups and so on used in the book. A few statements in the text may raise the reader’s eyebrows. The claim that the Dutch were guided by a strong proselytizing spirit (p. 277) seems somewhat surprising in view of the restrictive VOC policy on missionary enterprises. That ‘some’ Dutchmen sought the company of local women (p. 278) must surely be an understatement in view of the lack of female Europeans in the Indies before the Suez Canal. Finally, the author is at times careless with details. For example, to say that the Napoleonic
Wars raged between 1789 and 1814 (p. 25) or that the British took over Melaka in 1794 (p. 199) detracts unnecessarily from the reader’s otherwise favourable impression of the author’s care and empirical diligence. But these are mere details and should not obscure the fact that Trade and society in the Straits of Melaka is an impressive contribution to the history of early colonial urban society and economy. It will surely serve as a standard work in the field for years to come.


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This work is a most welcome contribution to Austronesian linguistics as well as to the study of the culture of the Biak people, who dominated trade along the northern coast of West Papua in historical times, played an eminent role in the history of contact and missions, and whose importance in present-day Papuan culture and politics is evident to visitors and scholars alike. The book adds substantially to our knowledge of the languages of the South Halmahera West New Guinea subgroup of Eastern Malayo Polynesian languages; it presents data for considering Eastern Indonesia as a linguistic area (pp. 11-12); using diachronic explanations for grammatical phenomena, it gives evidence supporting a close relationship between this subgroup and Oceanic languages (for example, p. 66 on pronouns, pp. 172 and 177 on verbal prefixes). Above all, it is the first comprehensive descriptive grammar of the Biak language, giving a detailed account of fieldwork trips, aims and methods, data collection, informants, and corpus. It presents a wealth of data suitable for further analysis and typological study.

The author aims ‘to present the main aspects of Biak grammar to a general public of linguists’ (p. 16). The research and the book are part of Pieter Muysken’s program ‘Lexicon and Syntax: Areal Studies in Eastern Indonesia’. Biak grammar and culture are said to be ‘a key to the areal linguistics of Eastern Indonesia’ (p. 16). Instead of following ‘an all-encompassing theoretical framework’ (p. 17), Van den Heuvel uses theories as methods and means of presenting and examining the data.

Although the language is spoken by approximately 70,000 speakers on Biak island, on neighbouring islands, and in settlements along the northern
coast (where speech communities of fewer than one hundred speakers are not uncommon), it seems to be endangered: only in remote areas do children still learn and use the language (p. 5). The danger of it disappearing is incidentally illustrated by the Indonesian loan words encountered in almost all of the examples: not only nouns for introduced objects or institutions like rumah-sakit ‘hospital’ and pemerintah ‘government’, but also function words like kalau ‘when’ (p. 397) and sebelum ‘before’ (p. 421). The presence of Indonesian harimau ‘tiger’ (tigers not being part of the native fauna) indicates that at least some Indonesian text material has been absorbed into Biak speech.

Table 2 gives an ‘overview of transcribed texts, ordered by genres’ (p. 15), Appendix B an overview of all recordings (pp. 463-5). While ethnographers will be interested in the five origin stories and the two versions of the Manarmaker myth, the linguist will delight in the variety of other genres (including songs, jokes – apparently a new genre appreciated throughout West Papua – speeches, expository texts, and descriptions of pictures and film scenes, a method of elicitation provided by the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics), the documentation of which goes beyond pure description. Appendix A presents four Biak texts: a short story, a joke, a speech, and a prayer.

The introductory chapter contains a typological sketch and a summary of the book; a summary in Dutch is at the back. In accordance with state-of-the-art description, and taking into account the methodological and heuristic status of linguistic terms, the following chapters treat Biak phonology, word classes, verbs, noun phrases, possession, reduplication, clause structure and grammatical relations, reference to space, and clause combinations. All the chapters present a good number of informative and well-analysed examples from the corpus. In some chapters the author goes beyond pure description, venturing into matters of style, for example on indefinite pronouns (pp. 71-6), animate and inanimate nouns (pp. 100-4), the function of specific and non-specific markers (pp. 206-18), and the structure of subject and predicate noun phrases in verbless clauses (pp. 301-12, 290). Other chapters give straightforward descriptions either of semantically defined word or morpheme classes or of morphological processes (adverbs, pp. 119-29, prefixes, pp. 172-87, wind directions and ‘left and right’, pp. 363-4, connectives, pp. 388-410). The chapter on reduplication is an interesting mixture of diachronic remarks, description of patterns, and analysis of the (partially syntactic) function of morphological processes. Some of the chapters are outstanding, others are mere lists of annotated lexical fields; some can be read independently, while others need to be supplemented by information elsewhere in the book, a fact the author is aware of (see the section on further research, where he especially recommends ‘research on tail-head linkage, distribution of relative clauses, and thematization’, p. 423).
One naturally values what is new and useful for comparative work, that is, new data for known problems. The author’s presentation of data is excellent and this work is a valuable contribution to comparative and typological work on a number of topics. The author’s analysis of stress, for example, contributes to questions only recently tackled (by Donohue) about suprasegmentals in the New Guinea area; some Biak minimal pairs seem to have different stress patterns, yet stress assignment ‘can best be accounted for on the basis of the assumption that only vowel length is lexically specified (that is phonemic) and is realized as what sounds [like] stress [...] [A] number of words [...] contain one or more long vowels, which are not only longer on the surface than short vowels, but usually also have higher pitch than short vowels’ (p. 49). The analysis of ‘verbal complexes’ and so-called postverbs exhibits a nice continuum going from serialization proper to verb compounds (pp. 187-99). ‘The language has verbal complexes, formed by the combination of a verb and a postverb. Some of these combinations are like compounds, but others can be broken up by adverbs. Two major classes can be discovered’ (p. 199), the transitive complex consisting of the postverb, which relates the event to the Undergoer, and the verb expressing the means of that relation, the intransitive complex consisting of a verb of motion or position and the postverb specifying the meaning of the verb. Of equal interest is the analysis of causative and instrumental constructions, in which a peripheral NP is transferred into a second clause built around the verbs ‘give’ and ‘use’; instead of strategies of valency increase, the language prefers clause-combining (pp. 392-6, 415-23; on transitive verbs and the strategy of ‘object elision’, pp. 160-7). As increase in valency and the presence of referential NPs are, I believe, marked processes, perhaps one could look at the problem the other way round and speak of object adding.

A few corrections: in the references, under Hyslop it should be ‘Hiding’ instead of ‘Hinding’ (?); Senft is an edited volume. Concerning example (139) on p. 416, I do not understand why the 3Pl is used in the instrument NP and main verb; I would have thought using one’s arms was a clear case of dual. In the interesting section on ‘The morphology of inalienable kinship nouns’ (pp. 242-50) the author refers to Van Enk and De Vries’s study on Korowai; although an admirable work, this is certainly not a reference work on kinship classification. ‘Irian Jaya’ should not be singled out, but placed in the context of New Guinea or Melanesia.
Mental illness has a better prognosis in a ‘developing’ country than in a modern Western society. This paradoxical outcome of many research findings, including those of the World Health Organization, sparked Appleton’s research and resulted in this book. Appleton analyses the relationship between mental illness and culture. Her ethnographic perspective on mental illness is intended to be complementary to the biomedical perspective. The subject of her studies is the Melanau people in Serawak, Malaysia, where she did fieldwork in 2000-2001.

Appleton’s central argument is the primacy of the (social) relationship between a person and his (social) world. Her view of the person is based on existentialism and phenomenology. A person exists in the world with others and this world is the structure of meaningful relationships within which the individual lives. According to Appleton, this applies particularly strongly to Melanau society, where the reciprocal relationship between a person and his world underlies all practices and belief. From this perspective, mental illness is not only a disorder within an individual, but also an imbalance in the world and in the social relationship between the individual and his social world. Psychopathology is thus culturally and historically constructed. Appleton focuses on the traditional healer and ritual in Melanau society. The healer plays a central role in the Melanau healing system as a mediator between the patient and the forces that caused the illness.

After a theoretical introduction, five ethnographic chapters deal with mental illness, healing and ritual in Melanau society. Traditional Melanau society consisted of independent villages, consisting of two or three tall-houses, inhabited by several hundred persons related by descent or marriage. Society was organized hierarchically and each tallhouse community was led by a group of aristocrats. In the nineteenth century Melanau came under Brooke rule and the Melanau began to settle in separate Malay-style houses in smaller villages. After the Second World War, Melanau became British until the independence of Malaysia and Serawak in 1963. In Melanau villages, kinship networks are strong and relatives tend to live close to one another. The
kinship structure of the tallhouses apparently continues today in the more scattered settlements, though in a somewhat looser manner.

Against this background, a person’s identity is not an autonomous entity but exists only within the social structure and in relationship with other persons. Melanau concepts of personhood, normality and abnormality are constructed in the process of engagement between the self and the world; they are culturally and historically constituted categories. A person should live in balance with his world. Illness occurs when there is imbalance, and this imbalance is not restricted to the individual person but also entails imbalance in the world. Illness is conceived as a disturbance of social relationships. Many patients of traditional Melanau healers are not ill in a biomedical sense but suffer from social problems. In an environment in which natural forces are personalized, these social conflicts are projected upon supernatural beings. The concept of soul is also important; sometimes the soul is believed to have left the body and started wandering. These illnesses should be viewed within their cultural context, where they make perfect sense and are recognizable. The behaviour of the patients is culturally constituted and culturally recognizable.

The Melanau healer plays a central role in Melanau healing. Some healers are able to enter an altered state of consciousness, while others are not; also, healers have their specialities and their different healing methods, such as a cleansing bath or a healing massage. The healer is the mediator between the patient and the forces behind the imbalance that caused the mental illness; the healer is the one to restore the balance. The healer is a member of the same community as his patients and therefore has extensive knowledge of his patients and their social world. He uses ritual to restore balance in social relationships. The healing ritual is meant to restore the imbalance in the world and between the world and the individual. So both the individual and his social world require attention.

Appleton suggests a cultural relationship between death and psychopathology. Again, ritual plays an important role, in this case one of mediating the problem that death poses for the continuity of being in the world. In the traditional Melanau world view, death means that the soul separates from the human body and travels to the land of the dead. Funeral rites are meant to ensure safe conduct of the soul to this afterworld, and in the meantime to protect the souls of the living.

In the two final chapters, Appleton returns to theory. She adopts Jung’s concept of ‘shadow’, the unconscious part of personality which contains the rejected characteristics, the contrary of the ideal or normal personality. This shadow is culturally defined and it is connected with social relationships, especially with conflicts in social relationships. Psychopathology is related to culture as shadow and based upon imbalance in social relationships. In the healing ritual, the shadow can be addressed and reintegrated. The patient
is the focus of conflicting social relationships, and the haunting spirit – as a symbol of group conflict – must be exorcised.

Appleton illustrates her analysis with accounts of specific cases of ritual healing, spirit exorcism, ways to neutralize black magic, and burial rites. Sometimes ritual objects are manufactured and used as materialized focuses of the psychological phenomena.

The relationship Appleton posits between psychopathology and culture (and history) is a valid one, but this relationship applies equally to ‘Western’ or ‘developed’ societies. Certain types of ‘hysteria’, for example, seem to have vanished as diseases since the nineteenth century. In Western psychotherapy, it is also worth noting, there is room for systems therapy, family therapy, and all sorts of collective therapies whereby the patient is considered the centre of manifold conflicts. So the real difference between Western and non-Western society, as far as psychopathology goes, is still in need of clarification. In this respect I wonder why Appleton does not discuss the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) of Mental Disorders (IV) and the Cultural Formulation model added to DSM IV. Although DSM IV is much criticized, it is still the generally accepted standard in the psychiatry world.

Appleton suggests that her theory and analysis are applicable for psychopathology in general. However, her research is focused on social conflicts. Likewise, the healing rituals she describes are collective rituals oriented towards social conflicts. Mental illnesses with a physical element, for instance schizophrenia, do not figure in the book. This is rather amazing, for the better prognosis for schizophrenia patients in ‘underdeveloped’ societies was the author’s incentive to start the research for this book. The reason for adding the description of burial rites to the book is not altogether clear.

I wonder whether the Jungian element of ‘shadow’ is a valuable addition to Turner’s theories on ritual, to which Appleton refers. In the context of her argument, the cases of social conflicts can be explained without the extra concept of ‘shadow’; the connection between psychopathology and culture as consisting of social relationships will suffice. Also, there seems to be a contradiction in Appleton’s analysis of the ‘causes’ of psychopathology; the cause is either the ‘shadow’ or the social conflict – unless they are the same thing, but even then, the concept of ‘shadow’ would still seem superfluous.

The reader of Acts of integration, acts of faith should not expect a systematic overview of Melanau psychopathology and healing practices. The book presents a basic theory of psychopathology and culture, focused on social conflicts, which seems to be applicable in many cases. The book also contains case descriptions of ‘mental illness’ and healing practices, presenting a lively and personal impression of Melanau life. It is difficult to ascertain, however, to what extent these cases represent all of Melanau psychopathology. To sum up, Appleton’s book offers a readable, lively impression of Melanau healing
Amity Doolittle analyses the nature of property relations in two communities (Tempulong and Govuton) adjacent to Kinabalu National Park over the period 1881-1996, focusing on how these developed in the context of interaction with discourses and agendas emanating from the state.

Doolittle draws on Foucault’s discussion of the ways in which ‘truths’ are constructed as a basis for the exercise of power, arguing that not only state-level actors but also local actors are able to construct ‘truths’ and thus to achieve their aims. Despite the clear message that the advantage remains on the side of state-level actors, Doolittle shows how local individuals and leaders draw on a variety of local and extra-local discourses and ally themselves in a variety of ways with outside actors to achieve their own personal aims and those of the groups they represent. She draws on the different histories of Tempulong and Govuton to illustrate the importance of understanding the complexities of local political, ecological and social particularities, grounding her argument in political ecology.

Under both colonial and post-colonial rule, Doolittle shows how native peoples in Sabah have been treated as ‘problems’ that need to be ‘corrected’: their use of resources has been seen as wasteful and destructive, and their attitudes as backward and ‘un-modern’. She argues that there are important continuities over time in the way the state has conceived of and interacted with local communities, with both colonial and post-colonial administrators drawing their inspiration from European conceptions of progress and modernity and the need to introduce ‘development’.

In the colonial period, when Sabah was ruled by a Chartered Company, the priority of rule was, clearly, to make a profit for the company’s shareholders. This was to be achieved by transforming land into a commodity and using it ‘profitably’. The idea that land was or should become a commodity was, of course, founded in discourses developed over the previous few hundred
years in the United Kingdom, and Chartered Company officers themselves clearly believed in this aim both in relation to the aims of the company and at a deeper psychological and philosophical level, associating this aim with ‘progress’. At the same time, Doolittle shows how some colonial officers tried very hard to ensure that native lives and livelihoods were taken into account as far as possible, and that there were two conflicting and coexisting discourses during the colonial period, expressed through land proclamations and land laws as well as in actual practice.

Doolittle provides a particularly biting critique of discourses and practice in the post-colonial period, arguing that ‘development’ has not primarily been intended to benefit local populations, but has intentionally been used as a political tool to extend state control and to ensure the continued dominance of the Malay-Muslim elite. She argues that people in Tempulong and Govuton are aware of the political role of ‘development’ projects and of Kemas, and simply try to get what they can out of the initiatives presented to them.

A rather depressing picture is painted of the ways in which individuals within each community aim to achieve personal aims by negotiating with powerful extra-local actors. The reader gains the impression that communities are increasingly riven with divisions and losing cohesion. Doolittle discusses the economic rationale behind individual behaviour in relation to different kinds of land and crops, and how this relates to attitudes to common resources, but she does not unpack local ideas about cohesion and sharing as much as I would have liked, referring to, rather than taking to (local) pieces, ideas like Peluso’s ‘ethic of access’ and Scott’s ‘moral economy of the peasant’.

Doolittle rightly points out that it is important to understand both state and local community dynamics, politics and social context in order to make sense of the ways in which property relations have developed. She presents a nuanced and interesting analysis at the local level of individual behaviour based on individual and group agendas. To parallel this, it would have been interesting to see an analysis of the ways in which individual state-level actors are influenced by the different agendas implied by their being individuals, representatives of groups, and employees. One imagines that under colonialism there is likely to have been scope or toleration for individual agendas, and that administrators were only tied into interest groups in a limited way, so that individuals acted mainly as employees. In the post-colonial period, on the other hand, there would appear to be a good deal of scope for individuals to act as individuals and representatives of interest groups first and foremost, and it would seem likely that even as employees, individuals act primarily as patrons and/or clients within unofficial and even illegal networks which link employees within the state framework to each other and to individuals outside that framework.

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There is an acute shortage of analysis of Southeast Asia’s corporate business with a solid empirical basis drawing on company statistics. This thoroughly researched volume fills the vacuum and provides insights into wider issues of political economy. The substantive chapters offer case studies from five countries: Indonesia (three chapters), Malaysia (three chapters), Singapore and Thailand (two chapters each) and the Philippines (one chapter). There are two explicit case studies of Malaysian corporations, the Chinese-Malaysian Hong Leong Group and the Malay bumiputera conglomerate Renong, while the chapter on banking in Malaysia boils down to a case study on Maybank.

The chapters on Indonesia take a macro view of corporate restructuring before and after the financial crisis of the late 1990s. According to Brown, the financial crisis could still prove to have a long-run positive impact in checking cronyism and necessitating reform. She observes that the results of rent-seeking corporate strategies could vary widely, with some Chinese Indonesians being highly successful where pribumi businessmen failed. She is critical of World Bank economists and international rating agencies who supported the ‘continued irrational exuberance and fatal conceit’ in the Indonesian financial system (p. 72). Surprisingly, she argues that the corporate stakes of the family businesses of former President Suharto have been grossly overrated.

The wide scope of this volume readily lends itself to comparisons across countries. Cronyism is found to have been far less damaging in Malaysia than in Indonesia, an observation which is not exactly new but is very well documented here. The comparison between ethnic Chinese and indigenous corporations resurfaces when talking about Malaysia, and again, the Chinese were successful where their indigenous counterparts failed.

Singapore is described as a developmental state in which success can be largely attributed to the lack of cronyism. Details on four major government-linked corporations (Keppel, Sembawang, Singapore Technologies, SingTel) show how state dominance nurturing corporate concentration during the 1980s and 1990s. The finding, known from the literature, that gains in total factor productivity accounted for little of Singapore’s economic growth is confirmed here.

The accounts of Thailand and the Philippines are shorter, and focus on the financial crisis in the former and the dismal long-run growth record in the lat-
The chief culprits in Thailand in 1997 were excessive borrowing by private Thai investors and mismanagement by the central bank. In identifying endogenous structural defects as causes of the crisis, Brown is in line with the views of Paul Krugman and many other commentators. A comparison between the Philippines and Malaysia reveals that the colonial legacy of American rule was the more beneficial one, whereas after independence, the Philippines under Marcos’s predatory state fared much worse than did Malaysia.

This volume is without doubt highly useful, with a great detail of interesting information. Some critical comments are in order, however. The main line of argument is sometimes not easy to discern amidst all the data. Some factual details are repeated several times, on occasion within a span of a few pages. For instance, contacts between president Abdurrahman Wahid and Sinivasan, an Indonesian businessman of Indian descent, are mentioned on page 39 and again on page 45. There are inaccuracies in details. Examples from Indonesian economic history may serve as an illustration. Links between Suharto and Liem Soei Liong dated not from the 1940s, but from the 1950s; Dutch firms were not nationalized in 1956, but taken over in December 1957 and formally nationalized in 1959. Strikingly, the author has made no use of a major source of information on big business in Indonesia: surveys compiled annually by a private company in Jakarta (Data Consult) on the country’s 200 top conglomerates.

On occasion, the main line of argument is clouded by the author’s urge to dispute others’ judgements. When discussing the Renong conglomerate, she goes to some lengths to invalidate the argument of K.S. Jomo and others that a collusive developmental state such as Malaysia may be capable of generating a ‘productive’ use of gains from rent-seeking behaviour. In the case of Thailand, she gets bogged down in a dispute with World Bank economist Stijn Claessens about the positive effects of foreign capital injections on profitability in Thai-dominated banks prior to the crisis. Such sidelines may be more interesting to the author than to the reader.


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This is an excellent detailed descriptive study of three Indonesian prepositions – *di*, *pada*, and *dalam* – all three roughly translatable as ‘on, at, in’. The study reveals many hitherto unknown features of these prepositions, either as single items or as part of compound forms, and explains in which contexts they are interchangeable. As the title indicates, the author does not restrict herself to a lexical-semantic analysis, but also takes into account pragmatic and discourse factors that contribute to the intended meanings of the words as used in utterances. Indeed, because in particular contexts speakers/writers may choose between *di*, *pada*, and *dalam*, broad and partly intuitive denotation descriptions fail to explain their use. The work is based on up-to-date semantic and cognitive theories, contributing to its sophistication. Moreover, in line with current thinking about which language varieties actually constitute Indonesian, data were collected from a well-motivated diversity of written and spoken sources, some of them going beyond what prescriptivists have hitherto allowed. Because of these factors, Djaran’s book is an important reference work for those dealing professionally with Indonesian.

Chapter 1 identifies the relevant problems concerning prepositions, motivates the choice of data, and summarizes previous studies. The corpus consists of written and spoken texts from three different genres (narrative, expository, procedural) that vary in degree of formality. Out of a total of 60,000 words, 1,415 tokens of *di*, *pada*, and *dalam* have been identified and analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Although the author is well aware of the limitations imposed by the corpus, I wonder if perhaps the internet could have helped her out in a few cases. For instance, in section 5.2.5 where she discusses *dalam* in relation to human Landmarks, she mentions only a single instance quoted from another researcher and admits that ‘there are no examples of this use in the corpus of this study’ (p. 178), thus implying that *dalam* followed by nouns and pronouns referring to human beings does not occur or is at most marginal. A quick scan on the internet, however, yields plenty of examples (in non-religious as well as religious contexts) that could serve as ‘circumstantial evidence’, such as (*di*/*ke*/*dari*) dalam kita (sendiri)/saya/mereka/Tuhan Yesus).

Chapter 2 is a clear exposition of theoretical concepts used in the study. Well explained and illustrated is the necessity to analyse preposition use in terms of interrelated semantic, pragmatic, and discourse factors. Inevitably, much attention is given to the question of monosemy versus polysemy, which is a major issue in the case of prepositions. In order to avoid an excessive proliferation of senses, the author advocates a theoretical compromise which postulates a basic (spatial) meaning with, additionally, a limited number of (non-spatial) pragmatic inferences that are associated with contextual interpretation and others which become lexicalized (through recurring use) (p. 17). In addition to theories relating to the semantics of prepositions in a
narrow sense, attention is also given to expressive or non-conceptual aspects of preposition use that co-determine the choice made (for instance the need to articulate contrast or precision, or to avoid misunderstanding); the theory of presumptive meanings based mainly on Grice’s and Levinson’s work on pragmatics; and medium, type and degree of formality of the discourse. The resulting comprehensive framework is novel in Indonesian linguistics, and allows the author to explore preposition use in far more detail than any of her predecessors. It might have been useful to refer readers to figures elsewhere in the book which clarify and illustrate the theoretical concepts used, similar to the way an Ikea drawing will assist you in constructing a furniture frame. Figure 5.8 (p. 189), for instance, shows that in addition to its four ‘basic’ spatial meanings, dalam has eight ‘metaphorical’ extended meanings, and that a particular contextual variant is not posited as an independent sense.

I shall not attempt to summarize Chapters 3, 4, and 5, which provide an analysis of di, pada, and dalam respectively. It will be clear by now that the reader is offered a wealth of interesting details that will help in understanding the sometimes puzzling use of these prepositions and the system they constitute. A classical problem, for example, is the optionality of certain prepositions. Whereas the optionality of pada can be dealt with in a separate section (4.7), the optionality of di versus dalam versus di dalam requires discussion in subsections 3.4.2.1 to 3.4.2.5. Previous scholars have argued that pada is a Sanskrit borrowing and that it probably entered Indonesian through Old Javanese and Classical Malay. The main problem with pada is that there seem to be two basic meaning clusters, one locational (in which case pada can sometimes be replaced by di) and one directional (when pada is sometimes interchangeable with kepada). After a synchronic description of pada, the author offers a diachronic description and puts forward an alternative hypothesis that the directional meanings derive from Sanskrit pāda ‘foot’, whereas the locational meanings derive from the noun padā.

The concluding remarks in Chapter 6 encompass only three pages, but how to the point they are. The reader could well begin reading this admirable work at the end!


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Yakan is spoken in the southern Philippines, on Basilan Island, some coastal areas of the Zamboanga peninsula, and some smaller islands. It belongs to the Austronesian sub-group Sama-Bajau, whose various languages and dialects are spoken, apart from in the southern Philippines, in North Borneo (Sabah) and in a myriad of small maritime communities in Indonesia (mostly on the coasts of Sulawesi and the Lesser Sunda Islands). This meticulous study of the Yakan grammar, however, devotes no space to diachronic insights or synchronic comparison with other Sama-Bajau languages.

Having lived for many years among the Yakan people, Dietlinde Behrens has acquired a deep knowledge of their language, and with Sherri Brainard has published a comprehensive grammar supported by a wealth of reliable data. The 935 examples are mostly displayed in series of comparable sentences that illustrate efficiently the rules inferred by the authors. This grammar is almost entirely devoted to Yakan syntax, which exhibits a fascinating variety. In contrast, the chapters on verbal morphology and tense-aspect are less developed.

The general approach is generativist, although Chapter 7 adopts a ‘localist case grammar’ approach, but the whole book remains easily readable thanks to the definitions of the concepts and tools used, and to the clear descriptions of syntactic phenomena. Rather than enumerating and describing the grammatical morphemes one after another, which would generate redundant comments, ‘the authors have chosen to describe and to label forms according to their functions’ (p. 2). This ‘functionalist display’ offers the reader a fine and comprehensive overview of the Yakan language, although it cannot totally avoid redundancies; for instance, in Chapter 15, ‘Syntactic processes’, the authors must deal again with the antipassive and other features already described in Chapter 9 ‘Clause types’.
After presenting the phonology and parts of speech, the authors describe noun phrases. The marker *si* exhibits interesting constraints: it obligatorily precedes personal names less than three syllables long, but not names of three syllables or more. Yakan has three sets of personal pronouns: absolutive, ergative and oblique. Although Yakan is not labelled as an ergative language, it seems to prefer ergative structures with a VSO word order, where *S*, if not a noun phrase, is an ergative affixed pronoun.

‘The grammatical marker *-in’ merits a whole chapter; this suffix is basically a definite marker, recording the Indonesian demonstrative *ini*. ‘In transitive clauses, when the subject or object is a definite common noun, the argument is obligatorily marked by *-in*’ (p. 42), in other words it will not be deleted by other determiners like possessives. It also appears at the end of relative clauses. Interesting restrictions forbid the use of *-in* for inanimate oblique locations. The syntactic requiredness of *-in* (p. 51), apart from logical constraints (examples 204-211 and 220), remains unexplained in examples 212-215: a Yakan speaker can say ‘the child is sitting’ but apparently not ‘a child is sitting’ because the subject *nakanak* ‘child’ must be suffixed by *-in*.

Chapter 7, on ‘Verb classes’, provides a convincing classification in 13 classes: semantically intransitive motion verbs; stative verbs; process verbs; meteorological verbs; semantically transitive motion verbs; bidirectional verbs; ditransitive verbs; causative verbs; activity verbs; utterance verbs; perception verbs; emotion verbs; and cognition verbs. The reader should be aware that in Tables 11 to 24 (pp. 59-94) the asterisks do not indicate ungrammaticality, but rather mean that the affix ‘occurs on more verb roots than any other affix for a given clause type’.

Chapter 9, on ‘Clause types’, proposes a comprehensive classification. The verbal clauses are the most developed and the most interesting; they are ‘divided into six types: intransitive; external argument construction; transitive 1; transitive 2; passive; antipassive.’ The so-called ‘transitive clause 2’ type ‘obligatorily takes *-in*’ (in addition to any other verb affixes that might be required), and the ergative NP is obligatorily marked by *we’* (p. 113). For example:

i. Pinogpog *we’ ne sawehin.* (example 487, p. 114)
   -in-pogpog *we’ ne sawe-in
   TR-hit ERG ERG.3SG snake-DEF
   He hit the snake.

The case marker *we’* is glossed *ERG* (ergative), which seems plausible because it also occurs in other structures, for instance with a verb prefixed by the derivational morpheme *paN-*:
While in transitive clause 1, ‘word order is obligatorily VSO’ (p. 113), in transitive clause 2 ‘if the object is a pronoun, only VOS word order is possible’. The oblique NP introduced by we′ can be deleted; thus the ‘transitive clause 2′, in the opinion of the reviewer, does not differ fundamentally from the passive, as the next example is labelled:

iii. Pinogpog sawehin.  
    -in-pogpog sawe-in  
    tr-hit snake-def  
    The snake was hit.

The agent can also be indicated by a suffixed 3sg pronoun (example 773, p. 173; example 846, p. 186), and the morphemes -in- and ta- ‘able to’ or ‘happen to’ are mutually exclusive – two more reasons to conclude that the Yakan passive looks a lot like that of some Malayic Austronesian languages, such as Indonesian (passive di–; non-volitive/accidental passive ter–) or some Bajau-Sama languages of South Sulawesi and the Lesser Sunda Islands that have adopted (maybe borrowed) the di- prefix, along with an ergative marker le′. Van den Berg (2004:549) sees ‘a link between Old Malay ni- and Standard Malay di-, a prefix which ultimately goes back to Proto-Austronesian *-in′. Viewing transitive clause 2 as simply passive would resolve at least one of the ‘alteration[s] of the syntactic relation of oblique NPs’ (example 840, p. 184).

Interestingly, Yakan exhibits passive voice as well as antipassive clause type. ‘In an antipassive clause, the Theme (Patient) is demoted to an oblique NP, and the agent is the absolutive NP′ (see sentences iv and v).

iv. Mogpog sawe iye.  
    N-pogpog sawe iye  
    intr-hit snake abs.3sg  
    He hit a snake.

v. Magpogpog sawe iye.  
    mag-pogpog sawe iye  
    intr-hit snake abs.3sg  
    He hit a snake.
The verb will be prefixed by *N*- or *mag*- ‘interchangeably with no apparent difference in meaning’, although possible aspectual nuances could have been explored, recalling that for ‘activity verbs’, ‘the Agent is the absolutive NP and is usually cross-referenced by *N*-’ (p. 85). The demotion of the Theme (Patient) to an oblique NP poses no problem when the Patient is referred to by a pronoun: the speaker will use the oblique set of pronouns. When the Patient is referred to by a noun, the demotion process is less obvious; no preposition is needed, but the ‘demotion is signalled by the deletion of the definite marker *-in* on the Theme’ (see sentence vii).

vi. *Kehet dendehin kennahin.* (example 707, p. 160)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>cut</th>
<th>woman-DEF</th>
<th>fish-DEF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kehet</td>
<td>dende-in</td>
<td>kenna-in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The woman cut up the fish.

vii. *Ngethet kenna dendehin.* (example 708, p. 160)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>intr-cut</th>
<th>fish</th>
<th>woman-DEF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N-kehet</td>
<td>kenna</td>
<td>dende-in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The woman cut up fish.

Although left implicit by the authors, the word order in antipassive clauses may be significant too, because ‘under the right circumstances […] the demoted object in an antipassive can be definite in which case it is obligatorily marked by *-in*’ (p. 42). Also, the Theme (Agent) can be deleted, as is predicted for antipassive structures:

viii. *Ngethet dendehin.* (example 709, p. 161)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>intr-cut</th>
<th>woman-TRM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N-kehet</td>
<td>dende-in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The woman cut up (something).

The wide possibilities for cleft sentences in Yakan are also dealt with, and after a clear description of the relativization process, the last chapter describes complex sentences.

Data about the lexicon of the Yakan language, obviously not dealt with in *A grammar of Yakan*, are available in the *Yakan-English dictionary* by Dietlinde Behrens (2002). The spacious layout, the attractive character font, and the entries printed in bold make this dictionary comfortable to read and to browse through. The grammatical class of the entries is indicated. After the definition, at least one example sentence is supplied, with the entry in bold, as is its equivalent in the English translation of the example. When applicable, the possible affixes to the base are mentioned just after the entry, with a syntactic
annotation, for example ‘S N- mag- O -an’ means that if there is a subject, the entry can be found prefixed by N- or mag- and/or suffixed by -an if the verb is transitive. The derived/flexional forms are listed below the definition, rather than being displayed in sub-entries; this layout is concise and efficient.

Under some entries, a cross-reference box is available, listing a few words belonging to the lexical field relevant to that entry. For instance, under the entry and definition of buwani (bee) one can find a list of eight related words, ‘Things concerning bees’, for example bohe’ buwani (honey). Linguists (especially typologists) or learners of Yakan, even native speakers of the language, will find this feature extremely useful, along with the English-Yakan index at the end of the dictionary. The 33 short appendices are miscellaneous Yakan vocabulary lists, providing insights into the Yakan culture, technology and everyday life, for instance ‘relationships’, ‘fish and things of the sea’, ‘types of houses and carpentry’. To sum up, this dictionary is excellent both in form and in content.

Without doubt A grammar of Yakan is the most comprehensive grammar to date for any of the languages of the Sama-Bajau group. The grammar focuses on syntax, and is descriptive in nature, according to the functions of the forms, inferring the rules of the language from a large corpus. It may not be exhaustive, as the authors emphasize, but it seems truly comprehensive regarding Yakan syntactic structures. It provides linguists interested in Austronesian languages with a wealth of reliable data and analysis. Nevertheless, it is not designed to be used as a textbook for learners, unless they are familiar with general linguistics and syntax. The ideal companion for this grammar is the Yakan-English dictionary, the most interesting features of which are the clear-cut definitions, the examples, and the list of related words (under certain entries, or displayed in thematic lists in appendices). This dictionary is highly recommended not only for linguists, but also for anyone who wishes to become more familiar with the Yakan language, including native speakers.

Abbreviations

der: derivative; tr: transitive; intr: intransitive; erg: ergative; def: definite; obl: oblique; trm: term; abs: absolutive.

Reference

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Lemonnier’s latest book results from his long-term fieldwork among the Ankave, an Anga-speaking people living on the southern edge of the central highlands of Papua New Guinea, in a very sparsely populated part of Gulf Province. Colonization reached the Ankave late and was never intense. And after independence, in 1975, contacts with government and church officials diminished.

To introduce the Ankave, Lemonnier uses the familiar anthropological device of the travelogue. But he does so in an original way. In the first chapter he relates how he, his wife and fellow-anthropologist Pascale Bonnemère, and their two daughters arrive by helicopter in the Ankave habitat. The pilot is taken aback by the isolation of the landing site: forest everywhere, a dilapidated research station, and seemingly no people. This description of their return to the field forms part of an account of the Ankave habitat, and the ways the people make use of it. From here the argument proceeds by association. Lemonnier strings together the dangers that the habitat poses for the Ankave; the threat of attacks by sorcerers and witches; efforts by shamans to cure patients from these attacks; reactions to a case of death, mourning and the disposal of the dead; and so on. Often the last few sentences of a chapter announce the subject of the next one. In much of his book he employs the present tense, not unreasonably, since he is reporting on ongoing events.

Lemonnier’s focus is on the *ombo’,* cannibalistic witches, both male and female, who are thought to kill people and devour their putrid corpses in orgies held deep in the forest, *les sabbats des lucioles*. The Ankave are ambivalent towards the *ombo’* since they see them as the providers, in a mythical past, of their drums and the accompanying drumming rituals. But the witches’ malevolent impact far outweighs their benefits. Because humans may be *ombo’* in disguise, and because *ombo’* do not flinch from attacking close relatives, people are suspicious of those with whom they are in daily interaction. Lemonnier paints a bleak picture of Ankave sociality. People’s fears are aggravated by, first, ‘the obsessive wish for balance in exchanges that pervades Ankave social organisation’ (p. 83) and, second, the dire implications of exogamy. For, in the perception of the Ankave, enabling a male member of another clan to beget offspring via a female member of one’s own clan, creates a debt that can never be properly balanced or repaid. Hence Lemonnier
argues, at length, that one thing the Ankave especially fear is maternal kin who are inclined to carry out witch attacks as punishment for compensation deemed insufficient.

In the final chapters of his book Lemonnier points to the remarkable overall resemblance between witchcraft among the Ankave and among a great many European groups in the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries, as shown especially by research by the Italian historian Carlo Ginzburg. His conclusion is that both reflect ‘one possible response to the universal experience of death, mourning, and the inaccessibility of eternal life’ (p. 390, his italics).

Lemonnier’s book is packed with information. His knowledge of the Ankave way of life is vast. He tells about his interactions with local residents during participant observation that was obviously very intense. He elaborates on his attempts to interpret his findings. He provides comparative material on other Anga peoples, and about groups farther afield. Regarding the elongated dance masks that Ankave men wear during mourning ceremonies, he observes:

For the moment, the three masks that as many drummers kept moving with dedication and pride did not appear to me as mediators between the living and the dead, but rather as distant echoes of the rituals of the south coast societies from whom the Ankave have indirectly derived them. [...] Hence I was entirely enchanted to see these masked figures display themselves. (p. 236).

The south coast peoples he refers to are the Orokolo and the Elema, who stopped using such masks over half a century ago.

With this book Lemonnier has provided an excellent addition to the growing ethnography of the Anga-speaking peoples. Le sabbat des lucioles is one of the few anthropological contributions, if not the only one, to a French series aiming at a wide readership. An English translation for the benefit of readers (both anthropologists and others) unacquainted with French is highly desirable.


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To begin my review of this anthology of traditional narrative, poetry and rhetoric, together with contemporary essays, speeches and stories, let me quote Timu’ay Ansulat Promon: ‘I beg you politely, never allow yourselves to enter the presence of your elders without a pen and paper. Sulatay niu, haaa (Write it down)’ (p. 403).

Thirty Subanen storytellers and raconteurs, in collaboration with Felicia Brichoux, have fulfilled this leader’s wish. The volume is a rich compilation of an intangible heritage, the oral tradition of the ‘People of the Headwaters’ of central Subanen (on the Zamboanga peninsula in Southern Mindanao, the Philippines). Thanks to this publication, parts of the oral tradition of the Subanen have been turned into a more tangible heirloom that can be passed down to future generations.

Timu’ay Ansulat Promon’s entreaty emphasizes the relationship between the oral and the written, and what a high regard people with an oral tradition but no formal schooling have for written tradition. This is an attitude shared by many, though not all, societies. Esteem for a written tradition is in fact linked to education and empowerment. It is also linked to technology and to what could be called aids to collective memory, namely a writing system and printing.

With the current threat of globalization, all knowledgeable people including scholars are concerned about oral traditions and their safekeeping. In the Philippines, polyglossia and various levels of speech mastery are a normal situation not only at the urban level but also in the countryside. The list of collaborators in the present book (pp. xxvi-xxviii) partly reflects this complex linguistic situation.

Thus the anthology is an attempt to convey to linguists, anthropologists, students of literature, researchers, and general readers the Subanen way of life, their history, oral genres, and various styles of verbal art. Examples are included of poetry, etiological myths, customs ranging from aspects of daily life to ritual ceremonies, traditional and recent oral history, customary law, and related figures of speech. A further section is devoted to riddles, tales and various types of songs. A list of 31 names of rivers, two appendices, and a linguistic-anthropological bibliography complete the volume.

This anthology is useful for comparative studies in Philippines oral literature and for the study of recurrent motifs in folk tales like Pusung. Surprisingly, except for the inclusion in the bibliography of the work of Guadiosa Martinez Ochotorena, no allusion is made to the genre of guman epics, even though this is such a rich heritage among the Subanen.

The presentation of the Subanen and English texts on facing pages is indispensable, and as a linguist-anthropologist I applaud it. This is a good way to safeguard an oral tradition, and the book, dedicated to Howard P. and Barbara MacKaughan, attests to the long-standing work of the Summer
Institute of Linguistics in that field, through its project on education in vernacular languages.

I would like to comment on our prospects, in today’s world, for saving what I call ‘literature of voice’. We have previously shifted from the oral to the written, a shift to which A voice from many rivers is a testimony. However, thanks to digital technologies in audio and video recording, with their new ways of capturing performances, we are now shifting back from written to oral. If this book had been published in 2005 instead of 2002, it would have been possible to include a DVD with audio files, so that the reader could listen to a storytelling session while reading the transcription in the vernacular language or the translation. And this is how we return to the oral, via the written, to arrive at a ‘memorative composition’ (M. Carruthers): that is, a narrative process based at once on fixity and creativity. Visual and audio recordings can help people to preserve their tradition, not only in a frozen form (writing tends to ‘fix the butterfly’), but in a more dynamic manner, in a temporal flow, with the vividness of voice and music. These new memory aids stimulate aural and oral perception, as well as visual perception. They cannot but genuinely please those who wish to safeguard oral traditions and pass them down to younger generations. I therefore suggest that a digitized sound archive should be created to complement the record of beautiful and compelling Subanen tradition offered here in book form.


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In late 1945 Indonesia became independent, and the new state was recognized by the Dutch in late 1949. In mid-1955 the economic ties between the Dutch and the Indonesian government were cut. The religious connection, however, in terms of the Christian mission, continued almost undisturbed. In some periods it was more difficult for Dutch missionaries to obtain a visa, but in general the existing relations continued. In 1970, 73 percent of the Catholic priests in Indonesia were still foreigners. Only after that date did the number diminish with any speed, to 54 percent in 1980 and only (or still!) 19 percent in 1990. The process of Indonesianisasi, through which Indonesian members took
over the leadership of religious orders, was a calm and rarely revolutionary process. In 1945 there were 60 religious orders in the country, and nearly all of them were able to attract enough Indonesian members to survive and flourish in a period when in the Netherlands such institutions were entering a process of decline, and in some cases were even in danger of dying out. This created the idea of a ‘mission in reverse’, with some Indonesians coming to Europe to assist the rapidly shrinking number of European priests, sisters and brothers. In the 1990s the Congregation of Sisters of Carolus Borromeus (known from Carolus hospital in Jakarta, Borromeus hospital in Bandung, and Panti Rapih in Yogyakarta) received Indonesian sisters as superiors in the Netherlands. This process is depicted in the small book unde review here. Three of the contributions (by Huub Boelaars, Jan Willemsen and Vefie Poels) depict the historical and institutional framework, while nine other contributions are case studies related to individual persons or specific religious orders.

Most of the authors of this book are either still responsible for the strategy of these orders, or closely related to them. Therefore not all of the problems are openly discussed. The Dutch priest Hans Kwakman (born in 1939) was appointed provincial superior in 1996 for the Indonesian members of the MSC order, the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, even though the leadership had been with Indonesian members for 25 years. Only very attentive and more or less pre-informed readers will be able to catch sight of some of the hot issues hidden between the lines of Gabrielle Dorren’s rather diplomatic description of his recent career. Both in its general overviews and in the portraits of individual persons, this books presents a balanced and lively portrait of one of the most solid and lasting by-products of Dutch colonial rule. It is a pity that none of the contributors is of Indonesian origin, and that only one person, Brother Clemens Djuang Keban, born in Solor in 1935, was specially interviewed for the book.

Nancy Eberhardt. *Imagining the course of life; Self-transformation in a Shan Buddhist community*. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2006, xiv + 208 pp. ISBN 9780824830175, price USD 24.00 (paperback); 9780824829193, USD 55.00 (hardback).

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Strong emotions are ‘unrealistic’ (p. 154); ‘thinking too much’ may make you ‘crazy’ (p. 150). Two sisters in the village suffered from *khi kwaang*, a ‘condition that causes the sufferer, when startled, suddenly to begin to mimic
the movements and speech of those near her’ (p. 116). Using such materials, Eberhardt shows us how our understanding of ourselves and others is ‘linked to local assumptions and beliefs about the life course’ (p. 172).

Eberhardt is in search of an alternative to the Western model of a repressive society with its interiorized self, and among the Shan in this ‘periphery of the Thai state’ (p. 10) she finds a more collective, relational model in their ritual life. Here control over the feelings is more important than the self-expression valued by Western popular psychology. Contrasts ‘between the aware and the unaware […], the knowing and ignorant’ are more important than notions of interiority and exteriority (p. 169).

The book is based not only on the author’s original fieldwork in 1979-1981, but also on subsequent fieldwork a decade later, when a direct inquiry was mounted into notions of the self (p. 2). From an ‘ethnopsychological’ perspective, discourse and forms of ‘advice’ (p. 148) provide a level where we can find assumptions which colour everyday patterns of behaviour. Eberhardt writes vividly, using modest but incisive examples.

After a general introduction, Chapter 2 deals with a soul-calling curing ritual which shows the ‘porous’ body as a ‘contested site’ (p. 28) between khwan (souls) and phi (spirits). Although khwan are integral to Shan conceptions of the person, since they are detachable there is a ‘rather decentred view of the self’ (p. 43). Invasions of spirit are metaphors for loss of control (p. 154). Chapter 3 deals with ‘death as self-transformation’, and Chapter 4 with birth (or rebirth) and childhood. Shan children come into the world ‘pre-loaded’ (p. 81) with the karma of previous existences. Rebirth is accepted as common sense; the grown-up daughter of a recently deceased woman is quite willing to accept that a little child is her mother reborn (p. 74). Eberhardt shows that the capricious naughtiness, or wildness, of young children, wandering souls, and hungry spirits forms a category of ‘desire-driven’ otherness against which an image of the mature person is constructed (pp. 83-6).

Chapter 5 covers protective and annual rituals appropriate to the mature adult, demonstrating ‘a Shan view of self-in-the-world’ (p. 106). Chapter 6 deals with the initiation of novice monks, but from the mature viewpoint of those who – like the author herself – sponsor such rituals. Although original and ethnographically significant, the attempt to present this as ‘a ritual of maternity’ (p. 143) does not quite work; given the cultural constructions of age emphasized later in the chapter, it does not follow that these cannot be rites of passage simply because the novices are so young (p. 141). Chapter 7 concludes with the asceticism of old age, when a ‘second socialization’ takes place; just as physical powers are fading, one acquires spiritual powers (p. 160).

Oddly, from a Thai perspective, khwan turn into phi and back again, at death and rebirth, with apparent facility (pp. 44-7); there is a fairly undifferentiated category of phi with the prototype (pp. 34, 83) being a ‘hungry and
wandering’ ghost (although ‘a vague category of benevolent spirits’ is also referred to on page 108); and the tsao moeng is described (p. 30) as a ‘village guardian spirit’ – although his remit appears to be wider than this (p. 108) – rather than as a guardian of the realm. It is important to consider the Shan in their own terms, but I felt more comparisons could have been made with Thai materials on spirit mediumship, particularly when summarizing the logic of evicting invading spirits, evoking external powers, and securing the restored order (p. 121).

Eberhardt is convinced that ‘in many cultural traditions, including our own, we can find enduring affinities between prevailing religious teachings and the tacit assumptions that inform our everyday coping strategies’ (p. 147). She convinces us, too, with examples such as the views of children aged 4 to 13 as quoted directly on page 161. These children know all about the Buddhist notion of merit, about the connection with old age and the temple, and about rebirth and respect for seniors; and they explain it with devastating simplicity.

But while emphasizing the Buddhist ‘fluidity of life-forms’ and denial of radical otherness implied in rebirth notions (p. 165), the author also notes strong notions of a continuing individuality (p. 165), and ‘alternative conceptions of power’ (p. 51) in Shan psychology. In an apt simile (p. 9) she likens the Shan understanding of the Buddhist notion of anatta (‘no-self’) to the ordinary Chicago person’s understanding of relativity.

This might have been an older-style analysis of personality and culture, but Eberhardt is well aware of the dangers of presenting a homogenized ‘Shan’ point of view, of the potential for change in traditional views brought about by out-migration and wage labour, and of the difficulties of uniting generalized and individualized points of view. So she has consciously tried to highlight the ‘dialectic between cultural forms and personal interpretations’ (p. 173), and calls for more study of the ‘organization of work, gender, and domestic life’ (p. 13) in order to better understand changing notions of self-development (p. 176).

Chapter 3 shows how emotional attachments are seen as dangerous, since selves are ‘co-constituted by others’, conjuring an image of ‘hearts in motion, of the almost gravitational pull that exists between bodies that have an emotional tug on each other’ (pp. 70-1). The ultimate aim is the ‘quiet mind’ (p. 149), achieved by people who can ‘control their minds’ (p. 153) and do not give way to wanton indulgence in grief or greed.

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Albertus Jacob Duymaer van Twist werd in 1809 geboren in Deventer en stierf in 1887 in het bij dat stadje gelegen landhuis Nieuw Rande, dat hij na zijn terugkeer uit Indië liet bouwen en in 1857 betrok. In 2007 bestond Nieuw Rande 150 jaar, wat voor het Historisch Museum Deventer de aanleiding vormde de schijnwerpers te richten op de figuur van Duymaer van Twist. Er kwam een expositie, ‘Indië en Deventer, de twee werelden van Duymaer van Twist’, waar onder andere kunstvoorwerpen die de landvoogd tijdens zijn Indische periode had verworven, werden tentoongesteld. De drijvende kracht achter die tentoonstelling was J.C. Smelik die bovendien deze gelegenheid aangrep een boek te schrijven over Duymaer van Twist. Hij deed dat samen met C.M. Hogenstijn en W.J.M. Janssen.


Verantwoordelijk voor het tweede en meest uitvoerige hoofdstuk is Smelik die schrijft over Duymaer van Twists ambtstermijn in Indië. Hij leidt zijn onderwerp in met een – bij de VOC beginnend – stukje koloniale geschiedenis. Pas interessant wordt het wanneer Smelik vertelt over het leven en ervaringen van het echtpaar in Indië. Hij citeert daarbij regelmatig uit de brieven die Mie van Twist schreef aan haar zuster in Nederland. Ze heeft het daarin bijvoorbeeld over de grandeur die hen omringt in de korte periode dat zij, na aankomst in de kolonie, in het paleis in Batavia (het ‘Hotel op Rijswijk’) verblijven en over het spektakel tijdens de drie uur durende tocht van Batavia naar het paleis in Buitenzorg, hun permanente behuizing. Mooi is ook de beschrijving van de kennismaking op het paleis met de adjudant-Intendant baron Van Heerdt en zijn gezin. Over het oudste van zijn twee kinderen, de tweejarige Anna, schrijft mevrouw Van Twist dat het meisje haar ‘dikwijls komt bezoeken en hoewel de kleine Anna niets dan Maleis spreekt, kunnen wij toch best zamen overweg en redeneert zij onophoudelijk door, al versta ik er niets van’. Kort daarop sterven Anna’s moeder en broertje. Haar vader vertrouwt de zorg over zijn dochtertje toe aan het echtpaar dat het kind in 1856 zal meenemen naar Nederland. Zelf kinderloos, zou Anna op Nieuw Rande ‘het zonnetje zijn in hun leven’ (p. 42). Van haar is in het boek een ontroerend, door Raden Saleh geschilderd, portret afgebeeld.

Een groot deel van Smeliks bijdrage is gewijd aan het werkbestaan van Van Twist. Omdat hij nooit eerder in Indië was geweest, wilde deze zich persoonlijk op de hoogte stellen. Vandaar de talrijke reizen die hij, in gezelschap

Het boek van Smelik en zijn mede-auteurs is een boeiend boek, niet het minst omdat het – sinds het proefschrift van J. Zwart over Duymaer van Twist uit 1939 – in verschillende opzichten nieuw licht werpt op de man die Douwes Dekkers ‘edele bedoelingen’ aanvankelijk zo app scared maar ze al spoedig daarna vanwege het ontauistische optreden van zijn bestuursambtenaar in de weg stond. Direct en zijdelings vormt het daarmee een verrijking van de Multatuli-literatuur. Het is bovendien een mooi uitgegeven en fraai geïllustreerd boekwerk geworden.


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*Turmoil in Burma; Contested legitimacies in Myanmar* is the latest book from the doyen of Burma studies, David Steinberg. It is a more theoretically inclined volume than his previous works, interweaving abstract research on questions of political legitimacy with the author’s deep understanding of Burma’s political present and history. Recognizing the complexities of his task,
however, Steinberg declares (p. 241) that the book does not attempt to provide answers to questions of political legitimacy in Burma, but rather to ‘clarify […] the unruly discourse by asking what the legitimacy questions really are in that society, and to examine the ideological and institutional means that have been employed to prop up or destroy the multiple contending forces seeking power, authority, and/or identity’. Its objectives couched in these terms, *Turmoil in Burma* succeeds admirably.

The central actor in the book, and the player with most at stake given its questionable ‘legitimacy’ according to any of the criteria set out by Steinberg, is the military regime that has ruled Burma since it took power in a coup in 1962. Now the self-styled ‘State Peace and Development Council’ (SPDC), Burma’s ruling junta attempts to create legitimacy, in the absence of any electoral mandate, with appeals to nationalism, ethnic identity, the protection and promotion of Buddhism, and the unity of the state. Of course, and with the exception of the emphasis on displays of Buddhist piety, most of these are familiar themes of military regimes everywhere. The SPDC’s efforts to be seen as the protectors of Burma’s Buddhist identity, however, have been severely undermined by its crackdown on protesting monks in September 2007 – an event that took place after the publication of *Turmoil in Burma*, but presciently foreshadowed in it. Reaching into traditional Burmese concepts of political legitimacy, Steinberg makes the important distinction (p. 43) between the concepts of *ana* (the ability to coerce) and *awza* (the ability to influence through prestige or charisma). He drolly notes that the SPDC has plenty of the former, but very little of the latter.

Authoritarian regimes in modern times have often attempted to create legitimacy via claims of superior economic management. But, as Steinberg points out, the SPDC can entertain scant claims on this front. Under military rule, Burma has regressed economically from the country in Southeast Asia most believed was best positioned to prosper, to the poorest in the region. Meanwhile the recent domination of Burma’s economy by China (externally) and by Sino-Burmese (internally) bodes ill for the future. It could even, Steinberg writes (p. 238), ‘result in feelings that the military had sold out the country to the Chinese, and this could be a significant delegitimizing factor [for the SPDC] at some point in the future’.

Arrayed against the SPDC is their political opposition, led by the National League for Democracy (NLD) and personified by Nobel peace prize laureate, Aung San Suu Kyi. In contrast to Burma’s ruling military regime, the NLD has democratic legitimacy on account of its victory in the country’s general election of 1990. It has never been allowed to form a government, and most NLD members have been imprisoned, harassed, and/or have fled the country. Should the NLD ever come to power it would face the challenge of reaching a political settlement with Burma’s myriad of ethnic minorities, who constitute
the other major node of opposition to the SPDC. Such a settlement is likely, and the two forces have been broadly allied for some time, but the complexity and difficulties of the issue must not be understated. According to Steinberg (p. 246), the relationship between Burma’s ethnic communities and its majority Burmans ‘remains the most salient, long-range question facing the country’, a question against which ‘the immediate political problems pale’.

Like most Burma watchers, Steinberg is not optimistic about the country’s immediate future. But, eschewing what he refers to as the ‘Western Dualism that engenders absolutes’ and recognizing instead the Buddhist notion of the transience of all things, he adjudges that ‘transitionally pessimistic’ is a more appropriate estimation (p. 246).

Turmoil in Burma concludes with some useful statistical appendices that are all the more valuable in view of the dearth of reliable data otherwise available. The book is essential reading for anyone interested in Burma and its seemingly intractable problems.

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On one level, Carl Trocki’s book provides a competent but relatively standard history of Singapore. He starts with the early history of Riau, the eighteenth-century precursor of Singapore located near the contemporary town of Tanjung Pinang on Bintan Island. Its success owed a great deal to the Bugis – traders and pirates who had become princes, dominating Johor/Riau commerce. Trocki then gives us a rapid but effective overview of the buildup of colonial trade, the origins of British imperial control, the Second World War and Japanese occupation, the departure of the British, the political dominance of the People’s Action Party (PAP), the growth of oil and the Singapore port through the stimulation of the Korean and Vietnamese wars, and the period of industrialization. Finally he deals with the current political and economic issues facing ‘Singapore Inc.’ – the network of ruling institutions and companies around the Chinese elite and the Lee family. Trocki’s study is essentially a political economy of Singapore over the past two centuries. His view of the current status of Singapore appears to depend quite heavily on the work of Gary Rodan, whom he appropriately quotes generously.
While this is a competent overview, it is not necessarily original or striking, but there is a more interesting, somewhat implicit, aspect of this narrative, which is to chart the transformations of Singapore’s civil society, concentrating on how the state has managed, largely successfully, its multicultural and multi-faith civil society. On this level, Trocki’s work is more engaging and more important. He starts, plausibly enough, with a substantial quotation from J.S. Furnivall’s famous definition of ‘plural society’ in Colonial policy and practice (1948), in which different communities live side by side but separately within the same polity. This is how in what Furnivall called a ‘medley of peoples’ (in Burma and Java) it is possible to have some degree of social stability without civil conflict. Against the background of British colonial rule, Trocki traces the emergence of a Chinese intellectual and administrative class that was English-trained but increasingly independent and assertive. In colonial society on the eve of war, there existed in Singapore a relatively rich civil society, part legal and part criminal, in the form of clubs, schools, religious associations, work organizations, secret societies, and gangs. The intellectuals included people like Lim Boon Keng who formed the ‘Queen’s Chinese’ and were instrumental in shaping the Straits Chinese British Association, the Boy Scouts, and the Social Purity Union. There was also a rich associational and commercial vibrancy among the Arab, Indian and Malay communities. These associations were not dependent on the colonial elite, and they often questioned and occasionally opposed British rule. In fact the European merchant community rarely intervened in civil society apart from protecting its trading interests. This colonial society was eventually disrupted and destroyed by war, Japanese occupation, Asian nationalism, and class conflict.

Almost half of this book is devoted to the history of the island under PAP control, from the first electoral victory of the party in May 1959. Trocki (p. 107) claims that the PAP ‘defeated all its rivals and eliminated almost all visible forms of civil society in the republic to create a system of one-party dominance’. How has PAP managed Singapore so successfully with relatively little visible opposition? Social scientists have been addressing this question for some time – largely unsuccessfully. Trocki gives, somewhat implicitly, a series of plausible explanations for a society that is managed but is without a visible civil society. The PAP has exercised oversight over the emergence of a multiracial and multicultural community, notably in relation to Islam by setting up Muis (the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore). As a secular state, Singapore has sought to manage religious tensions through such instruments as the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act. Singapore has enjoyed relatively consistent economic growth – partly as a result of its strategic geographical location. The government has managed to keep the loyalty of the Chinese elite and middle classes. Lee Kuan Yew’s emphasis on elitism and meritocracy – apparently inspired by his reading of Arnold Toynbee – has produced a dynamic elite class. This
elite has managed to gain sufficient loyalty from the mass of the population – through public housing, a self-funded pension plan, and free education. The other arm of government control works through the manufacture of consumer choice: that is, through Singapore’s obsession with shopping and through the creation of a status-seeking middle class.

Trocki’s overall picture of Singapore Inc. is in the first place one of a ‘managed society’, with government attempting to control major dimensions of society such as housing, population, migration and the economy. Secondly, the making of today’s Singapore has involved ‘the elimination [of] all forms of civil society’ (p. 131), especially the elimination of all forms of political activism and intellectual engagement. Trocki’s study raises the obvious question about the long-term character of a society without a civil society. Can a society survive on a diet of shopping and consumerism? Singapore’s current answer is for the government to create a cultural face for the island, partly to attract tourists and partly to counter the objection that the shopping mall stands in lieu of a vibrant civil sphere. On these grounds, Trocki’s Singapore deserves close attention.

Trocki’s work is strong on class relations, the state, elite formation, and economic history. He achieves a useful political economy of the island, but the negative consequence is possible the neglect of the role of religion. In claiming that there is no civil society in Singapore, he ignores the mushrooming growth of religious sites, services and structures – reformist Islam, evangelical Christianity, spirit possession, Buddhist social movements, El Shaddai, reformed Taoist societies, and so forth. Such groups may not contribute to what Trocki calls political activism, but they are surely components of civil society.


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This book covers one of the many expressions of modern performing arts in Southeast Asia. The first local forms of ‘modern’ theatre appeared in the late nineteenth century. One of the first theatre groups which emerged during that time is described by Matthew Cohen in his descriptive and exhaustive study of the *Komedie Stamboel* from 1891, when this theatre troupe was established, to the ultimate death of its founder Auguste Mahieu in 1903. The book is divided into six chapters, four of which have been partly published before in
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journals. An introduction and an appendix of plays and tableaux performed complete the book.

The Indo-European Auguste Mahieu was a man of many talents: for his theatre group he served as actor, musician, playwright, composer and manager. Mahieu’s Komedie Stamboel, founded in Surabaya in 1891, soon became famous throughout Java and Sumatra, and gave its name to a whole genre of popular theatre that flourished in the Dutch East Indies from the turn of the century. Labelled ‘naive, sentimental, and populist’ by cultural elites at the time, the various Stamboel groups must be considered the most important commercial entertainment enterprise before the arrival in the archipelago of film and radio (p. 21). Very soon other groups imitated Mahieu’s theatre in Java and Sumatra. Common to all Stamboel troupes was their high mobility: they were constantly on tour around all major towns and cities, not only in Java, but also in Sumatra, Borneo, and the Malay Peninsula.

This form of popular theatre served the need for evening entertainment of the growing urban middle classes, be they Indo-European, Chinese, Javanese, Sundanese or Malay. Its main aim was to make money, and therefore the plays always had to present something new and spectacular to their audiences: new plots, new popular songs, artistic choreographies, exotic sceneries and costumes, or fabulous special effects. The first plays were adaptations from well-known, often European, stories (such as Cinderella) or operas (such as Bellini’s Norma or Gounod’s Faust).

But soon other stories were adopted for the new stages, such as tales from the Arabian Nights, early local bestselling novels such as Cerita Nyai Dasima and Cerita Rossinna, and original compositions based on contemporary events such as the Boer War in South Africa. From the very beginning these plays were performed in Malay, not in Dutch or Javanese. Musical intermezzi frequently interrupted the plays. While during the early years these mainly involved famous European songs and dances, the various troupes very quickly learned to compose and perform their own compositions, several of which became highly popular on the streets of Batavia, Semarang, Surabaya and Medan.

Cohen somewhat unfortunately refers to these new developments as a ‘hybrid’ form of theatre – can one really speak of non-hybrid cultural forms? While the European roots of Komedie Stamboel can easily be identified (for instance, in its theatrical conventions and its plots), the ‘native’ or ‘Asian’ component is more difficult to isolate. One indigenous source of inspiration was very likely the syair genre of Malay literature, which was popular in the nineteenth century. The sometimes very long syair poems were read aloud in a vivid manner, not only at the courts of Malay sultans in Sumatra and elsewhere, but also in the many coffee houses in coastal towns and cities. Indian and Chinese popular theatres may also have played a role. Traditional forms
of theatre from the Javanese courts, by contrast, seem to have had less influence on the Komedie Stamboel.

Cohen states that he does not aspire to deliver a biography of Auguste Mahieu, the Indo-European director-actor, due to the lack of suitable sources. No photos or complete librettis of the plays have survived. Only a few detailed descriptions of performances could be found in book chapters or newspaper clippings. Rather than a personal biography, Cohen’s meticulous study is a kind of collective biography of an early commercial theatre group. It offers fascinating insights into the culture industry at the beginning of the twentieth century, illuminating an innovative development which was to have a lasting impact on the first Indonesian dramas of the 1920s and 1930s, and on the early Indonesian film industry.


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This brief book focuses on local discourses about, and interpretations of, contemporary fasting rituals in West Java, Indonesia. It is based on 24 months of fieldwork between 2000 and 2002 carried out in a religious school (pesantrén), a village, and among Bandung urbanites. The basic ideas underlying this study are set out in the first, introductory chapter. Aside from secondary discussions about techniques of fasting, differences between Islamic and traditional approaches to fasting, fasting as a source of prosperity, and the contexts in which fasting is referred to, the study first of all aims to use the phenomenon of fasting as a point of entry into a discussion about indigenous theories of power and knowledge. A second aim is to see the role of the body as a locus of control and individual empowerment, asking how fasting reflects local theories of power and knowledge in individual lives. By seeing religious beliefs as embodied knowledge and fasting as a way of sharpening this knowledge, Hellman hopes to give us an understanding of fasting that rises above the thought/action divide. He posits that the framework within which people understand religious ideas about fasting is an embodied knowledge rather than one of mental concepts or just instrumental acts (pp. 10-1).

The second chapter gives us an overview of some individual ideas about fasting, collected from three rather different Bandung residents. The first is
a woman who has undertaken the Muslim hajj, who describes fasting as an emptying of the person in order to become receptive to God and thus be led into doing God’s will. The second, a teacher of architecture and city planner in his forties, emphasizes that in fasting, one’s intentions and understandings should accord with God’s will rather than be just a mechanical following of prescribed rules. To the third, a twenty-year-old single female journalist and student, fasting is first of all a purification of body and soul; she worries less about the correct way to fast, or about the symbolism of the practice. All three are primarily concerned with the Islamic fast of Ramadan. In their interviews basic ideas about purity, control, and submission, as well as empowerment and the social and religious rewards of fasting, are brought out. Less clear is the distinction between Islamic and traditional modes of fasting.

The next chapter presents some conceptual themes that underlie people’s understanding of the practice of fasting, especially ideas about containers (wadah) and gateways. A wadah can be any kind of container that is filled with religious experiences and through it be empowered. To the people of West Java the wadah is a concrete body, though they then link it with boundaries, centres (or foci), and a place of regeneration (p. 25). The person’s body-as-wadah is the product of socialization, and its ability to absorb religious influences waxes and wanes with the person’s state of purity (p. 19). This is also indirectly shown to be true of the household-as-wadah or the community-as-wadah (pp. 38, 94). Family rituals are household-centred, though this ‘container’ is a porous one, a gateway, allowing religious power and blessings to flow into and out of it. Rather than impervious containers, wadah are places where religious power is concentrated and made visible during rituals.

Chapters 4 through 8 concentrate primarily on Islamic fasts, especially Ramadan. Chapter 4 outlines a number of Islamic fasts, only one of which, Ramadan, is required (wajib). Since it is required, there are rules about when and how it must be conducted, the conditions for inclusion or exclusion, and how days lost due to exclusion may be made up (p. 27). A general definition of fasting includes abstaining from food, drink, and tobacco during prescribed times, but also from sex, masturbation, kissing and the like (p. 27). Fasting is a conscious activity in which the person’s clearly stated intent is an important factor. An accidental lapse does not therefore invalidate the fast. Other fasts are voluntary and may be undertaken for a variety of individual reasons like health, social well-being, or one’s spiritual growth. An important factor in these fasts is self-control, mastering one’s body’s natural desires and inclinations in order to be open to cosmic influences (p. 36).

Much of Chapter 4 and all of Chapter 5, however, is concerned with Ramadan, a ‘set of divine rules that govern behaviour for one specific month of the year’ (p. 31). Even though it consists of a global set of ritual practices (orthopraxy), there is room for intercultural variation in the way these are
carried out. The author considers Ramadan to be ambiguous in that performing this required fast is at once a submission to God and an intentional act of piety (p. 34), though I suppose a pious believer could intentionally submit to God. At the same time, however, the month of Ramadan is a time for public display and utilization of Islamic values, as these are perceived by various agencies such as the government, business and political groupings, connecting it with food, health, politics, cars, and sometimes very narrow interpretations of religious teachings (pp. 46-9). The latter occasionally spark conflicts as fundamentalist groupings forcefully close places of public entertainment and attack practices like prostitution and homosexuality that they consider to be against the teachings of the Koran. Ramadan is sacred and so the wadah within which it takes place – in this case, most of Indonesia – must be purified: in the sacred space of Ramadan the pious are bound together as a moral-political community (p. 52). Such actions and statements are opinions without ultimate authority and their legitimacy is open to evaluation (p. 53), Hellman writes. Yet, given some of the threats and actions of (for example) the Front Pembela Islam, I wonder who would dare to publicly object?

Chapter 6 gives us our first look at the actual practice of the Ramadan fast, in a religious school (pesantrén) where the author stayed in 2001. The pesantrén’s leader, the Kiai, has the final authority in interpreting the rules of Ramadan and other religious matters. His instructions and examples are seen as a guide on the proper religious path. The chapter describes the routine from awakening in the early morning to prepare food for the last meal prior to the fast (Sahur) to the first breaking of the fast in the evening (Magrib). Especially important in these first and last meals is that they be eaten together, either with family, friends or neighbours. They are a social consumption, in contrast to the usual Javanese and Sundanese habit of eating privately.

In Chapter 7 the discussion shifts to the perspective of a village, where rather than a Kiai being in charge of the restricted wadah of his pesantrén, individuals are relatively free to follow their different interpretations and inclinations. Yet outward form is very important, and even if one does not fast, there is much public pressure to conform to expected behaviours. Even in the village people deferred to the local religious teacher (Ustad) to answer questions about Ramadan. This surprised the author, as elsewhere people had been eager to discuss matters of asceticism and fasting – though it is not clear whether these discussions had been about Islamic fasts or non-Islamic ones. In the description of the village fast we meet for the first time a concern with ancestral spirits that are invited to participate in the meal that opens the fast (p. 68). Once again, people eat these ritual meals together, not just with living family but also with deceased relatives, affirming social bonds between the living and the dead. This is done primarily within the household, which is implicitly defined as the ritual unit. It is only at the end of Ramadan, dur-
ing Idul Fitri, that food is shared more widely and the household once again redefines itself as part of the larger Muslim community (pp. 75-8). The author sees sharing of food during Ramadan as a paradox because eating is a need (*nafsu*) to be controlled and eating together reverses the tendency to privately satisfy this need. Yet we should realize that the social context is a control on this need: people tend not to publicly overindulge in food when eating together. The meal breaking the fast (*buka puasa*) Hellman sees as a communal meal in the presence of God. Here the ritual nature of the household once again comes to the fore: neither the Sahur nor the *buka puasa* meals are distributed beyond the household. As an aside, it should be noted that during communal meals involving people from the neighbourhood (*slametan*), people tend to eat very little, taking a small basket of food home with them as *berkat* (blessing).

Tying this together, Hellman notes that the data presented in the three interviews and the ethnographies show how individual experiences and aspirations can be given meaning within a religious framework. This meaning, which he sees as reliably embodied through repeated physical experience since childhood, may come to transcend the distinction between daily life and religious activity (p. 79). While this may be true for some of the more pious, I cannot help but wonder how true this is for the majority of the people of West Java, especially considering that there is such a variety in the way people relate to fasting (and other religious experiences) (p. 79). Religious training indeed has much to do with this, but whether it generally ‘moves beyond that acceptance into an active engagement that relates the liturgical order to personal experience’ (p. 80) remains to be shown. When it does, it can produce bodies with extraordinary powers, though this can also be achieved through other routes (p. 80).

Such alternatives are explored in Chapter 8, which addresses traditional fasts and variations, though even here Islamic prayers and the fast enhance each other: fasting without prayer is not enough, even if the fast is not an Islamic one. If the Ramadan fast is obligatory and communal, these fasts tend to be individual, for private purposes – which may include helping others (p. 83). Here again, fasting makes room inside the person, though now for power (*kasektén*), which strengthens the person. Owning powerful heirlooms and amulets helps as well. This traditional approach does not differentiate between Islamic orthodoxy and beliefs that are attributed to West Java’s ‘Hindu’ past. People’s approach is strictly functional; meditation and custom are subsumed under Islam and can include various fasts. Others disagree and argue for a purely Muslim approach, and heterodox practitioners are often murdered (pp. 83, 85). Even the heterodox agree, however, that being a Muslim enhances the power of the fast, and that for any fast not to be blasphemous it must be offered to God and not to the spirits.
In the preceding chapters, Hellman has taken pains to sketch the outlines of the Islamic belief system underlying Ramadan and other Islamic fasts. One of the major differences between Islamic fasts and traditional ones, he writes, is that the latter ‘is not tied to a coherent cosmology in the way that Islamic knowledge is’ (p. 90). While it is true that the traditional system does not have anything like Islam’s textual tradition, saying that it does not have a coherent cosmology seems to me to go a bit far: rather than text-based it rests on a set of local traditions that may vary somewhat from community to community, but nevertheless form an underlying polythetic set (Needham 1979:65), making for similar local practices that are understandable to outsiders. Also, as Hellman’s data show, Islamic cosmology is not monolithic either (p. 91), and as was made clear earlier (p. 32) there is considerable local variation in local praxis even in West Java. As is clear from Woodward’s Islam in Java (1989), non-textual Islamic praxis similarly forms a polythetic set of practices. If traditional knowledge is practical (p. 90), embodied Islamic knowledge must be so as well or it could not be embodied. In both it is indeed a ‘question of knowing how, when and where’. It is only the source of the knowledge that is different. For both the traditional practitioner and the Kiai, proof of knowledge is made visible in people’s submission to their pronouncements. Even though the Kiai has recourse to a textual tradition, final corroboration depends on results. Both Kiai and practitioner must validate their position, again and again (p. 90).

In the final chapter the author returns to the question of the body as a field of contestation in order to understand the variety of reasons why people fast. As has been clear from the beginning of the book, people fast expecting to gain something from the practice, whether a closer relationship with God or more immediate practical benefits, either of which may lead to influence and power. Reflecting back on Ramadan, the focus is on the perceived contradiction between the private nature of eating and the public nature of the ritual meals. Food is indeed a powerful symbolic vehicle that, depending on the context, can at once mark people’s biological needs (nafsu) and their social interdependence. Within the basic ritual unit, the household, people who eat together during Ramadan at once celebrate their personal victory over their needs and their collective solidarity in having done so for the glorification of God. Broadening the focus somewhat, we see neighbours joining in at the end of the fast, expanding social solidarity. The practices surrounding the fast also highlight the community as a larger ritual unit (which it traditionally was), including believers of all varieties and the ancestors, whose exclusion by more orthodox Muslims makes little sense to the rest (p. 95). ‘Ramadan creates a religious space where the social and religious bodies merge’ (p. 38). It is because of this interrelationship between the individual body and the larger social (and sacred) wadah – either the household or the community –
that personal failure during the fast is also a failure of the group (p. 94), and, more generally, this is why immoral behaviour reflects on the purity of the community as a whole. It is because of the sacred nature of the community that it can require its members to submit to the rules and why, even if the fast is a quest for individual purity, the collectivity retains its claims on the individual (p. 96). In return for this submission and the consequent strengthening of the social *wadah*, the individual is empowered, making the body a gateway for greater personal and social rewards. Operating on the margins of this dominant social and religious view, the traditional practitioner is in a more precarious position and thus eager to show his Islamic credentials (pp. 97-8). Neither the traditional nor the pious, however, can rest on their laurels, as their claims must continually be validated.

In short, Hellman has presented us with a challenging model of fasting in West Java. My occasional quibbles with his argument stem from our differing valuations of the two cosmologies involved and the resulting practical consequences – a discussion that certainly will not end with this review.

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Ever since the sixteenth century, German travellers to insular Southeast Asia have written rather profusely about their adventures, informing the German reading public in Europe about this other, far-away world. The present book focuses on ‘lexical souvenirs’ from the archipelago as encountered in German-language publications up to 1700, that is, ‘Malayisms’ such as *pisang, orang-*
utan, arak, and other exotic words. As in other European languages, the term amok is perhaps one of the best-known borrowings which, as duly noted in this book (pp. 224-6), in more recent times has led to such new compounds as Amokführer (berserk driver) and Amokschütze (berserk gunman). The word Kakadu (from Malay kakatua, cockatoo), too, has gained lasting popularity. The author provides several examples of its occurrence in (contemporary) popular culture, and as he punningly concludes, ‘[h]ardly any other borrowing from Malay seems to have nestled so deeply into German language and culture, as the word Kakadu’ (p. 189).

The book is attractively illustrated, and provides a wealth of extracts from the original sources, always accompanied by an English translation. Almost every page contains a citation of considerable length. As the rendering of Malay words in the contemporaneous German literature is often beyond recognition for present-day readers, the author has very helpfully transliterated the Malayisms in the parallel English translations by using standard Indonesian orthography. Non-philologists may find the book rather dry reading, but it is in fact filled with many (unintentionally) humorous examples. Printing errors, combined with sheer ignorance, often resulted in absurd misapprehensions. For example, the Javanese word bèbèk (duck), which was originally correctly translated in Francis Drake’s travel account as a ducke, was subsequently misread as duke, and so bèbèk wrongly entered later Dutch and German publications as ‘duke or prince’ (p. 298). The old wordlists, which are most ably discussed in this book, are riddled with errors of this kind.

The polyglot author of this book has no difficulty in deciphering mistranslations of Dutch, English, Portuguese and German terms, while he also easily reconstructs the correct forms of heavily mutilated ‘Malayisms’. However, being a native speaker of Dutch myself, I had to smile at the author’s schoolmasterly criticism of a Dutch phrase in a seventeenth-century German travelogue, viz. schiet niet, schiet niet, wy binnen Holländers (don’t shoot, don’t shoot, we are Dutchmen) (p. 126). According to modern standard Dutch grammar, the verb binnen (or bennen) is indeed incorrect, but this form is perfectly normal among dialect speakers, and the citation probably reflects real usage. In the case of a Javanese-German wordlist I do not think that the word alomba, glossed as ein Ochse (an ox), is correctly identified by the author as domba (sheep, goat) (p. 333); the word lĕmbu (cow, bull, ox) is more likely. Concerning the word sevit, glossed as Linnenwand (linen cloth), which the author could not identify (p. 299), I wonder whether it may not simply be derived from Dutch servet (napkin, borrowed from French serviette); the Malay rendition is normally serbèt.

Applying himself diligently to his task, the author has also unearthed a risqué pantun, and, as he puts it, apparently feeling somewhat embarrassed, the four-line poem ‘is actually so vulgar and obscene as to be quite “unprint-
able”, were it not for its significance as a linguistic document’ (p. 298). Transliterated in accordance with modern conventions, it reads *ke mana pergi tuan (sen)diri / mari (ke) rumah makan sirih / air manis dalam (pe)riuk / puki nangis karena (ma)buk* (p. 298). As a further justification for publishing this cheeky verse, the author opines that it offers us ‘access to an otherwise lost aspect of 16th-17th Malay common-folk poetry’ (p. 300). In any case it is certainly different from what is to be found in printed anthologies.

In his foreword the author explains that this work originally began as a conference paper, but over time more and more material came to be included, and ‘the paper swelled to a size quite forbidding for the planned publication in the colloquium proceedings. The idea was born to publish it as a monograph, and that, alas, dispersed all remaining inhibitions regarding size limitations’ (p. xi). The resulting bulky outcome of the author’s data-collecting frenzy has both a positive and a negative side to it. There can be little doubt that it will remain the standard reference book on the subject for many years to come, but at the same time it is unnecessarily long and should have been more tightly edited.

The writers of travel literature of this period were as a rule professional plagiarists, and hence the information culled from the sources in this book tends to be highly repetitive. Even the rendition of the funny Malay exclamation *O seytang Orang Hollanda, de baakalay saamatay* (*Oh you Dutch devils, you fight with shit*) loses its poignancy when it is cited for the umpteenth time (pp. 264-6, 279, 303). The commentary on the word *salacha* (*silver*) is incorrect, and it is odd to call Malay *salaka* an ‘archaic’ term, ‘already obsolete even at that time’ (p. 331), as it can readily be found in any dictionary under *selaka*. It is especially odd when, on p. 333, in another wordlist the variant *salorcka* is correctly identified as Javanese *slåkå* (from which Malay *salaka/selaka* is derived).

Unfortunately, the index of lexical citations (pp. 393-6) generally lists words in the Indonesian standard orthography, almost completely ignoring the idiosyncratic spelling in the sources. Therefore, such ‘strange’ words as *sevit* or *alomba* (discussed above) and variant spellings (*perahu*, but not the Westernized plurals *brawen* and *parawen*) cannot easily be retrieved. This is a sad shortcoming for a book that few will be likely to read from beginning to end but which philologists and historians will want to consult as a reference tool.
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THE POWER OF PROPHECY
PRINCE DIPANAGARA AND THE END OF AN OLD ORDER IN JAVA, 1785-1855

National hero, Javanese mystic, pious Muslim and leader of the ‘holy war’ against the Dutch between 1825 and 1830, the Yogyakarta prince, Dipanagara (1785-1855, otherwise known as Diponegoro), is pre-eminent in the pantheon of modern Indonesian historical figures. Yet despite instant name recognition in Indonesia, there has never been a full biography of the prince’s life and times based on Dutch and Javanese sources. ‘The power of prophecy’ is a major study which sets Dipanagara’s life history against the context of the turbulent events of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century when the full force of European imperialism hit Indonesia like an Asian tsunami destroying forever Java’s ‘old order’ and propelling the twin forces of Islam and Javanese national identity into a fatal confrontation with the Dutch. This confrontation known as the Java War, in which Dipanagara was defeated and exiled, marked the beginning of the modern colonial period in Indonesia which lasted until the Japanese occupation of 1942-1945.

The book presents a detailed analysis of Dipanagara’s pre-war visions and aspirations as a Javanese Ratu Adil (‘Just King’) based on extensive reading of his autobiography, the Babad Dipanagara as well as a number of other Javanese sources. Dutch and British records, in particularly the Residency Archives of Yogyakarta and Surakarta currently kept in the Indonesian National Archives, provide the backbone of this scholarly work. The book will be read with profit by all those interested in the rise of Western colonial rule in Indonesia, the fate of indigenous cultures in an age of imperialism and the role of Javanese Islam in modern Indonesian history.

Peter Carey, Laithwaite tutor in History at Trinity College, Oxford, has made a lifetime study of Dipanagara and the history of early nineteenth century Java. His many works include the two-volume Archive of Yogyakarta (1980, 2000), The British in Java, 1811-1816; A Javanese account (1992) and Babad Dipanagara; An account of the outbreak of the Java War (1825-1830) (1981). He is one of Britain’s foremost historians of Southeast Asia and has also published on Cambodia, Burma and East Timor.
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