

a polemical misrepresentation. ‘Ghazalian norms’ (p. 40) do not segregate, rather they integrate law and mysticism. For al-Ghazali, obedience to the Law was an essential foundation for progress along the mystical path.

There are a few slips in the handling of words and etymologies, both in the body of the text and the glossary. The Javanese word *kaji*, to study, is not derived from *hajj* the pilgrimage (p. 75), but another derivative of the same root, meaning to argue or reason. The book title *Tuhfat al-muhtaj* (p. 96) is not ‘Gift of the needy’, but ‘Gift to the one in need’ — the *idafa* construction is not reducible to an English genitive. The glossary needs fine-tuning. *Abangan* is a portmanteau term: it includes the ‘red ones’, i.e. ethnic Javanese, peasantry, and laxity in religious observance. All three components are implicit in the word. The definition of *Wahdat al-wujud* as unity of being between God and Creation is oxymoronic!

Petty carping aside, this is a wonderful book. Laffan shows how active, and indeed proactive were Muslims in the region that is now Indonesia, how firmly established and long-standing were their relations with Muslims in the Indian sub-continent, and ‘heartlands’ of the Muslim world, effectively exposing the vacuity of generalisations about ‘heartland’ and ‘periphery’.

Perhaps the last word may rest with Snouck Hurgronje. He wrote to Noldeke of his ‘absolute conviction’ that Indonesia would prove the most likely site of a rapprochement between Islam and humanism (p. 194). Today this conviction seems to have been remarkably prescient! Even so, it was a prescience without foreknowledge of the tortuous path history would follow, or a realisation that the ‘orthodox’ — in Snouck Hurgronje’s view, the ‘rational’ aspect of Islam rather than the *tariqa* tradition — might provide soil for the seeds of anarchy and terror to be cultivated by al-Qa’ida.

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Aceh: History, Politics and Culture

Edited by ARNDT GRAF, SUSANNE SCHRÖTER and EDWIN WIERINGA

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Following the December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and undersea earthquake off the island of Sumatra, which hit Aceh the hardest, Indonesia’s long-troubled westernmost province became the subject of unprecedented international attention. Foreign and Indonesian journalists and development workers descended upon the disaster zone and images of the devastation wrought by the waves were broadcast around the world. This event, combined with the resolution in August 2005 of a protracted armed separatist conflict between Free Aceh Movement rebels and Indonesian security forces, created a set of conditions that inspired a growing number of scholarly

writings about what makes Aceh unique, and how other places might learn from its dual experiences of recovery from natural and man-made disasters.

Aceh: History, politics and culture, edited by Arndt Graf, Susanne Schröter and Edwin Wieringa, contributes to this burgeoning body of literature by bringing together scholars and activists who explore various dimensions of Acehnese state and society in contemporary and historical perspective. The seventeen chapters are logically ordered into four parts that offer insights into (i) History, (ii) Contemporary economy and politics, (iii) Foundations of religion and culture, and (iv) Current debates in religion and culture. The overall aim of the collection is to provide an introductory body of knowledge 'which would benefit expatriate aid workers in their dealings with the Acehnese people' (p. ix).

Yet upon opening this book this reader felt a nagging sense of foreboding. First, the audience for which this collection of essays is primarily intended — the international development community involved in the large-scale reconstruction effort in post-tsunami, post-conflict Aceh — had already completed their missions and withdrawn from the province by the time the book was published. While authors and publishers are frequently overtaken by events, the phased departure of foreign aid workers from Aceh had begun four years previously and ended in 2009.

The key substantive weakness of this volume, however, is that there is neither an editorial introduction nor a concluding chapter. The editors provide no overarching theoretical or conceptual framework, no contextualisation of the case of Aceh in relation to wider developments, and do not attempt to situate this book within the growing body of scholarship on Aceh. Nor has any serious effort been made to connect the chapters across integrating themes beyond their broad partitioning into four sections. Instead, the editors dismissively justify the diversity of chapters in their two-page preface by employing the metaphor that "a thousand flowers may bloom" is the spirit in which this "bunch of flowers" (*bunga rampai*) is offered' (p. xi).

Highly varied chapters could potentially enhance the quality of an edited volume if authors engage with each other's work, but in this case the contributions do not speak strongly to each other, or at all. Moreover, many of the ideas and material presented in this volume have been published in previous academic writings. As a relative latecomer to the expanding collection of edited volumes on Aceh, this book covers much of the same ground as Anthony Reid's widely-cited *Verandah of violence* (2006) and *Post-disaster reconstruction*, edited by Matthew Clarke, Ismet Fanany and Sue Kenny (2010).

As with many edited collections, some chapters in this book are more polished than others and the editors would have done well to omit the weaker contributions. Still, the historical essays by Antje Missbach and Anthony Reid, which deal with the influence of Dutch scholar and administrator Christiaan Snouk Hurgonje on the Aceh war against Dutch colonialism (1873–1913) and with Aceh's Turkish connections respectively, are nuanced, informative and thoughtfully written. Some of the chapters on religion and culture also offer important insights that are overlooked or understudied in other works on Aceh. Of these, Susanne Schröter's chapter on the plurality and homogeneity of Acehnese society is especially useful in providing a

complementary corrective to the literature on the Aceh conflict that tends to construct the Acehnese as a singular ethnic and cultural entity in the contest over competing nationalisms. Werner Kraus' short history of the Shattariyya Sufi order similarly enriches this picture of internal diversity against a literary backdrop of political discourses about the blanket application of Islamic law in Aceh in recent years.

Despite its shortcomings, this book does contain some essays which will enhance the expanding repertoire of resources available to scholars of Aceh. Due to a lack of editorial work and wide variations in the quality of scholarship in the individual contributions, however, this collection should not be read as a coherent volume as it does fall well short of the sum of its variegated parts.

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China and the shaping of Indonesia, 1949–1965

By HONG LIU

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Throughout most of President Suharto's long term in office (1966–98) the People's Republic of China was Indonesia's 'great Satan', severed from diplomatic engagement, expunged from Indonesian cultural life and public memory. Diplomatic relations resumed in 1990, and today China is the subject of public discourse in Indonesia, its economic growth admired, its status as a regional and international player acknowledged. Professor Hong Liu says the rise of China compels Indonesians to ask: How do they do it? Is China a viable model for Indonesia's own economic and political life? Does China offer a more relevant form of modernity than the West?

Historically, Hong Liu argues, there were always flows of people and ideas between China and polities in the Indonesian archipelago. When cut off by Western imperialism, Indonesians only knew China through Indonesia's own Chinese, whom they regarded with contempt as tools of colonialism, unprincipled, and having offensive personal habits. But, in Indonesia's first fifteen years as a sovereign republic, Liu documents that China again became important to Indonesians.

Between 1950 and 1965 over three hundred Indonesians prominent in politics and the arts were fêted as guests of the Chinese government. They toured factories, spoke at conferences, were given audience with office holders at the highest levels. Back home they expressed their admiration for China in speeches distributed by the mass media. China's embassy in Jakarta reinforced their glowing reports through cultural events, Indonesian-language translations of Chinese political and literary documents, and radio broadcasts.