

life and thought with the ideas and practices that have crystallised as part of modern liberal governance.

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*Babad Arung Bondhan: Javanese local historiography; text edition and commentary*

Edited and trans. by TITIK PUDJIASTUTI

Tokyo: Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa (ILCAA), Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, 2008. Pp. xii + 792. Notes, Appendices, Glossary, Bibliography, Indexes.

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This major work must have required many years of labour by Dr Titik Pudjiastuti, one of Indonesia's leading Javanese philologists. It is a romanisation and translation into English of a manuscript held in the University of Indonesia collection (and once owned by Th. G. Th. Pigeaud, who purchased it in 1932) of very considerable size: 748 pp., containing nearly 3,800 stanzas of Javanese verse. One does not undertake a complete romanisation and translation of something on this scale lightly. Dr Pudjiastuti deserves our thanks for all her work.

The text is particularly interesting because there are grounds for thinking it may be of north coastal origin, whereas most other examples of this kind of work that have been studied so far are of Central Javanese, usually *kraton*, provenance. It is undated, but probably of nineteenth-century origin, to judge from the Dutch paper that is employed.

The manuscript lacks both its beginning and end; what remains is a version of the sort of pseudo-historical romance about Java's past that is known in different versions in other manuscripts. The story goes from ancient times through the age of Majapahit, thence to the beginnings of Islam in Java and ending with Arya Penangsang. There are tales here of a kind familiar from such texts: great battles, court intrigues, love affairs, magical beasts and persons, Panji stories, a Baron Sakhender-like tale, Siti Jenar and so on. There are chronogram dates given in the text, often differing from what is found in other sources. None of them is to be regarded as having any actual historical validity, of course. In addition to the full text and translation, Dr Pudjiastuti provides a summary of the contents and notes.

This major work of scholarship is, however, seriously hampered by poor English. For example, this from the summary of the text: 'Lembu Miluhur was curious stepped on the stone and shattered it. Inside was found a bird ... who was in its priest age. The bird was the God of Wisnu and his wife (placed in its stomach) in priest to incarnate the king of Java' (p. 23). The translated text on p. 186 to which this refers is not much better.

Generally the English in the translation is a bit better than in the rest of the book. Nevertheless, one finds strange translations from time to time that almost surely result

not from any misunderstanding of the Javanese by Dr Pudjiastuti, but from inadequate English. Just a few examples will suffice. When the text refers to a *teropong* (clearly meaning a weaving shuttle), the translation clumsily calls it a 'tool weave' (p. 313) while the summary (p. 36) bizarrely calls it 'binoculars'. In a version of the story of Sunan Giri's origins when, as a baby, he was thrown into the sea in a box (mimicking the story of Moses as found in the *Quran* 28), the Javanese text (p. 518) says that he is placed in a *gendhaga* (a small chest or box), which is translated as 'cowries' — I cannot imagine how the translator came to choose that. When the text refers to magical objects for use in battle from which come bees, mice and wind and rain (pp. 590–1), the summary (pp. 60–1) says that these objects 'excrete' them.

Scholars of Javanese will find this text to be of interest. Because of the serious problems with English, however, it cannot be recommended to anyone who is obliged to rely upon the summary, translation and notes alone.

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*To nation by revolution: Indonesia in the twentieth century*

By ANTHONY REID

Singapore: NUS Press, 2011. Pp. 348. Maps, Plates, Glossary, Index.

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Any book from noted historian Anthony Reid is to be welcomed as making a significant contribution to the literature on Indonesia. A collection of Reid's essays from over four decades is a particularly special event, capturing the best of his work, allowing reflections on the perspectives of the times and reminding us that the insights of a good historian can have a timeless quality.

Of the 12 chapters here, all are based on previously published papers that have been revised and updated, but for one, chapter 9, on the bloody events of 1965–66. The book's blurb says this chapter has been left unchanged to allow an insight into early understandings of those events. More appropriately, though, this chapter should remain unchanged because its insights have stood the test of time.

The first chapter argues that, while it was not a Communist revolution, Indonesia's independence process could find closer parallels with the French Revolution. Setting aside the political meaning of 'revolution', this chapter offers a rich and clear explanation for Indonesia's independence process; why it happened the way it did.

The chapter on slavery is also interesting, arguing for an alternative 'mild' (p. 46) understanding of the idea to that found in Europe. 'It is,' Reid notes, 'difficult to use the term [slavery] without appearing to denigrate Southeast Asian cultural traditions which still have force and value' (p. 45). While denigration is not a useful explanatory method, Reid's perspective here tends to allow for the kind of cultural relativism that has characterised much scholarship on the region. It is relevant that, in the early twenty-first century, a form of 'mild' slavery continued in Indonesia.