

on, by members of the Sino-Malay press. Finally, Keppy discusses the decline in Malay Opera's social relevance in the mid-1930s as Orion turned towards courting a Dutch colonial audience, and its more nationalist rival company, Dardanella, left the Indies for a world tour that foundered amidst financial difficulties in India.

This is a well-researched book making use of an impressive array of period sources, including many newspapers and other periodicals. As a comparative study, it is instructive in showing how, despite some differing social, political, and economic circumstances, nonetheless there were also striking similarities, especially in the trajectories of popular cultural florescences in the two countries during the 1920–36 period. Central to his argument is the rise of new classes — both urban white-collar workers with money to spend in both colonies, and a planter aristocracy in the Philippines — who sought in various ways to define themselves through a cosmopolitan embrace of hybrid modern popular cultural forms. Keppy's emphasis on the hybridity of these forms, as well as their complex interactions with modern media, such as the press, and entertainment industries like the recording business, add substantially to our understanding of the cultural dynamics of the late colonial era.

This study, then, offers readers a lively account of the rise and decline of several new cultural forms in Southeast Asia, placing them in their socioeconomic and political contexts, and tying them to the rise of new urban audiences with cosmopolitan outlooks. It expands significantly our view of the social complexities of the late colonial period, helping to demonstrate that, while racist and oppressive, some colonial systems also featured dynamic and lively cultural life. As such this study will be of great value to scholars working in the fields of cultural studies, theatre, music, and history.

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Indonesia

Buru Island: A prison memoir

By HERSRI SETIAWAN, translated by JENNIFER LINDSAY

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The 1965–66 genocide of communists and left-wing sympathisers in Indonesia happened over fifty years ago. Millions of people were murdered and imprisoned; many were sent to a small island called Buru. However, writings about and by the political prisoners on this island are still few and far between.

Besides the present volume by Hersri Setiawan, the only other book written by an ex-political prisoner that I know of is Pramoedya Ananta Toer's *The mute's soliloquy*, which was first published over three decades ago in 1988. Indeed, the cronies of the New Order regime remain powerful in Indonesia, and thus many survivors are still hesitant to speak up.

Although both Pramoedya and Hersri narrate their experiences on Buru Island around the same period (Pramoedya was sent there a few years before Hersri), Hersri's book does not overlap with Pramoedya's, as he tells different stories and talks about different people from a different perspective. Thus, Hersri's book is very valuable in this nearly silent discourse of the 1965 genocide, especially from the remote island of Buru.

Born in Yogyakarta in 1936, Hersri came to love literature and became a member of *Consentrasi Gerakan Mahasiswa Indonesia* (CGMI, Indonesian Student Movement Concentration). Later, he left CGMI and joined *Lekra* (Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat, Institute for the People's Culture), a literary and social organisation associated with the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI).

Hersri worked as a representative of Indonesian writers at the Asia-Africa Writers Bureau in Colombo, Sri Lanka, from 1961 to 1965. He returned to Jakarta on 24 August 1965, and had to face the rising tensions there. Days after the news that six army generals and one aide were kidnapped and killed on 30 September 1965, the army accused the PKI as the perpetrators. The mass murder and mass imprisonment of communists and left-wing sympathisers followed.

At the time, Hersri was staying with his younger brother, a navy colonel, in south Jakarta. He was not arrested until 1969. From that year, Hersri was detained as a prisoner in Cilandak, Salemba and Tangerang for two years without trial. In 1971, he was sent with 850 other prisoners to Buru, a small island in eastern Indonesia. After arriving at the transit camp on the island, they were divided into two: the first group of 500 (including Hersri) was placed in Unit XIV and the rest were placed in Unit XV. The Buru Camp housed 22 units of political prisoners, and its official name was the Rehabilitation Installation.

Despite this 'positive' official name, Hersri's memoir gives readers insights into how the prisoners suffered severe torture, malnourishment, forced labour and humiliation. When a prisoner was caught making a mistake or offending a guard, all of the prisoners in the unit would be punished.

In spite of this, the prisoners had their own ways of surviving torture and even facing death. Hersri faced his torture by practising the Javanese attitude of *Sumeleh*, which means not to surrender but to accept, as well as to be aware and calm. On Buru, Hersri and his friends managed to build a small garden in the middle of the forest, hidden by banana trees. From the crops, Hersri and his friends could gain additional food.

However, the memoir reveals that conflicts did not arise only between prisoners and guards, but also amongst the prisoners themselves. Differences in ages, ideologies as well as hopes, often made these prisoners disagree and even suspect one another. This suspicion was heightened by the authorities' strategy of placing spies amongst these prisoners.

When two of his fellow inmates, Heru Santoso and Bonar Siregar, managed to escape, all the prisoners were punished and Hersri was interrogated. The guards accused him of having knowledge about Heru's escape. When Hersri denied this accusation, one of them put a cricket in one of his ears. This cricket plus other forms of torture caused Hersri to be deaf in his left ear. The escape of these two inmates also became a topic of debate amongst the political prisoners. Some praised

their escape as a courageous act, others condemned it as irresponsible towards other prisoners.

Nevertheless, Hersri also makes fun of the guards by portraying how ridiculous and naïve many of them were. The guards, for instance, were superstitious. When they could not find the two fugitives for a while, they assumed that Heru and Siregar were hidden by the spirits.

Hersri was released in 1978, surviving nine years of imprisonment, seven of which were on Buru Island. In 1981, he married Dutch-born Jitske Mulder and lived in Jakarta before moving to the Netherlands. The couple had a daughter, Ken Setiawan, who wrote a touching introduction to this book, explaining how her parents decided to move to the Netherlands not because of fear of repression but for their daughter's future. Mulder died of cancer in 1989, and Hersri moved back to Indonesia in 2004. Ken Setiawan remembers how her father used to tell her about his experiences on Buru; some were very upsetting, but others were more light-hearted. Indeed, these are the impressions I have from reading this memoir: it is not just a story of sadness but also of strength, of perseverance, and of finding happiness and comedy in the midst of tragedy. Thanks to the painstaking work by a well-known translator, Jennifer Lindsay, this book is now available in the English language.

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Malaysia

Mahathir's Islam: Mahathir Mohamad on religion and modernity in Malaysia

By SVEN SCHOTTMANN

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This is a beautifully written and well researched book that examines the ideas of one of the oldest living statesmen — Mahathir Mohamad — who is still shaping (some would say stunting) the course of Malaysian politics. Since the last four decades, a substantial amount of academic literature has been devoted to the study of the life and thought of the nonagenarian to a point that there can be no study of modern Malaysia without at least a passing reference to its longest serving and twice-elected prime minister. With the exception of a monograph written by Mohd Rumaizuddin Ghazali, *Pembangunan Islam di Malaysia dalam era Mahathir* (Nilai: Penerbit USIM, 2011), previous analyses have not delved in great detail to explaining the shifting coordinates of Islam in Mahathir's eyes. A known expert of Islam in Southeast Asia, Sven Schottmann's distinctive contribution thus lies in a few critical areas.

First, he affords us a panoramic coverage of Mahathir's views on Islam and his relentless intellectual engagements with his own faith, and with his co-religionists. The book brings to light the ways in which Mahathir radically transformed the