

those activities that are not performed, such as not observing taboos connected to the nature spirits or those laid down by the ancestress Afek, the Urapmin creator. I am aware that there are different levels of temporality and spatiality at play here. Nevertheless, the complexity of this issue, which cannot be answered simply by a radical definition of time and space being bound solely to speech and aural information, deserves pointing out. Physical activity seems equally important, as is most obviously seen in spirit possession dances and the density of Christian ritual behaviour generally. Likewise, jealousy, covetousness, anger and, we might say, a whole moral domain are very much the embodied experiences of people's egotistical drives, with their deep roots in sexuality, procreation, growth and a life-to-death existence.

Robbins concludes his book by emphasizing that the moral domain is a useful tool in obtaining a better understanding of cultural change and of the phenomenon of people living in two cultures at once. Following traditional values concerning their land, gardens, social relationships on the one hand, and the conflicting values of their adopted Christianity on the other, the Urapmin find themselves in a troubled situation. Robbins favours the concept of cultural change (instead of the more common concept of social change) and offers an eloquent critique of renowned scholars of hybridity theory.

This ethnography of Christianity, cultural change and moral hybridity among the Urapmin, with its many theoretical arguments (some problematic, while others are quite convincing), is a welcome contribution towards a better understanding of the problems that Papua New Guineans have had to face since the beginning of colonialism and the arrival of western concepts such as law, religion and the monetary economy.

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Timothy P. Barnard (ed.): *Contesting Malayness: Malay identity across boundaries*. Singapore: Singapore University Press 2004. xiii, 318 pp.

The question of Malay identity is of great importance for many modern nation states in Southeast Asia. Special rights for Malays in Malaysia and Brunei, entries of 'Malay race' in Singaporean passports, political turmoils in the three 'Malay' provinces of southern Thailand, and the recent splitting of the Indonesian province of Riau in mainland and island parts, following the old boundaries of the former Malay sultanate of Riau-Lingga, show the relevance of research on Malayness in maritime Southeast Asia. Thus the present book is a most welcome addition to existing research and an important contribution on ongoing debates in this area.

Most of the essays on Malayness in this collection come from a symposium held at the University of Leiden in April 1998. Most of its papers were subsequently published as a special number of the Singapore-based "Journal of Southeast Asian Studies" in October 2001. The importance of the research focus justifies a separate edition in the form of a book, enlarged by two chapters of Reid and Vickers. Most of the chapters consist of historical studies of Malay ethnicity in general (Vickers, Andaya, Reid) or historical case studies of Malayness in particular regions (Barnard, Putten, Sutherland). Other topics covered include political and sociological analyses of the situation in Malaysia (Shamsul, Matheson, Hooker), and language and literature (Collins, Derks). A translated 'epic poem on the Malay's fate' by Tenas Effendy, a well-known cultural figure in eastern Sumatra, has also been included. An afterword by Milner discusses various aspects covered in the volume.

The contributors are among the most foremost experts in the field of Malay studies at

the present day. About half the papers deal with historical aspects of Malay identity. Most of them cite Anthony Milner's works on Malayness (1982, 1995). In both these books Milner argues that Malay ethnicity in the Malay Peninsula is mostly a product of the nineteenth century and that it is developed alongside British imperialism, which needed a willing Malay work-force for the colonial administration. However, this raises the question of the character of Malay identity in a 'pre-ethnicity' state, to use Milner's phrase from the afterword (249). I have particular problems with Leonard Andaya's statement that 'a Melayu ethnicity was being developed [...] perhaps as early as the seventh century' (57). This is highly hypothetical and overlooks the possibilities of other identities than ethnicity. If '[i]dentity [...] is dynamic, multi-dimensional, composite and continually defining itself', in the words of James Collins (168–169), then why should it be limited by or based solely on ethnicity for more than twelve centuries? This assumption ignores passages on identity in both traditional Malay literature and European writings from the sixteenth century onwards. The argument is even challenged by some of the contributors to this volume. Anthony Reid's essay, for example, confirms that the state of Malacca appears 'to have categorised traders in terms of the direction they came from and the intermediate ports they visited rather than any sense of common ethnicity or language' (6). Some present-day scholars tend to treat ethnicity as a form of identity that is given *per se*. A closer examination of ethnic groups, however, shows that ethnic identities that are presented both to and by researchers as having existed since time immemorial are far too often a product of the nineteenth or twentieth centuries, other forms of identity, like kinship or kingship, having predominated earlier. Adrian Vickers argues that 'up until the late nineteenth century "Malay" was a fluid category both for those who became "Malays"

and for Europeans' (32) and highlights the hybridity of Malay identity.

This volume cannot resolve every issue concerning what constitutes Malayness. 'What is a Malay?' is the main question of more or less all the essays presented here. None of the contributors is able to answer it satisfactorily in a general way, and probably nobody ever will. A person of Siamese descent will be considered Malay in Kelantan but not in Negeri Sembilan (241). Are the descendants of Bugis lineages in Riau, Makassar or Selangor 'real Malays'? Their strategies of identity are described by Putten and Sutherland, but these two fascinating and meticulous essays show the complexity of the term 'Malayness' rather than permit a yes-or-no answer. What distinguishes a Malay language speaker from a Jakun or a West Kalimantan Dayak who also speaks Malay dialects and will probably be a Muslim as well? How can the Cape Malays of South Africa regard themselves as Malays, even though they no longer speak Malay? What is the essence of 'Malay custom', a woolly term of great importance in the Malaysian constitution? The performances of traditional Malay theatre presented by the Malaysian Ministry of Culture might be termed 'invented traditions' in the Hobsbawmian sense, since they are rather fossilised relics of regional Malay cultures. What constitutes Malay literature? Was it written by Malays for Malays?

Many more questions arise from reading this book, but they cannot be mentioned here. The role of the European colonial powers was surely quite crucial. The ideas of British and Dutch administrators and scholars obviously differed in various ways. Nineteenth-century British authors labelled the Malays as 'nation', 'tribe' or 'race', the parameters of which varied from anthropological definitions, speakers of an Austronesian language – including every native speaker between the Philippines and Madagascar – or every Muslim speaking Malay as his or her

first or second language.

This collection of essays is a good overview of current thinking on this subject and will surely stimulate further research into one of the most complex topics in Southeast Asian history, anthropology and politics, hopefully going well beyond studies of ethnicity alone.

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Holger Warnk

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Michael Francis Laffan: *Islamic nationhood and colonial Indonesia: the umma below the winds*. London: Routledge Curzon 2003. xvi, 294 pp.

This book is a revised version of Laffan's Ph.D. thesis, which was defended at the University of Sydney in 2000. Laffan argues that Indonesian nationalism was based on, and to a large degree had its roots in, an Islamic ecumenism, which existed decades and perhaps even centuries before the emergence of the notion of an Indonesian 'nation' or 'people' in the early twentieth century. Here Laffan criticises well-known authors like Schrieke and Wertheim, and especially Benedict Anderson's classic study "Imagined communities" (1983). Instead he highlights the importance of the Muslim *ummah* (or *umat*, as in modern Indonesian), which may be loosely defined as the body of faithful and

trustworthy Muslims as a distinct community. In his view, the *ummah* and its impact on maritime Southeast Asian history has been overlooked by many previous analyses of nationalist developments and movements in the last two centuries.

The book is subdivided into ten chapters and an introduction to Southeast Asian Islam. Laffan presents a voluminous amount of material on developments in the Middle East, particularly in the Hijaz and Egypt, which had a profound impact on religious, intellectual and political life in the Netherlands East Indies. The author uses Dutch archival sources and cites Dutch, Indonesian, Arab, French and German titles. Some arguments might have been developed further through the inclusion of materials from British archives, particularly from the Public Record Office. Laffan's textual notes and bibliography are nevertheless impressive and constitute a highly valuable source for further studies.

However, it is always the little things that cause problems. While Laffan's descriptions, in Chapter 4, of the role of well-known Islamic religious teachers (*ulama*) like Sayyid Usman bin Aqil (1822–1913), native colonial administrators like Achmad Djajadiningrat (1877–1943) or Dutch officials like C. Snouck Hurgronje (1857–1936) deepen our insights into the often neglected relevance of Islam for Indonesian societies, other interpretations are rather more problematic. I have particular problems with Laffan's analysis of Acehnese history in the first chapter, in which the author argues that Indonesian rulers 'were but one source of authority in Islamic societies. Beside them, the 'ulamā have always played a leadership role' (18). Laffan presents the state of Aceh in northern Sumatra as one example proving this statement. In the seventeenth century, Acehnese sultans and sultanas are known to have been the important patrons of many important Muslim intellectuals throughout the Malay Archipelago and far