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Berita

Malaysia/Singapore/Brunei Studies Group Association for Asian Studies

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James Wathen, George Town Near Pulo Penang, 1811. Print. 1814. 14.4cm x 21.8cm.
Source: Lim Chong Keat, *Penang Views 1770-1860* (Penang: Penang Museum, Summer Times Publishing, 1986).



Editor's Foreword

It is with great enthusiasm and pleasure that we at the Malaysia/Singapore/Brunei Studies Group (MSB) present this Special Spring issue of *Berita*. Many thanks to everyone who contributed to the contents of this newsletter, which has become an important source of information and scholarship about Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei for many people attracted to and involved with Southeast Asia in various ways.

This special issue has the theme of "Cultures of Island Southeast Asia" as symbolized with the 1811 James Wathen illustration on the cover. This marks our recognition of the importance of continuing to strive to better understand the diverse cultures of this region, including continuities of past traditions and their transformations. Several preceding issues of *Berita* have concentrated on a variety of topics related to electoral politics and contemporary sociopolitical struggles. Although these are ever-important issues, we should not forget how much we still have to learn about the rich cultures of our region. It is hoped that this issue will begin a series focusing on various aspects of the diverse and dynamic cultures of Island Southeast Asia. While this issue focuses on some features of Malay cultures, future issues in this series should explore the diverse Indian, African, Bidayuh, Chinese, Rohingya, Bangladeshi, Portuguese and many other cultures constituting the amazing cultural creativity of Island Southeast Asia and its interconnections with the wider world.

Dr. Sarena Abdullah discusses the interweaving of art and design histories in prosperous and ethnically diverse nineteenth and early twentieth century Penang. She shows that Malay scribes, who had long expressed their aesthetics of visual imaging in religious manuscripts, began to produce illustrations with the newly emergent printing presses. Abdullah argues that "Malayan" art produced in the print media should be viewed as informing locals of modern visuals and suggests further exploring the forms of modernism embodied in these media. I would like to thank Dr. Sarena Abdullah for sharing these fine illustrations with us, including the one used on the cover of this special issue.

Sarah Kelman contributes the second article and continues our theme of focusing on cultures of the region by exploring some of the ideas about, and lived experiences of, Malay entrepreneurs. Based on ethnographic research, she demonstrates that there are many complex and sometimes contradictory ideas about Malay entrepreneurs in an economic environment in which many officials and institutions promote their success while others criticize their reliance on support and

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lack of English language competence. She concludes that surmounting the business startup ecosystem remains a major dilemma for Malay entrepreneurs.

Dr. Siti Norkhalbi Haji Wahsalfelah examines the use of traditional textiles in the royal court and life cycle rituals of Malays of Brunei Darussalam. She demonstrates that not only are these textiles instrumental in various contexts but they are also highly symbolic entailing associations with social status, royalty and commoner, as well as positions in political hierarchies. They also carry multiple meanings in wedding and funerary rituals and have become associated with national identity.

In addition, this issue continues with the MSB commitment to include book reviews together with longer featured articles. Here, Dr. David Banks and Dr. Patricia Hardwick offer book reviews. Banks provides us with an insightful evaluation of Charles Allers' important book *The Evolution of a Muslim Democrat: The Life of Malaysia's Anwar Ibrahim*. Hardwick contributes a fine assessment of Kartomi's massive treatise *Musical Journeys of Sumatra* that reports on materials she collected about traditional musical arts in Sumatra.

Finally, this is my last issue as editor of *Berita*. I personally submitted each of the articles and book reviews in this issue to editorial review. Perhaps in the future an editorial board can be organized to conduct a more extensive scholarly review of contributions to *Berita*. Furthermore, I hope a new dedicated editor will be selected in this year's MSB business meeting and that this person will continue to build upon the work of previous editors, especially the devoted and industrious model of Ronald Provencher, one of our MSB pioneers.

Timothy P. Daniels, *Hofstra University*
Editor
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Members' Updates

Linda Y.C. Lim is Professor of Strategy at the Stephen M. Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan, where she also served as Director of the 55-year-old Center for Southeast Asian Studies from 2005-09. Linda has been writing about the Singapore economy since 1976 (when she was a graduate student), and has also published on various aspects of economic development, trade, investment, industrial policy and business in Southeast Asia. Some of her recent publications are:

Academic/Policy

1. "How Land & People Fit in Singapore's Economy", Ch. 2 in Donald Low, ed., *Hard Choices: Challenging the Singapore Consensus*, National University of Singapore Press, 2014, pp. 31-39
2. "What's Wrong with Singaporeans?", Ch. 6 in Donald Low, ed., *Hard Choices: Challenging the Singapore Consensus*, National University of Singapore Press. 2014, pp. 79-86
3. "Singapore's Success: After the Miracle" in Robert Looney, ed. *Handbook of Emerging Economies*, London: Routledge 2014, pp. 203-226

Media

1. "Preserving a shared heritage", *Business Times* (Singapore) Mar. 1, 2014
2. "Tracing Confucius' bloodline in Singapore", *Straits Times* (Singapore) Feb. 8, 2014

<http://www.straitstimes.com/the-big-story/case-you-missed-it/story/tracing-confucius-bloodline-singapore-20140211>

3. "Why Singapore is Not Iceland", with James Cheng, *Straits Times* (Singapore) Jan. 24, 2014

Self-published book (available on www.blurb.com)

Four Chinese Families in British Colonial Malaya: Confucius, Christianity and Revolution, 3rd

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edition, 2014

1. "Southeast Asian Chinese Business and Regional Economic Development", in Chee-Beng Tan, ed., *Handbook of the Chinese Diaspora*, London: Routledge, 2013, pp. 249-260.
2. "Globalizing State, Disappearing Nation: Foreign Participation in Singapore's Economy", with Lee Soo Ann, in Terence Chong, ed., *The Management of Success: Singapore Revisited*, Singapore: Institute for Southeast Asian Studies, 2010, pp. 139-158

Dr. Paul H. Kratoska I have been appointed editor of the Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society with effect from January 2015. I plan to expand the journal to include 6 to 8 articles per issue, and am interested in hearing from MSB members who have or know of manuscripts that might be suitable for the journal. JMBRAS publishes material on Malaysia, Singapore or Brunei. Articles in the journal go through a double-blind peer review process, and should be of lasting value. I remain Publishing Director for NUS Press at the National University of Singapore on a half-time basis, and am also interested in discussing publication of monographs. NUS Press primarily handles books on Southeast Asia, but we also publish a certain number of titles on East Asia.

Michael Peletz received a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities for the period 2013-2014 to work on a book tentatively titled Syariah Transformations, which focuses on recent transformations in Malaysia's syariah judiciary, with comparative perspectives from Indonesia and Egypt. Some of his findings are presented in two recent articles:

(1) "Malaysia's Syariah Judiciary as Global Assemblage: Islamization, Corporatization, and Other Transformations in Context". Comparative Studies in Society and History, 55(3):603-633, 2013. (A short version of this article was published as "A Syariah Judiciary as a Global Assemblage: Islamization and Beyond in a Southeast Asian. Context". In A Companion to the Anthropology of Religion. Janice Boddy and Michael Lambek, eds. Pp. 489-506. New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.)

(2) "A Tale of Two Courts: Judicial Transformation and the Rise of a Corporate Islamic Governmentality in Malaysia". American Ethnologist 44(1): 143-159, 2015.

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Special Article 1

Modernities Through Art and Design: Printing Press as a Source of Examining Penang's Modernity

(By Sarena Abdullah)

Although there was quite a systematic periodization of art in the context of Malaysian art history, the print media artifacts, especially in terms of graphic design and its history have not been well researched. Artworks by Malaysian artists, however, fared much better fate with the establishment of the National Art Gallery in 1958. The gallery's role, however, is quite limited mostly within the demarcation of more traditional fine arts such as drawing, painting, sculpture, printmaking, and ceramics. Only in 2011, the gallery was re-named from the National Arts Gallery to National Visual Arts Gallery. With the significant name changed, it is most appropriate to consider the wider visual domain to be included as part of the gallery's research and collection framework.

In the Malaysian Studies context, however, research in the history of design and architecture, visual culture, popular culture, film studies, etc. are still limited under its own core academic field. Interdisciplinary research that examines visuals, materials, artifacts in the context of the larger Malaysian Studies are still limited. Having done research on Malaysian art more than ten years, and coming from a design background myself, it is important for me to examine the link of both design and art and my research interests. Therefore, I am at the initial stage of examining the area that falls under the visual communication such as the public press. This is my early attempt at merging art history and design history, especially in the context of Penang.

Old images of Penang had always fascinated me even during my undergraduate days studying Interior Design at Universiti Sains Malaysia (Figure 1). Besides its very nostalgic landscape more than a century ago, Penang was a very important city, especially within the larger context of Malaya's history. In 1826, Penang, along with Malacca and Singapore, became part of the Straits Settlements under the British administration in India and later was under direct British rule in 1867 as a Crown Colony. With the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, colonial Penang prospered through exports of tin and rubber, which supported the demands of the Industrial Revolution in

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Britain. Penang's prosperity attracted people from far and wide, making Penang truly a melting pot of diverse cultures. Among those found in Penang then were Malays, Acehnese, Arabs, Armenians, British, Burmese, Germans, Jews, Chinese, Gujaratis, Bengalis, Japanese, Punjabis, Sindhis, Tamils, Thais, Malayalees, Rawas, Javanese, Mandailings, Portuguese, Eurasians and others.¹ Therefore, cosmopolitan Penang had been already a thriving colony of the British Empire in the first decades of the 20th century.

¹ Visuals of early Penang for example can be seen in Cheah Jin Seng, *Penang: 500 Early Postcards* (Kuala Lumpur: Didier Millet, 2012) and Khoo Salma Nasution and Malcolm Wade, *Penang Postcard Collection, 1899-1930s* (Penang: Penang Heritage Trust, 2003).

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Figure 1 William Daniell, View of Glugor House and Spice Plantations, Prince of Wales Island, 1818, Aquatint, 46.0cm x 71.0cm

Source: Lim Chong Keat, *Penang Views 1770-1860* (Penang: Penang Museum, Summer Times Publishing, 1986).

Since early 20th century Penang was cosmopolitan in terms of its population and city development, in terms of architecture, for example, cosmopolitanism in terms of architecture persisted in George Town through the Art Deco design of shop houses and buildings.² Penang,

² An examination of hybrid architecture can be read in Sanusi Hassan and Shaiful Rizal Che Yahaya, *Architecture And Heritage Buildings in George Town Penang* (Penang: USM Press, 2013).



however, was soon supplanted by rapidly developing Singapore whose importance overtook Penang's. With such early history, Penang's or George Town's position as a city in the early 20th century can be argued, was important to the development of modernism in Malaya for several key reasons; it was the biggest city in South East Asia at that time having expanded with extraordinary rapidity, and it was the locus of a burgeoning growth of technology and increased mobility. In the past, George Town even boasted of having the best public transportation system in Malaya, with electric trams, trolley buses and also double-decker buses although these stopped during the 1970s.

In terms of the arts and design, the idea of that there persists an alternative modernity that was reflected in Penang's printed medium in the early 20th century has not been explored and examined. In terms of the arts, Penang boasted its own pioneers of art such as Yong Mun Sen, Abdullah Ariff, Lee Kah Yeow, Khaw Sia, Tai Hooi Keat, and Kuo Ju Ping, to name a few. Prior to Malaya's independence, there were also several pre-war art associations in urban centers, which were formed mostly by Chinese immigrants along with certain British expatriates in Penang, for example, the Penang Impressionists (formed in 1920 in Penang), and the Penang Chinese Art Club (formed in 1936 in Penang). As I have mentioned earlier, research in Malaysian art history, however, limit its own historical narrative to modern art only. It fails to make the link with other forms of visual communication such as printing press, although a few artists have also worked as graphic designers at the same time for example, Abdullah Ariff (Figure 2 & 3).³

³ See Ali, *Abdullah Ariff: Bapa Seni Lukis Moden Malaysia*.



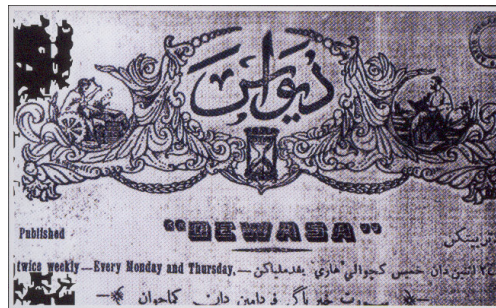


Figure 2 Abdullah Ariff, "Dewasa Logo," 15 February 1932.

Source: Zakaria Ali, *Abdullah Ariff: Bapa Seni Lukis Moden Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur: Balai Seni Lukis Negara, Malaysia, 2006).



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Figure 3 Abdullah Ariff
"Bumi Yang Bahagia Lombong Bijih Timah Malaya" (1960), watercolour on paper, 60.0cm x 75.5cm
Source: Ibid.

Although there was quite a systematic periodization of art in the context of Malaysian art history, the print media artifacts, especially in terms of graphic design and its history were not well researched. A preliminary attempt could be seen in Ahmad Suhaimi Mohd Noor's *Sejarah Kesedaran Visual Di Malaya* in which he argued that the earliest illustration works should be examined as an art form itself. He exemplifies this by pointing out to the illustrations that was published in *Hikayat Abdullah* in 1849 and another anonymous illustration that were done to



illustrate Syair Sebaha in *Syair Indra Sebaha* (1891) by Hassan Agha (Figure 4) and the illustration of Sultan Abdullah on the front page of a newspaper *Jajahan Melayu* (1897).⁴



Figure 4 Hassan Agha, *Syair Indra Sebaha* (1891)

Source: Ahmad Suhaimi Mohd Noor, *Sejarah Kesedaran Visual Di Malaya* (Tanjung Malim: Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, 2007).

It must be noted that the establishment of printing presses in Malaya as early as 1806 in Penang marked an interesting turning point in visual histories not only through illustrations.⁵ Through

⁴ Mohd Noor, *Sejarah Kesedaran Visual Di Malaya*.

⁵ For works on these early presses see -- Nik Ahmad bin Haji Nik Hassan, "The Malay Press," *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 36, no. 1 (201) (2014): 37–78; Md. Sidin Ahmad Ishak, "Malay Book Publishing And Printing Volume 1 : Text"



these newspapers or periodicals, masthead design, typographies, design through advertising columns was introduced. What Ahmad Suhaimi fails to identify however, is that there are limited drawings or sketches produced by Malay scribes in Malay manuscripts prior to the introduction of the lithographic printing presses. Although figurative representation in Malay manuscripts is extremely rare, the artistic energies of Malay manuscript scribes and illuminators could be seen in the creation of purely decorative frontispieces and colophons, which are found in most genres of texts, ranging from literature, history, moral and didactic works, and Islamic texts, including the Quran. Drawings in the forms of simple illustrations and symbols can also be seen in Malay magic and divination manuscripts from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century.⁶ In Penang for example, *Taj al-Salatin*, was copied in Penang by a scribe named Muhammad bin Umar Syaikh Farid on 4 Zulhijah 1239 AH (31 July 1824 AD) (Figure 5).⁷ Therefore, it cannot be denied that aesthetics and visual comprehension have already been important aspects of a scribe's work.

(University of Stirling, 1992); Mohd. Sidin Ahmad Ishak, *Penerbitan Dan Percetakan Buku Melayu 1807-1960* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1998).

⁶ Henri Chambert-Loir and Dewaki Kramadibrata, eds., *Katalog Naskah Pecenongan: Koleksi Perpustakaan Nasional Sastra Betawi Akhir Abad Ke-19* (Jakarta: Perpustakaan Nasional Republik Indonesia, 2013).

Annabel Teh Gallop, "British Library Malay Manuscript Art: The British Library Collection" 17, no. 2 (1991): 167–89.

⁷ Annabel Teh Gallop, "The Crown of Kings: A Deluxe Malay Manuscript from Penang - Asian and African Studies Blog," *British Library*, 2013, <http://britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk/asian-and-african/2013/09/the-crown-of-kings-a-deluxe-malay-manuscript-from-penang.html>.

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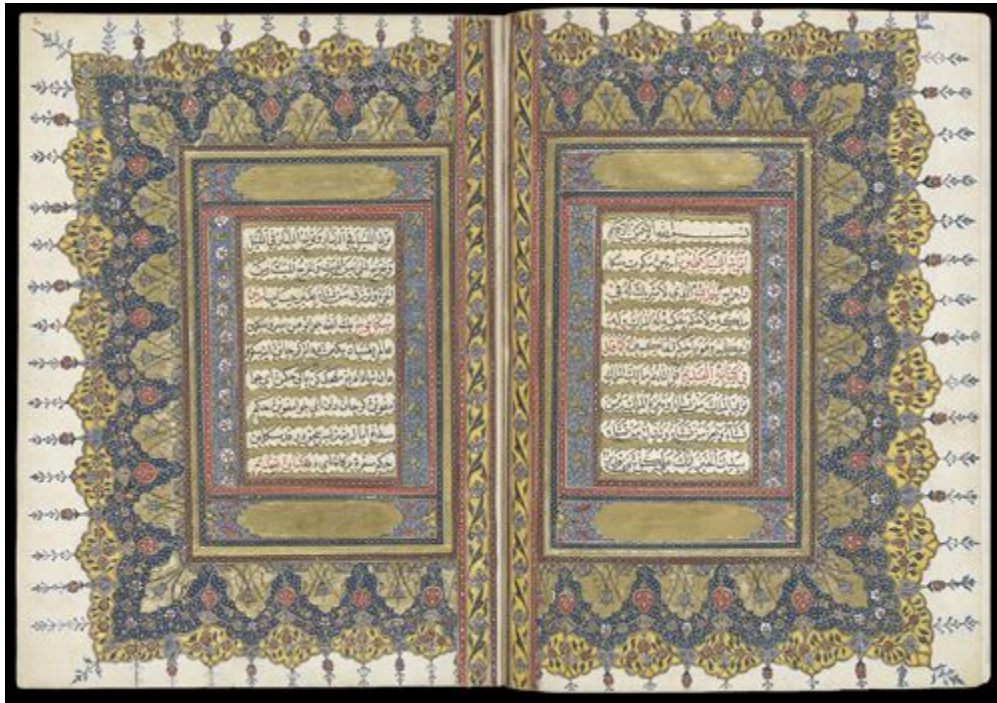


Figure 5 Initial pages of the Taj al-Salatin, 'The Crown of Kings', a Malay 'mirror for princes'. British Library, Or.13295, ff.1v-2r.

See more at: <http://britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk/asian-and-african/2013/09/the-crown-of-kings-a-deluxe-malay-manuscript-from-penang.html#sthash.c9aKjed2.dpuf>

1876 also witnessed the emergence of Malay lithographers and the establishment of *Jawi Peranakan* in Singapore. Lithography was the earliest early printing that can easily mastered by the Malay scribes. Like the Malay manuscripts, lithographic works are almost exclusively in *Jawi Peranakan*. In these early years, lithography as a method of printing, were mostly operated by the Malays because Malay scribes, reared in the manuscript tradition, could easily master this new technique that requires simple skills of transcribing the text in special ink to be transferred to the stone. A few scribes even took the liberty of adorning the books with motifs and decorations of that time.



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Lithographic printing, however, popular between 1870-1905, slowly declined at the beginning of the first decade of the twentieth century. Printing by letter presses became more viable, although the capital cost of the letterpress machinery was higher as the printing equipment needs to be imported from Europe, but nevertheless, newspaper publishing accelerated in Malaya during the early 20th century, further supported by secular education provided by the British and the political consciousness and nationalism among the locals.

Since pre-independence, local print mediums have contributed towards modern visual comprehension either consciously or not. Therefore Ahmad Suhaimi argues that the contributions by Malay teachers such as Mohd Said b. Haji Hussain at Sultan Idris Training College (now Universiti Perguruan Sultan Idris), Saidon Yahya, illustrator and editor of *Majalah Guru*, other illustrators and painters like Nora, Idris b. Haji Salam and Abdullah Ariff in the first half of the twentieth century should be discussed in the context of modern visual history of Malaysia.

Interestingly, during the 19th century, early images of Malaya were also depicted by British officers and some were even done by anonymous Chinese artists who came to Malaya during their sea-route. Some of these images have been collected by the East India Office, though extensive research on these images are still limited.⁸ There are also other attempts not only to document the images or collections through books but also by organizing exhibitions and producing art catalogues.⁹ Images in *Frank Swettenham and George Giles: Watercolors and Sketches of Malaya 1880-1894*¹⁰ for example, can be seen in how British officers portray the locals. The works despite being just mere sketches and drawings, position these officers not only as documentary artists, but these drawings and sketches, reflected the view or perspective of the British as a colonizing power.¹¹

⁸ Mildred and John Bastin Archer, *The Raffles Drawings in the India Office Library London* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1979); John Bastin and Pauline Rohatgi, *Prints of Southeast Asia in the India Office Library* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1979).

⁹ Lim, *Penang Views 1770-1860; Early Views of Penang and Malacca* (Pulau Pinang: Lembaga Muzium Pualau Pinang, 2002).

¹⁰ Chong Keat Lim, *Frank Swettenham and George Giles: Watercolours & Sketches of Malaya, 1880-1894* (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Malaysian-British Society, 1988).

¹¹ I have discussed these in -- Sarena Abdullah, "The Early Drawings of Malaya (1880-1894) by Frank Swettenham," in *1st Malaysian International Drawing Marathon*, ed.

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The drawings of the 19th century until now, however, were simply regarded not as Malaysian simply on the basis that the paintings or prints were done by non-Malayans, the paintings were produced through the colonialist eyes and there were no direct exchange of knowledge between the officers, painters and the local Malays. Therefore, it was generally assumed that there were no exchanges between the artists and the locals in terms of promoting visual comprehension or Western artistic activities.

To conclude, think of Penang as a site of an alternative modernity reflected in the visual forms. In Europe, the discussion of modernity and Modern art begins with the painters like Vincent van Gogh, Paul Cézanne, Paul Gauguin, Georges Seurat and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec all of whom were essential for the development of modern art. Rather than examining art, print medium can be seen as a platform that informed the locals of modern visuals. In investigating these artifacts, several important questions can be asked: - What are the forms of modernism (such as style, approach, medium, design, subject matter) that could be seen in the selected print medium? Could the claims of modernity be made of these artifacts based on the background, education and networks of these early 20th century producers? How did local artists and designers localize or adopt Western art styles and design elements to suit their local audiences?

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*Sarena Abdullah is a Senior Lecturer at the School of the Arts, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), where she teaches courses such as “Malaysian Modern Art,” “Western Modern Art” and “Art Theories” for undergraduate level and “Selected Topics in the Visual Arts” for a graduate class. She has an MA in Art History from the State University of New York, Buffalo, N.Y., U.S.A., and a PhD in Art History (2010) from the University of Sydney, NSW, Australia. Her research interests are contemporary Malaysian and Southeast Asian Art. She has also taken an interest in architectural and design history due to her Diploma and Degree in Interior Design. She has numerous papers published both locally and abroad, and has presented at conferences in Malaysia, Singapore, Australia and the United States. She was one of the Field Leader for “Ambitious Alignments: New Histories of Southeast Asian Art,” a research project led by the Power Institute, The University of Sydney and funded by the Getty Foundation.



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Special Article 2

Malaysia's New "Culture of Entrepreneurship": *Bumiputera* Agendas and Dilemmas

(By Sarah Kelman)

Of Nation-Building and Techno-Futures

I recently attended an event at the Malaysian Global Innovation and Creativity Centre (MaGIC), a brand-new government organization for supporting entrepreneurship located in Cyberjaya, just outside of Kuala Lumpur. The event launched MaGIC's Bumipreneur¹ Program, a strategic play on words that combines "entrepreneur" with "bumiputera," to inaugurate its commitment to helping bumiputera gain a foothold in the world of "high-growth, highly scalable" (read: technology) entrepreneurship. Peppered with Silicon Valley tech-speak, such as "Validating Ideas Using a Lean Start-Up Machine," the program lingered on until Deputy Finance Minister Datuk Ahmad Maslan spoke. He gave a brief speech about bumipreneurs as the hope of the nation and lauded bumipreneurs' role in "charting economic development," emphasizing that bumipreneur successes would not only be the pride of the Malay community, but that they would also lead the entire nation's economic development efforts (Idris 2014). After all, Malaysia sees entrepreneurship as a development tool for growing the economy², and it particularly sees bumiputera-led entrepreneurship as the main thrust in "transforming the country into a developed and high-income nation" (Povera 2014).

Except for the glow of smartphones in the audience, I could have been listening to a speech on empowering bumipreneurs as a means of economic development from 20 years ago. However, instead of an audience comprised of "old boys" cohorts of the 1990s (Sloane 1998), these bumipreneurs and stakeholders were fresh graduates and young professionals – and still mostly male, although women now have a growing presence. Furthermore, whereas the previous generation of bumipreneurs could be found across a diversity of sectors, this generation is

¹ Despite the awkwardness of this phrase, I will use it in this piece to denote the "special category" of bumiputera entrepreneurs who work in the tech startup sector.

² According to a 2014 government economic report, "[T]he Government is actively promoting entrepreneurship given the huge potential for entrepreneurs to grow and enhance their contribution to the economy in terms of job creation, exports and share to GDP (*sic*)" (Ministry of Finance Malaysia 2014: 9).

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concentrated in the technology startup sector. For the past several years, Malaysia has been shaping itself into the “Silicon Valley of Asia” in the hope of creating a new hub of entrepreneurship in Kuala Lumpur and the Klang Valley (Free Malaysia Today 2012). The allure of tech startups is that they are high-growth, meaning they can generate high revenue; highly scalable, meaning they can spread throughout the region and the world; and, most importantly, high-value, meaning that they can draw investment in the form of global venture capital. Growing the technology-based startup economy is therefore a cornerstone of the Malaysian government’s plans to achieve the nation’s Vision 2020 goals. By putting bumipreneurs at the forefront of the tech startup “ecosystem,”³ Malaysia is tasking bumipreneurs with the effort to build what I call Malaysia’s techno-future: a future in which technology generates innovation, wealth, and prestige for citizens and the nation.

Although the subject of bumiputera entrepreneurship may be familiar, this article explores bumipreneurship in a new light to highlight changes emerging from this techno-futuristic landscape. I propose that bumipreneurs play a unique role in Malaysia’s dreams of creating the next Silicon Valley – a role that ultimately puts bumipreneurs in an impossible position because the Malaysian startup ecosystem itself is littered with contradictions and paradoxes. By exploring these paradoxes through the lived experiences and struggles of today’s bumipreneurs, I pose new questions to old values that Malaysia has long held dear – privilege, progress, and the elusive dream of becoming a “first world” entrepreneurial nation.

The Bumipreneur Dilemma

When former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad wrote *The Malay Dilemma* in 1970, he controversially argued that “passive” Malays needed a state-led affirmative action program to reclaim their share of national wealth. The dilemma was whether or not Malays should accept the state’s assistance, given that it could lead to complacency and lack of ambition. Although much has changed in Malaysia since 1971, when the New Economic Policy introduced affirmative action, bumipreneurs continue to face dilemmas associated with their special status. If they accept bumiputera concessions, they may find themselves derided, both by Malays and non-Malays, for being uncompetitive, mediocre, and even corrupt. However, refusing assistance will likely result in hardship for lack of financial and cultural capital, for reasons that I will describe in the next section. This dilemma is underscored by critics within the startup community who argue that maintaining bumiputera privileges in tech entrepreneurship has the effect of “dumbing down” the Malaysian government’s efforts to cultivate a startup hub. In effect, they argue, “bumi interventions” and

³ This term was popularized by Brad Feld (2012) and is commonly used by tech entrepreneurs in Malaysia.



concessions lower the bar, leading to bumiputera deficiencies and, in turn, necessitating further concessions – just as Mahathir feared.

One bumipreneur who runs a quasi-tech business has found himself in the middle of this dilemma. He mused that, when “offered in good faith,” special bumipreneur funding from the state is not problematic – “it’s there for you, so you should take it,” he said. However, these good faith offerings are rare, and most of his experiences with bumipreneur funding have been tarnished by “hanky panky, dirty money with kickbacks attached to it,” as he put it. “Of course we’ve been propositioned before to take this kind of dirty money. The downside to taking the money is that, number one, in our religion [Islam], it’s forbidden. Humanity aside, it’s also immoral. Your heart is not pure, for once you take it, it’s hard to stop.” He further described the hazards of engaging in the bribery attached with bumiputera funding as “scary,” for those who help arrange the grants and kickbacks “think they own you for life.” He knew of others who took the money, but he personally found it to be too dangerous and troublesome. As it turns out, this entrepreneur pursued non-bumiputera specific venture funding, in part, he said, to maintain the quality and integrity of his brand. After he was turned down for the funding, he found his business in serious financial hardship, yet even then, he was unwilling to accept risky bumiputera assistance.

If so much has changed since Mahathir’s time, before Malaysia was on its way to a bumipreneur-led techno-future, then why does the dilemma of bumiputera special privileges continue to linger? By closely examining this desired techno-future, embodied in Malaysia’s aim to create a Silicon Valley-like “culture of entrepreneurship,” the next section will unpack the contradictions and paradoxes that frame the bumipreneur dilemma’s persistence. I highlight how the friction between the special status of bumipreneurs and the startup ecosystem (in its idealized form, at least) reveals the fractured, privileged nature of tech entrepreneurship itself.

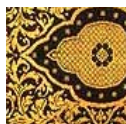
Special Status and a Culture of Entrepreneurship

Three related paradoxes frame Malaysia’s efforts to reconcile its transformation into an entrepreneurial nation with actual entrepreneurs’ experiences of privilege and inequality. These paradoxes highlight how the culture of entrepreneurship that Malaysia hopes to achieve is fraught with a number of values, privileges, and contradictions that put bumipreneurs in the difficult position of needing to utilize special resources while being viewed as lesser for it.

Paradox 1: Even though bumipreneurs are the hope of the nation, they have a low presence in the tech startup ecosystem.

Despite the emphasis placed on bumipreneurs’ participation in the tech startup economy as a means for achieving greater Malay wealth and national economic development, their presence in

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the field is low, compared to Chinese and Indian Malaysians. Malaysian government and non-government agencies maintain no official numbers, but my own observations at various entrepreneurship-related events held in the Klang Valley⁴ indicate that approximately one-third or fewer of the participants at these events were Malay. For events, agencies such as Teraju that focused on bumipreneur outreach, the rate of Malay participation was much higher.

Paradox 2: Malaysia's startup ecosystem is 90% government-funded, putting it at odds with its desire to develop a "culture of entrepreneurship."

Although Malaysia dreams of a techno-future in which startups are led by bumipreneurs, the means of achieving this dream seem to chafe against its understanding of a "culture of entrepreneurship." Many Malaysian entrepreneurs decry the detrimentally strong government presence, often in the form of funding for startups – compared to the U.S. Government's *laissez faire* approach with Silicon Valley – because they believe it makes entrepreneurs "soft," providing a financial safety net that discourages risk-taking and creativity. Nonetheless, the 2014 government economic report declares that 90% of financing for startups in Malaysia comes directly from the government (Ministry of Finance Malaysia 2014: 10) – much of which is used to help bumipreneurs.⁵ Furthermore, a number of public and semi-public organizations extend help to bumipreneurs in the form of advocacy, support, and funding, representing part of the efforts of Najib's "Bumiputera Economic Empowerment Agenda" to uplift and empower the Malay population. While only a few of these entities are exclusively dedicated to assisting bumipreneurs, the rest have government-mandated bumiputera funds or programs. The funds are generous⁶, but they come with stipulations that make them difficult for bumipreneurs to access. Not only are applicants given very little leeway to "pivot"⁷ from their submitted business plan, but to apply for funding, bumipreneurs must often work unofficially with "agents" who expect kickbacks to help "sort out" their applications.

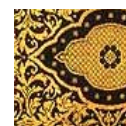
⁴ I attended networking sessions, informal dialogues, hackathons, pitch competitions, summits, and conferences over the course of my research.

⁵ For example, bumipreneur grants and loans are offered by agencies such as Unit Peneraju Agenda Bumiputera (Teraju) for up to RM 500K, Malaysia Venture Capital Management Berhad (MAVCAP) for up to RM 10 million, and by Malaysian Technology Development Corporation (MTDC) for up to RM 15 million.

⁶ Awarding as much as RM 500,000 (about \$140,000) to a single startup for pre-seed capital, and upwards of several million ringgit for large-scale commercialization.

⁷ Pivoting is a term in startup-speak that refers to changing directions in the business. A single startup may "pivot" in terms of its business focus, product creation, structure, ownership, and finances several times before it finds a successful model that works.

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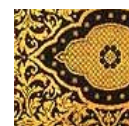


Several entrepreneurs that I've spoken with found the awarding of bumipreneur special funds and opportunities to be problematic. One Chinese Malaysian tech entrepreneur proposed that bumipreneur assistance creates a "culture of dependency," a charge often levied against bumiputera special status writ large. Other entrepreneurs argued that bumiputera special concessions emphasized race while downplaying the merit of ideas. For instance, one bumipreneur chronicled his experience with a government agency that sponsored Malaysian entrepreneurs to Silicon Valley for business development and networking. Although about 50 of the participants (both bumiputera and non-bumiputera) were selected through a strenuously judged pitching competition, 10 additional bumiputera were added to the roster *without* going through the tryout process because it was determined (behind the scenes, under political pressure from the Bumiputera Agenda) that not enough qualified Malays had been selected. The bumipreneur I spoke with described some of the "specially selected" participants as under-qualified and particularly "sleazy." He felt they represented "everything that's wrong with Malay entrepreneurs," scorning them because, as a tech entrepreneur himself, his ideal vision of the startup ecosystem is as a meritocracy, where the quality of a person's ideas, their level of skill, and their dedication to hard work matter more than personal traits. The notion of bumiputera privileges chafes against the values that tech entrepreneurs embrace values that take pride in bootstrapping, working under a lean startup model, and making personal sacrifices in pursuit of success. To them, bumiputera funding is the wrong kind of "hack," or a shortcut that cannot be taken because it circumvents an important vetting process for developing a true culture of entrepreneurship. However, the startup ecosystem in Malaysia is far from an even playing field – as the next paradox shows, it is rife with its own structures of power and senses of privilege.

Paradox 3: Despite its self-image as a "meritocracy," the startup ecosystem has a high cost of entry, requiring a great deal of capital that bumipreneurs find difficult to access.

Malaysia's tech startup ecosystem sees itself as open and accessible to all – a true meritocracy that emulates the entrepreneurial culture of Silicon Valley. The startup sector tends to idealize the notion that anyone can be the next Mark Zuckerberg or Tony Fernandes, and that it is only a matter of hard work, skill, and luck that separates successful entrepreneurs from the rest. However, built into the image of these successful entrepreneurs is a set of privileges that are comprised of both financial and cultural capital – a term I borrow from Bourdieu (1984) to describe how the resources mobilized by successful tech entrepreneurs are matters of socio-economic privilege and class.⁸ To begin with, many of the tech entrepreneurs I spoke with were encouraged to "bootstrap," or raise their own funding from personal savings, family loans, and community associations. Bootstrapping

⁸ As scholars such as Alice Marwick (2013) have shown in studies of startups in Silicon Valley, tech entrepreneurship is not the neutral, value-free space that it claims to be.



is designed to keep costs low in a startup's early phases, where the premise and the prototype might change several times before taking on its final form. Furthermore, bootstrapping has strong moral and ethical connotations within the startup world. To be able to "pull yourself up by your bootstraps" implies a drive to succeed that starts within the self, rather than coming from external sources (such as government grants). Entrepreneurs who are overly reliant on outside sources of funding often find themselves sacrificing some aspect of their independence to those who hold the purse strings, where they may lack the ability to remain agile and quickly respond to changes in market conditions or technological availabilities for their products. Although all tech entrepreneurs ostensibly face fundraising challenges, bumipreneurs in particular recounted how they experienced this struggle more acutely than their non-bumiputera counterparts. One bumipreneur argued that Chinese entrepreneurs have an easier time because, instead of going to banks and government agencies, they have underground funding and credit associations among themselves. "For us," he said, "we have to rely on our network, but in a halal way, lah. Not the underground way."

Although there are a number of special programs to help bumipreneurs with financing, aspiring entrepreneurs also need to mobilize a great deal of cultural capital, much of which is out of reach for bumipreneurs. Many bumipreneurs described an invisible set of barriers that hindered their entry and advancement. They identified challenges such as a lack of comfort with the English language that made it difficult to confidently pitch their ideas, network with other entrepreneurs, seek out partnerships, and close sales. Although Bahasa Melayu is Malaysia's official language, English is the unofficial business language, and fluency is necessary to participate in the startup economy. One Chinese entrepreneur told me rather dismissively, "[Malay language speakers] should step up and learn English if they want to succeed and take their businesses globally." In the tech startup field, which is dominated by English-speaking Chinese and Indians, fluency with English is a high admission price for bumipreneurs, who are less likely to speak English well. I saw this dynamic unfold at a startup pitching competition for students from a Malaysian public university, where the Malay students clearly struggled the most with speaking in English. They were singled out by the competition's judges to "brush up" on their public speaking, for their lack of confidence negatively impacted their abilities to convey their ideas.

In a related sense, bumipreneurs also argued that successful entrepreneurs usually have a solid educational foundation typically found in universities outside of Malaysia – the local universities, they explained, are generally of low quality. Malaysians who studied overseas described their experiences as "eye-opening," where they gained "soft skills" not taught at home (such as critical thinking and questioning-asking) and broadened their horizons to become worldly, sophisticated citizens. Better-quality overseas universities are expensive for Malaysians, although there are government and private scholarships available for top students – even bumiputera. However, bumipreneurs complained that there are too few spots available, so for most Malay students, admission preference and scholarships for local universities are incentives for them to stay within

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Malaysia.⁹ In this sense, some bumipreneurs voiced the sentiment that these privileges de-incentivize them to go abroad and actually work *against* them by providing fewer opportunities to cultivate a set of cosmopolitan sensibilities that are advantageous for entrepreneurs. These sensibilities range from the obvious (having an international network of wealthy, well-connected alumni) to the subtle (speaking Anglophone accented English, which connotes upper-class status and education). In contrast, I have heard entrepreneurs who speak heavily Malay-accented English derided for being “too *kampung*” and unsuitable as representatives of globally scalable startups. As a population that by and large has not sought education overseas because of the incentives to stay in Malaysia, bumipreneurs may find themselves lacking in these forms of cultural capital that can facilitate their success.

Conclusion

Rather than taking bumipreneur dilemmas for face value, as “facts” about bumiputera abilities and deficiencies as entrepreneurs, I argue that they highlight the distinct values and privileges underpinning the tech startup sector that make it difficult for bumipreneurs to succeed, despite special concessions that are intended to help. In the past decade or so since entrepreneurship has become a highly visible form of economic development in Malaysia and greater Southeast Asia, the stakes for bumiputera success is higher than ever. As “sons of the soil” and citizens of the technofuture, bumipreneurs are increasingly called upon to be “global,” “scalable,” and “fundable” – yet the much-needed resources extended to them also become a double-edged sword that can portray an image of dependency, given the notion that bumiputera privileges are inappropriate for a true culture of entrepreneurship. It is in closely examining what exactly comprises this culture of entrepreneurship – its own privileges, assumptions, and contradictions – that we may be able to shed light on the potential cost of achieving Malaysia’s dreams of “first world” wealth and status amidst continued socio-economic inequality. It seems that, for bumipreneurs in the tech startup field, the impasse continues.

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⁹ By contrast, many non-bumiputera entrepreneurs have argued that their limited educational opportunities within Malaysia (due to bumiputera preferences in admissions and scholarships) forced them to seek education overseas, primarily in Australia, the U.K., and the U.S.

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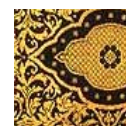
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Special Article 3

Meanings of Traditional Textiles Consumption in Brunei Darussalam

(By Siti Norkhalbi Haji Wahsalfelah)

Introduction

Weaving traditions have been claimed as one of Brunei cultural legacy and considered as part of the Brunei great traditions. In Brunei society, traditional woven cloths have multiple roles whose meanings vary according to the situations in which the traditional cloth is utilized. Although textile is a tangible heritage, but it also consists of intangible aspects that need to highlighted. Due to social transformation, the symbolic aspect of traditional textiles has been forgotten or to certain extend is not known especially among the younger generation. To ensure the knowledge is well preserved and uphold among the society, therefore, there is the need to document the intangible aspect of this heritage. This paper will discuss the meanings of the traditional textiles in Brunei Darussalam.

Traditional woven textile is one of the material cultures that is conspicuously consumed and plays a dominant role in Brunei society. They are used as ceremonial dress at royal weddings as well as other royal court functions. The consumption of traditional textiles extends to other than ceremonial costumes but also used in a plethora of other paraphernalia. In addition, traditional textiles are extensively consumed not only among the royalties but also among the commoners. The meaning of traditional textiles in Brunei has been closely related to their consumption in ceremonial events held in the Malay culture in Brunei.

Historical background

The exact date of when woven textiles came into existence in Brunei is yet to be determined, but existing evidences indicated that weaving activity may have already existed in Brunei as early as the ninth century (Karim 2002). This surmise was constructed based on the archeological excavations in Kota Batu led by Tom Harrison in 1952-1953 discovered different parts of weaving implements. Radiocarbon dating of the implements indicated that they are dated from 800-850 (Karim 2002).

Early accounts on the consumption of traditional textiles were noted by foreign travelers. Chau Jua Kua, the Chinese traveler visited Brunei in 1225 noted that the women of rich families wore sarongs of brocades and silk (Mohammed Jamil 2000). It was also noted that Brunei envoy went to pay homage to China when Emperor Yung Lo (1402-24) was in power, brought native products including cloths as gifts (Mohammed Jamil 2000). Pigafetta, who visited Brunei in 1521 was captivated by the imposing splendour and ceremonial of the court and recorded an advanced culture. He noted that the dignitaries wore traditional woven cloths. However there was no mention of colour and motifs of the clothing. Andaya (1992:411) asserts that such displays were a major reinforcement of the claims made by the Bruneian ruler to stand as the region's overlord.

The men in the palace were all attired in cloth of gold and silk which covered their privies, and carried daggers with gold hafts adorned with pearls and precious gems, and they had many rings on their fingers (Nicholl 1975).

In addition, Pigafetta also noted that traditional textiles were used as curtains in the hall of the palace. Textiles were also used as gifts to foreign guests and were seen as a significant factor in establishing and strengthening the relationship between the two parties (Siti Norkhalbi 2007).

As recorded in Genealogy of Brunei rulers by Datu Imam Aminuddin, *Jong sarat* was worn by royal dignitaries as part of the ceremonial attire during the coronation ceremony of Sultan Muhammad Jamalul 'Alam in 1919. Pengiran Bendahara (one of the viziers) wore a white suit, including a white *Jong sarat sinjang*, whereas the Pengiran Shahbandar (one of the *Cheteria*) wore a black *Jong sarat sinjang* (Sweeney 1998: 124).

Traditional Textiles and Royal Court

Contemporarily, traditional textiles are still extensively consumed in the royal court, especially at ceremonial events such as the Sultan's birthday, royal weddings, and investiture ceremonies. The use of special ornate woven textiles as part of ceremonial dress in the court ceremonies signifies social and political ranks, and the office held by certain officials. This distinction can be identified by colours and designs of the traditional woven cloths.

When in power, Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddien III (1950-1967), who was known as 'the Father of Modern Brunei' introduced official use of traditional cloths as part of ceremonial court dress when the Malay traditional costume was worn. He established the use of certain colours, type, patterns, designs and motifs to distinguish rank. In the beginning, certain colours were used for personal standards and ceremonial clothing for the royal regalia bearers (Yusof 1958) and lower rank traditional officials, but later these colours were extended for ceremonial clothing at court for other officials (see Siti Norkhalbi 2007). In Brunei, colours such as yellow, white, green, black, red, purple, orange, blue and pink were adopted at court. Later other colours such as maroon, olive and silvery green were also adopted.

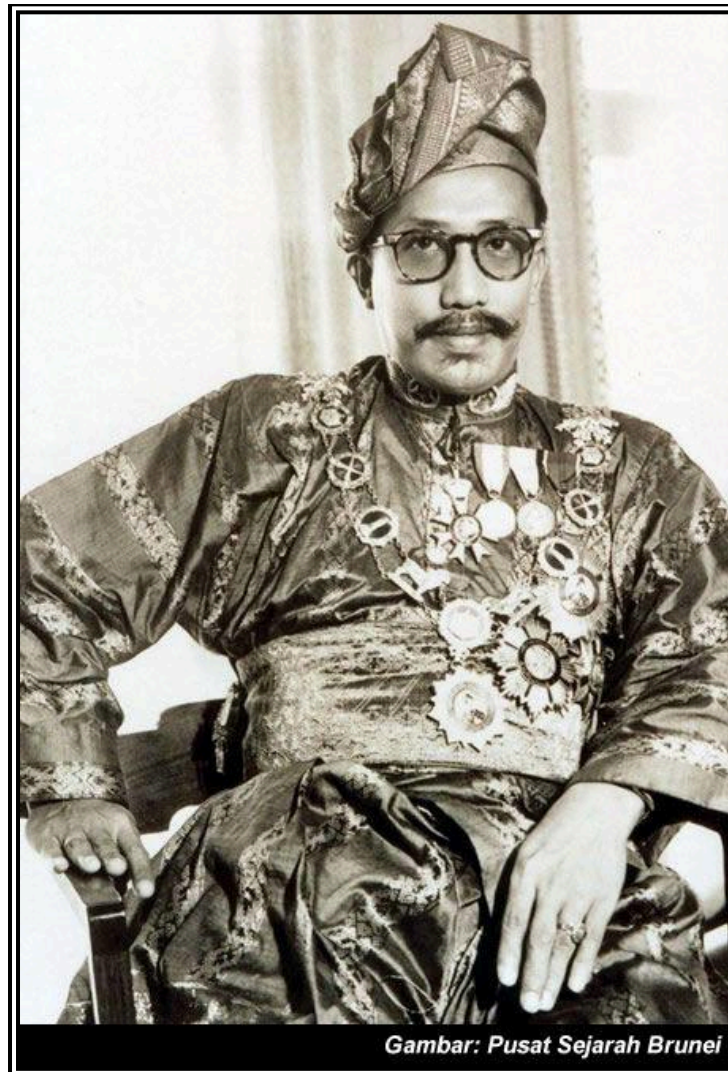


Plate 1: Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddien in traditional attire.

Photo: Courtesy from Brunei Historical Centre.

According to informants who were involved in establishing court ceremonial dress, apart from the symbolic significance of colours and designs to distinguish ranks, the logic behind the choice of colours was for safety and visibility as well as the popularity of such colours at the time. However, by looking at the background of Brunei court, the adoption of these colours might have been influenced by Hindu-Buddhist practice (Siti Norkhalbi 2007). Brunei was once under the subjugation of the Majapahit Kingdom in Java in the 13th and 14th century and it was possible that the Bruneians practiced a Hindu-Buddhist system of

governing during that time. Even though Brunei was freed from Majapahit, the influence of Javanese Hindu-Buddhism remained to influence the local culture. Such influence can still be seen in contemporary Brunei, especially in social customs and the traditional political system.

Since Brunei was under the British Protectorate, it adopted modern system of administration enforced by the British. After the declaration of its independence in 1984, Brunei became a constitutional Sultanate and the monarch is both the head of state and head of the government. Although there have been changes in the system of government, the traditional institutional structure which is relevant to the court continues to be practised. Now, the ceremonial costume is extended to senior officials and other officers, including those in the modern administration and offices. Such ceremonial costumes are worn when prescribed for court function. The present Sultan continued the idea, adding more colours and designs to accommodate changes to the administration system since independence.

At all court events, the colour of the dress is specified according to the status of the wearer, as well as the time when the function is held. Generally, all guests are required to wear black for day functions and white for evening ones. Malay guests are directed to wear the national costume i.e. *baju Melayu*, whereas non-Malays may wear formal Western-style clothing. For males, the national dress consists of a tunic, a pair of trousers, *sinjang* of traditional woven cloth, and headgear. The headgear may be a black velvet cap known locally as *kopiah* or *songkok*, *dastar* (specially folded headgear from traditional woven cloth) or *ketayap* (white skullcap with a piece of white cloth bound around the head) or *serban* (turban). Other forms of male headdress are not acceptable. For female, the national dress is either *baju kurung* or *baju kebaya*. The wearing of a headscarf (*tudung*) is encouraged, especially for Muslims.

Traditional or royal dignitaries wear different types, pattern, designs, motifs, and colours of traditional woven *sinjang*, *arat* (belt), and *dastar* in accordance with their rank. Each male dignitary carries a kris. Among the traditional noble dignitaries, only the *Cheteria* are provided with uniforms of ceremonial dress for court functions. The traditional textiles for the *cheteria* have the same pattern and design for all levels of wearer. However, rank can be identified a difference in colour. The cloth is a *Jong Sarat* design decorated with *bunga cheteria bersiku keluang* (the elbow of flying fox motif). The colour for the chief *cheteria* is dark purple. Light purple is for *cheteria* 4, additional *cheteria* under *cheteria* 4 wears green with red striped, *cheteria* 8 wear orange, *cheteria* 16 wear blue, additional *cheteria* under *cheteria* 16 wear black with red stripes and *cheteria* 32 wear magenta-pink.

Non-noble traditional officials can be divided into three categories. The levels of offices can be distinguished through the colours and motifs of their ceremonial *sinjang*, *arat*, and *dastar*. Different colours and motifs are used to decorate their ceremonial costume. Higher non-noble traditional officers are also ranked into four, eight, sixteenth and thirty-two. However, unlike the noble office of *cheteria*, there is no distinction in the colour and designs of uniform for this office. The colour of the fabric is magenta-pink. The design for the traditional cloth uniform is a scattered pattern arrangement decorated with *bunga butang arab gegati* (rhombus and button floral motifs).

Lower ranking non-noble traditional officials include the *Manteri Istana* (officials of the palace), *Manteri Agama* (traditional religious officials), *Manteri Dagang* (officials of foreigners), *Manteri Hulubalang* (officials of defense) and *Manteri Pedalaman* (officials of the home affairs). The traditional cloth for the *Manteri Istana* and *Manteri Hulubalang* is similar in color and design. The color of the cloth is purple with a scattered pattern arrangement decorated with *bunga tampuk manggis* (the calyx of mangosteen flower) motif. The *Manteri Pedalaman* uniform is a blue with scattered pattern arrangement decorated with *bunga kembang setahun* (year round blooming flower) motif. The base color for their costume is scarlet. Traditional religious ministers and officials have been prescribed an Arabic-style long dress known as a *jubah* and headdress that is known as a *serban* (turban). The color of the *jubah* depends on the time, black during the day function and white for evening function.

The state dignitaries or modern administrative ministers, deputy ministers, and other senior officials must wear the ceremonial costumes prescribed for them. The colors, as well as the designs of their ceremonial dress, vary according to position and rank. The ministers and deputy ministers of the cabinet wear woven cloths of similar design and motif for their *sinjang*, *arat*, and *dastar*, which is of *si lubang bangsi* design decorated with *bunga berputar kembang bertatah* (rotating bloom with multi colored motif). The color of the cloth for the ministers is golden olive. Deputy Ministers wear silvery green colored supplementary weft cloth. Senior officials in the government sector wear a traditional cloth of *jong sarat* design decorated with *bunga teratai* (lotus motif) (see plate 2). The color of the cloth is maroon. Traditional cloth of similar design and color is attached to the lapel and the sleeves of the costume and for the *kain kapit* worn by the female senior officers.



Plate 2: The uniform of the senior officials.

The officers who bear royal regalia for the Sultan and his siblings also wear a uniform. They assemble behind where the Sultan and his siblings were seated. Each of them has four officers carrying the royal regalia. The regalia are the royal umbrella, a sword and shield, a spear, and a golden betel container locally known as *kaskol*. The *kaskol* are wrapped with traditional cloth. The color of the wrapping cloths reflects the status of the royal members. For instance,

the Sultan's *kaskol* wrapping was yellow supplementary weft cloth, whereas the *Pengiran Perdana Wazir* (supreme vizier) and *Pengiran Bendahara's* (second vizier) ones are white.

The royal regalia bearers are clothed in a black traditional costume, but the color of their *sinjang*, *arat*, and *dastar* differ in accordance with the rank of the person whose regalia they were bearing. For instance, the officers bearing the regalia for the Sultan wore a black background traditional woven cloth decorated with golden thread of *kain berturus* (vertical) design *sinjang*, *arat*, and *dastar*.

The uniform of the regalia bearers for the *Pengiran Perdana Wazir* (supreme vizier) and *Pengiran Bendahara* (second vizier) is white. Both cloths are of *kain berturus* design, but different motifs are used for the decoration. The *Pengiran Perdana Wazir's* regalia bearers wore *kain bepakan* (i.e. the wefts were alternately woven with gold threads, thus producing a shimmering effect to the material), whereas the *Pengiran Bendahara's* regalia bearers wear *kain biasa*. In *kain biasa*, gold thread was not use for the weft, thus giving a matte effect. In this case, the difference in shimmering effect on the cloths signifies the different rank of the person on which the regalia are borne.

Apart from the royal regalia bearers, there are also two traditional commandants locally known as *Panglima Asgar* (defense commandant) and *Panglima Raja* (royal commandant). During the court events, these commandants stay on guard. The *Panglima Asgar* carries the royal weapons of *kelasak* and *kampilan* (the royal sword and shield), whereas the *Panglima Raja* carries *pemuras* and *kampilan* (the royal gun and cartridge container). They are dressed in a scarlet traditional costume with a purple traditional woven *sinjang*, *arat*, and *dastar* designed with *bunga bertabur* pattern and *bunga tampuk manggis* (calyx of mangosteen flower) motif.

Officers from the Jabatan Adat Istiadat Negara and the Grand Chamberlain's Office are also dressed in uniform. The design and color of their clothes reflects their respective offices. For instance, officials from the Jabatan Adat Istiadat Negara wear maroon colored material with a vertical design. The material is also decorated with scattered arranged floral motifs. During the wedding of the Crown Prince in 2004, the officials of the Jabatan Adat Istiadat wear black and white newly designed traditional woven textiles.

During the sixtieth birthday of the Sultan in 2006, a new design was created for the uniform of the *Penghulu* (headmen of a cluster of villages) and the *Ketua Kampong* (heads of village). The material is in green colour with checkered design. The material is also decorated with scattered arrange geometrical motifs.

In the royal court, the utilization of traditional cloth in the court is not limited to uniforms for the officials. Such cloth is also used as gifts, wedding exchange and clothing, furnishing and decorations. Different colours and designs used in the traditional textile manifested different rank and status.

Traditional Textiles and Ritual

Brunei Malays celebrate lifecycle transitions and the ceremonies are regarded as an essential part of Malay culture. During these ceremonies, traditional woven cloths are used as gift exchange, clothing, furnishings, and decoration.

In Brunei Malay wedding ceremonies, traditional textiles play significant role as ceremonial garments and in gift exchange. At royal marriage, traditional textile is exchanged between the groom and the bride. This is also practiced by the commoners. According to Brunei Malay culture, traditional textile presented to the bride as part of the bride price settlement and exchange. The bride price settlement usually consists of *mas kahwin* or *mahar* (groom's settlement on the bride), *belanja serba guna* (multipurpose expenses), a piece of *jong sarat* (traditional woven cloth) (see plate 3) and the ring. The bride price settlement is provided by the groom and presented to his future bride during the engagement ceremony. The traditional woven cloth in this context is also known as *kepala berian*. The color of the fabric is not specified; however a brightly colored *Jong sarat* is common. In the past, among the noble a cloth yellow color was common to be seen as it signifies the status, whereas the commoner opted red color which symbolized happiness and prosperity. The cloth becomes the bride's permanent possession and remains as marker of love and a reminder of the ties between the husband and wife. It symbolizes the interrelationships between the couple (Siti Norkhalbi, 2007). The bride also presents a procession of counter-gifts to her groom to be. The gifts include cooked food, such as cakes and sweets, as well as clothing, accessories and clothing. Traditional cloth is also presented.



Plate 3: Traditional textile is one of the gifts given to the bride

Traditional cloths are also as worn as ceremonial costumes during marriage ceremonies. Grooms and brides usually wear traditional Malay costumes made from traditional textiles in their wedding ceremonies. During the solemnization ceremony, grooms of noble families usually wear traditional Malay costume, with *sinjang* and *dastar* made of traditional woven clothes. However, for grooms from the commoner families, it is not unusual for them to wear imported material combined with traditional woven cloth *sinjang* and *dastar*. Whereas for the brides, it is common for them to wear imported materials such as lace which is made into *baju kurung* or *baju kebaya*. The brides also wear headgear, which is in line with Islamic teaching, where women are to cover their head. In other marriage ceremonies, both bride and groom also are usually dressed in traditional costumes. During the *majlis bersanding* and *majlis berambil-ambilan*, both bride and groom are usually dressed in similar color and design material. The uniformity of color and design of the clothing symbolizes unity and understanding (Siti Norkhalbi, 2007). In addition, traditional textiles are also conspicuously displayed during marriage ceremonies. They are used such as bedspreads, manual hand fan and pillows.

Other than weddings, traditional woven clothes are also worn in other ceremonial events, such as celebration of new mother and first child, circumcision and puberty ceremonies. The use of such textiles in these events can be seen as an objectification of a sense of continuity with tradition (Renne 1995:83). Traditional woven cloths are part of Malay culture and are used in Brunei traditions; not observing such traditions seems to alienate one from her or his own root.



Plate 4: Traditional clothes worn by a bride during powdering ceremony



Plate 5: The Malay wedding.

Traditional textiles may also be used during funeral among Malays in Brunei Darussalam. They were usually used as a top cover for the corpse while waiting for it to be cleansed. For the noble, traditional cloths were also used to cover the coffin. The use of traditional textiles during funeral rites was perceived as paying a sense of respect and to display social and economic status of the deceased as well as his or her family.

Brunei Malays also has a long tradition of using woven cloths for special occasions. Among men, traditional cloth is used as part of their traditional costume especially when attending ceremonial and festive events. A plaid, checkered, or floral design *sinjang* is usually worn over the traditional costume. In addition, traditional Malay attire has been adopted as the official attire in Brunei. At certain formal state occasions, such as National Day, traditional Malay attire is prescribed for guests. Traditional Malay attire is not only worn by Muslim Malays, but it is now increasingly common to see for non-Malays such as the Chinese wearing this style of attire on such occasions. The use of traditional Malay attire has come to signify Bruneian identity, hence, national identity.



Plate 6: Men wearing traditional Malay costume.

Photo: Courtesy from Information Department.

Conclusion

The use of traditional textile still plays significant roles especially in the royal court and traditions of Malays in Brunei. Not only that such textile important functionally, but also symbolically which are closely linked to the customs and traditions. For Brunei Malays, tradition is a significant aspect of life that must be preserved and maintained and whose continuity in the society must be ensured.

The consumption of traditional textiles serves to signify distinctions; as such textiles are used as marker of status. The materials of specific color, motif, and design that are worn as part of the ceremonial attire at court constitute significant symbolism distinguishing the rank of the wearer in the social and political hierarchy. The upholding of the traditionally based social structure as well as the adoption of novel political system have contributed to the intensification creation and consumption of traditional textiles. Thus, they remain in use to distinguish rank.

The continuations of the celebrations commemorating lifecycle transition ensure that the usage of traditional woven cloth is well preserved. In these ceremonies, traditional woven cloth is essential as ceremonial dress. The attire is perceived to be the most appropriate for such ceremonies. In addition, such textiles are also copiously used as ornamental objects on ceremonial occasions that symbolize the aesthetic refinement of Malay cultural heritage.

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Book Review 1

Charles Allers, *The Evolution of a Muslim Democrat: The Life of Malaysia's Anwar Ibrahim*, forward by John Esposito. American University Studies, New York: Peter Lang 2013. Xii, 345 pp. ISBN 978-1-4331-2356-6

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Allers study of the life of Anwar Ibrahim revolves around the accusations against him by the Mahathir administration and his criminal trials for alleged sexual acts committed while in office. The treatment includes sequential information about two trials and their outcomes. There is also some information on Anwar's youth in Bukit Mertajam and his secondary school education at Malay College of Kuala Kangsar, Perak, where he completed Form Five in 1964 and where he met the British scholar and convert to Islam, Desmond J. Tate who inspired him to become a reform-minded scholarly leader (p. 38). He entered the University of Malaya in 1967 and became leader of the Malay Language Society (p. 44) that was interested in Malay identity and post-colonial politics. At this time he was critical of government efforts in behalf of the rural poor. After the May 13, 1969 post-election riots, in which the Parti Al-Islam Semananjung (PAS) opposition to UMNO forces did well, Anwar looked to Islam as a potential unifying force and visited Iran early in their period of revolution (p. 61). He also showed interest in rural poverty during the Baling protests in 1974 where he was arrested but never charged under the Internal Security Act and served twenty-two months in detention. He told Allers that he was treated well because of his charisma as a Malay student leader who was not on the political left (p. 58, Asmah, ed. and Husin Ali).

Anwar entered UNMO in 1982 at the invitation of Mahathir Mohamad, the prime minister (p. 67). This was shocking to some since groups he belonged to, such as ABIM (Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia), had been critical of UMNO actions. Anwar and ABIM thought that there should be a greater government commitment to a more egalitarian Islamic society, but he stopped short of recommending the imposition of shariah law in Malaysia (p. 61). The author

tracks Anwar's progress in UMNO after his entry into the Mahathir administration until he reached his pinnacle as head of the Ministry of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister.

The fall of Suharto in Indonesia precipitated movements for reform in Malaysia. Anwar considered the NEP (New Economic Policy, begun after the 1969 riots) that sought to eliminate the gap between Malays and other groups in the country through granting of licenses, as open to corruption as a result of what he called nepotism and cronyism (p. 114). Rather than the NEP's top-down approach of helping Malay entrepreneurs, Anwar favored one from the bottom or grass roots up and this could threaten entrenched financial interests. In 1997 Anwar opposed Mahathir policies that would help conglomerates (pp.111-112). Despite these growing disagreements, Anwar was able to consider himself loyal to the pledge of welfare (*amanah*) in the UMNO slogan of (*Bersih, Cekap and Amanah*). Tensions burst forth on Mahathir's accusing George Soros of using the IMF to weaken the Malaysian ringgit, while Anwar thought that Malaysia should have a dialogue with the IMF leaders to weather the financial crisis of 1998. At this time the public seemed to blame the Malaysian wealthy for the crisis.

Notwithstanding these tensions, Allers presents Anwar's sacking in 1998 and the charges of sodomy placed against him as shocking events that Anwar did not expect. He was ordered to resign, and refusing, asked for Mahathir's resignation instead, issuing a Permatang Pauh Declaration of his position on issues of governance and their differences saying that he was for rule of law, democracy, economic justice, eradication of corruption, and commitment to peaceful protest (p. 119). The sodomy charges were unusual in that he was a married man with six children. He had a strong following at the grass roots as a protector of Malay rights working through the Alliance system of ties between communities.

His trial for sodomy left little doubt that the scales of justice were strongly tilted against Anwar. Even when accusers withdrew their testimony, the court refused to accept these retractions. He was sentenced to nine years in 1999 and released in September of 2004 as the Court granted his appeal of conviction. Anwar was still banned from running for parliamentary office. He did give many speeches and organized the Pakatan Rakyat, a new alliance of opposition parties who shared reformist agendas and included Anwar's People's Justice Party (PKR), Democratic Action Party (DAP), the Party Rakyat (PR) and the Parti Al-

Islam Semananjung (PAS). In the interim he spent much of his time giving public speeches, telling his unique slant on the potential for change and growth. Although he faulted UMNO for its interpretation and implementation of policies affecting Islam, he never supported a full Islamic state or imposition of shariah law. PAS had become somewhat less interested in imposing shariah law after 1999 and placed Islam within a reformist agenda under its leader, Fadzil Noor (p. 144).

Just two months after Anwar was permitted to run for office, June 29, 2008, he was charged again with sodomy. This time his accuser was an acquaintance of the new Prime Minister, Najib Razak. This man said he would swear on the Quran to support his testimony (p. 189) but the court found that medical evidence was lacking and found him not guilty in January 2012. Anwar had been a member of parliament since 2008. Allers uses his final chapter to summarize Anwar's contribution to Malaysian and Muslim reform: emphasizing tolerance, civil liberty, economic justice and democratic government all ideas that were present in his *The Asian Renaissance* (1996) and the Permatang Pauh Declaration (1998).

Allers bibliography is not complete in some respects and readers must seek references in the extensive notes that make use of commentaries in the foreign and local presses as well as websites, such as Malaysiakini. Availability of these sources suggests that Malaysia has not fully restricted Internet access. The section on the early habitation of Malaysia and Indonesia is dated and readers should look to other works. A UNESCO conference document provides DNA evidence on the spread of peoples from Africa in late Pleistocene and Holocene (see Simanjuntak, et. al., 2006). Jones (2007) summarizes similar data.

Structures were in place in Malaysia, with this long history, to deal harshly with dissenters declared beyond the pale of democracy. Mahathir's declaration seemed to have set these forces in motion. Allers does not discuss the government structures that enabled the human rights violations against Anwar. He gives the post-World War II insurgency a very brief mention, although many of the draconian measures, including the Internal Security Act (I.S.A. of 1957) that he discusses were implemented in response to activities of the CTs (Communist Terrorists, *Pengganas Kommunis*) after Japan's defeat and the dissolution of the MPAJA (Malayan Peoples Anti-Japanese Army). There are now copious memoirs discussing the tactics of the British, Malayan and Australian troops during the period after WWII until

the December 2, 1989 Haadyai Peace Accords with the rebels. Governments set land mines, armed village militias called long knives (*parang panjang*), and developed an intelligence network that included *orang asli* (aboriginal peoples of central Malaya) informants who helped them locate gatherings of rebels (Abdullah 2005, 2007, 2009; Abdullah, Rashid and Abu Samah 2005; Rashid 2005; Samiah 2007; Shamsiah 2007; Suriani 2009). Baling, the site of demonstrations that precipitated Anwar's first imprisonment, was the site of peace talks between the insurgents and Tunjku Abdul Rahman in 1955 and set in motion the I.S.A (Chin, pp. 366-386).

Finally, Allers does not discuss a theory of dual personalities that Mahathir and other accusers must have used against him. While Anwar was able to convince the UMNO leadership of his *daulat* or fitness to rule, after he was sacked, his enemies apparently assumed that he had another darker side that they could sell to the public as a great danger. Malay culture has a folk concept relevant here: *susuk* or one's evil double captured the public imagination through Amir Muhammad's horror film of that name (2008). Is this film satirizing Anwar's treatment? Where do his accusers think that Anwar learned about homosexual practices? Was it at MCKK as a student in secondary school or did he learn them as part of his experience in village Malay culture? Some of Allers' informants might have spelled out these interesting details.

This is a fascinating study and well worth careful reading. Students of the transition from colonialism to independence in Malaysia will find this a useful document. Colonials thought that local systems were inadequate. They replaced and supplemented them but could not accomplish this without leaving behind descent crushing patterns.

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Book Review 2

Margaret Kartomi, *Musical Journeys in Sumatra*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2012; 478 pages, 100 illustrations, 11 maps and tables. \$60.00 cloth. ISBN 978-0-252-03671-2

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Margaret Kartomi's *Musical Journeys in Sumatra* is the first book to exclusively focus on the performance traditions of the sixth largest island in the world, home to more than forty-four million Indonesians, and spans forty years of original fieldwork on the music and dance traditions of six of the island's ten provinces including West Sumatra, Riau, South Sumatra, Bangka, North Sumatra, and Aceh. Margaret Kartomi is a Professor of Music at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia. *Musical Journeys in Sumatra* is based on the materials gathered in Kartomi's thirty-two fieldtrips to Sumatra between 1971 and 2011, often accompanied by her husband Mas (Hidras) Kartomi, her children, colleagues, and graduate students.

Kartomi notes her concern with the preservation and documentation of traditional Sumatran musical genres threatened by Indonesian national policies and religious change and underscores the importance of advocacy in her work. "From the early 1970s, Mas Kartomi and I focused on collecting the most endangered species of the musical arts—genres attached to the rituals of ancestor and nature veneration that were under attack by the state and some adherents of world religions" (p.xxvi). Although Kartomi notes that she collected data on commercial popular music and dance during her periods of fieldwork, she explains in her preface that she was unable to deal with popular Sumatran music in this volume, acknowledging that the commercial and popular arts of Sumatra are subjects that deserve to be covered in a separate study. Since the publication of *Musical Journeys in Sumatra* in 2012, Kartomi has continued her research on and advocacy for traditional Indonesian performing arts, collaborating with her daughter, ethnomusicologist Karen Kartomi Thomas, as well as several colleagues from the fields of ethnomusicology, linguistics, and anthropology on the documentation and preservation of the performance traditions of Kepri, in the Riau Archipelago.

Many of the fourteen chapters of *Musical Journeys in Sumatra* have been previously published, the first in 1972. Chapter 1: "Sumatra's Performing Arts, Groups, and Subgroups" provides readers with an overview of Sumatra's history and musical traditions. Kartomi

notes that nine major themes are interwoven throughout her text including identity, rituals, and ceremonies, religion, the impact of foreign contact on the performing arts, musical instruments and pitch variability, the relationship between music and dance, social class, gender, and arts education. While not all of these themes are addressed in each of the chapters, they are summarized in her final Chapter 14: "Connections Across Sumatra" which adds to these themes an analysis of myths relating to music and dance throughout Sumatra.

The remainder of the book is divided into four parts, corresponding to four regions of Sumatra and covering folk performances from six out of ten of the island's provinces. Part I, (Chapters 2-6) investigates the musical traditions found in West Sumatra and Riau, Part II, (Chapters 7-9) covers the region of South Sumatra and Bangka, Part III, (Chapters 10-11) focuses on North Sumatra, while Part IV, (Chapters 12-13) examines two traditions in Aceh. Unlike many contemporary authors that publish work on embodiment and performance, Kartmoi does not spend much time developing or elaborating upon complex theoretical models or engaging in extensive self-reflexive rumination. This choice of style leads Ellen Koskoff to write that, "*Musical Journeys in Sumatra* reads somewhat like a book written perhaps fifty years ago, long before anthropology's crisis of representation, or ethnomusicology's critical examinations of shifting Self/Other perspectives during fieldwork. Contemporary postmodern readers might see the book as too data-driven, too descriptive, not positioned within any contemporary theoretical framework; as not acknowledging or questioning any underlying assumptions; as not analytic" (2013:886).

While some may view Kartomi's style as old fashioned, her courage to devote her text to portrayals of the performance forms as she encounters them, instead of manipulating her data to conform to fashionable theories is refreshing in a time when many prize style over substance in ethnographic writing. Indeed, Kartomi's *Musical Journeys in Sumatra* reads like a classic ethnography, full of richly contextualized descriptions of her observations of Sumatran music and dance performances. Kartomi begins each of her four sections with a brief overview detailing local history, geography, economy, subsistence patterns, as well as the linguistic, religious, and ethnic diversity of the region. While Kartomi adopts a classic ethnographic style, the people of Kartomi's Sumatra are never presented as existing in an a-historical unchanging ethnographic present. Much of her analysis is pulled from her wealth of long-term fieldwork as she documents how many of the musical genres, traditions, and practices that she observed in the 1970s have been compromised by urbanization, development, rural poverty, religious intensification, conversion, and policies related to Indonesian nation building.

Kartomi's work bears witness to the diversity of Sumatran traditional arts during a period of tumultuous social and political change and provides readers with comprehensive view of an incredibly culturally diverse island in a rapidly developing nation. Her descriptive

data, ethnographic detail, illustrations, and musical transcriptions will be invaluable to future scholars of the Sumatran performing arts, and the audio examples, videos, color photographs available on the book's website <http://profiles.arts.monash.edu.au/margaret-kartomi/musical-journeys-in-sumatra-audiovisual-examples> bring her writings about performance to life. Much like the performance forms that she documents, Margaret Kartomi's *Musical Journeys in Sumatra* manages to merge the best of tradition with contemporary production to provide readers with a work that is at once a timeless classic firmly rooted in the ethnographic tradition, yet a nuanced portrayal of the varied routes of the musical journeys that Sumatrans have taken and continue to take as they re-imagine their traditions to meet their needs in a rapidly changing Sumatra.

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