

Title	<Book Reviews>Vladimir Braginsky. The Heritage of Traditional Malay Literature.2004
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が70ページまでしかなく、「K.バリ」も3カ所しか示されていないし、「カダザン人」は1カ所、「サバ」は2カ所しかないなど、欠陥が多く、ほとんど用をなさない。

10. 埒外のことで恐縮だが、日本語表現で気になったところを2, 3挙げたい。「表出」の語が頻出するが、どうも日本語としてしっくりしない。大抵の箇所は「表明」の方がなじむ。「……としてみなす」、支持（忠誠心）「調達」（p.175 など）、「……すべきなのは」、「じきに」（「直ちに」、「間もなく」の意）、言語・芸術・文化を「祭り上げる」（p.113）（「奉戴」もしくは「発揚」の意か）なども適切さを欠くように思われる。

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||| Vladimir Braginsky. *The Heritage of Traditional Malay Literature: A Historical Survey of Genres, Writings, and Literary Views*. Leiden: KITLV Press, 2005, 889p. |||

The publication of Vladimir Braginsky's *The Heritage of Traditional Malay Literature* is a seismic event in Malay literature studies; it may be the single most important text now available on this genre of literature produced anywhere in the world. Braginsky has spent his life translating and interpreting numerous examples of Malay classical texts, and it shows in this volume. The book is more than 850 pages long and on this density alone it screams to be recognized as a landmark of compilation. Yet the volume is also much more than this, as it manages to traverse the centuries and a huge geography of the Malay World lightly and with a nimble touch. This is

not just the work of a master accumulator, but also the many-years-long labor of love of a sensitive intellect. The Malay texts discussed span seven hundred years of time and pass from Aceh to Eastern Indonesia, from the Southeast Asian mainland to southernmost Java. In the end, this book sets a new benchmark for the study of Malay literature, one that is not destined to be surpassed anytime soon. If that sounds definitive, it was meant to be expressed as such.

Braginsky starts off with a useful discussion on the idea of a canon in Malay literature, and how commentaries and the texts themselves act in union to decide what is considered to be foundational to Malay literature, what isn't, and what may be crossing from one category to the next before our very eyes. He gazes over some of the most important early texts of this region, such as the *Sejarah Melayu* (or *Malay Annals*) and the *Hikayat Raja Pasai* (*Annals of the Pasai Kings*), and introduces the earliest worlds of Malay writing to the readers through such classical discourses. From here Braginsky moves onto Sanskrit epics that were phased into Malay literature through the exploits of their heroes, and he allows us to see some of this marriage through particular characters such as the Pandawas, and even through the romances of the Panji tales. He even strays into tales of Middle Eastern origin in this early period as well, discussing the place of Iskandar Zulkarnain ("Alexander the Two-Horned") and the Tale of Muhammad Hanifiyah. The fertilization of Malay literature with ideas, characters and images from a number of sources is laid out in full detail, so that we can see "Malay literature" is in fact a spring with many sources.

From here, Braginsky moves into more theorized territory; he spends a number of pages talking about the notion of the "beautiful," from its origins in Malay literature to "immanent properties" of the concept, to the psychology and perception of beauty in Malay writing, as well as the functions of the notion in classical texts of the region. He is interested in these manifestations across the Hindu-Malay synthesis of

classical texts, and especially in tracing what was borrowed and what was rejected by Malay writers, who faced an increasingly complex series of options in narrating new forms of their own tales. Braginsky seems to have a special affinity for adventure narratives (*hikayat*), which were often romantic and allegorical at the same time. He is also interested in notions of spiritual perfection as expressed through literature, examining this through the Qur'an, the *kitab*, hagiographic *hikayat*, and through Sufi literature. The range of expressing one's self in Malay writing was increasing all of the time. Braginsky keeps up with this deepening of choices by outlining how the morphology of Malay literature undulated and expanded to accommodate more and more forms as the centuries passed.

The only real critique I have of this otherwise excellent volume is the Conclusion. It seems slightly short and schematic at three pages, and when so much ink has been spilled on so many topics elsewhere, I suppose one feels a bit let down not to see a grand summing up here, since the number of people in the world with Braginsky's knowledge about Malay literature can literally be found on the fingers of one hand. Perhaps this was intended, though, in the best European philological tradition: it is the book itself that is the summing up, and the author may well have wished for only those brave enough to really push through its many hundreds of pages to see the full arc of his knowledge on display. I do not know the answer to this riddle, but those wishing for a teaching

primer of a few pages on "What is Malay literature" will have to look elsewhere. There may be poetic justice in this, perhaps, and possibly even the whiff of intent on the part of the author.

Braginsky's range is truly amazing. He is equally at home in discussing the Sufi prose of Aceh in the seventeenth century as he is in outlining the contributions of celebrated figures such as Abd as-Samad of Palembang in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as well as the famed "School of Riau." But one senses that his true heart resides with the poets; those who constructed dozens upon dozens of poems about "the boat" (that most ubiquitous of Malay objects), or about the conversations of birds, and what they might be saying to one another. In his commentary about the *Hikayat Bayan Budiman* (The Tale of the Wise Parrot) one can almost imagine Braginsky smiling as he wrote on this wonderful topic. Malay authors were nothing if not allegorical, and it is difficult not to imagine with pleasure the thought of a number of Malay scribes sitting around a fire and discussing this notion of the "words of birds" with an earnestness that twenty-first century humans will never know. A good reason to read this book, certainly — but only one in a huge compendium of good reasons. This volume will very surely stand the test of time as a singular masterpiece in its field of study. (Eric Tagliacozzo • Cornell University; CSEAS Visiting Research Fellow from August 2007 through January 2008)