

Ronit Ricci, ed. *Exile in Colonial Asia: Kings, Convicts, Commemoration*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2016. 294 pp. ISBN 978-0-8248-5374-7.

The essays in *Exile in Colonial Asia: Kings, Convicts, Commemoration*, edited by Ronit Ricci, are the result of a workshop held at the Australian National University in 2013. They examine the many experiences, practices and outcomes of exile in colonial Asia, spanning a period between the 16th century and the early 20th century, over a vast geographical space. The outstanding feature of this volume is the multiple approaches to the subject of exile – literary, anthropological and historical; textual analysis, archival research and fieldwork – which makes it an engaging read.

The breadth and variety represented in this volume may pose a dilemma for readers wondering where and how to start. The opening chapter by Clare Anderson, “A Global History of Exile in Asia, c. 1700-1900,” is an important overview of exile as practised by the British in South Asia, Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean, providing readers with the historical background, the types of exile introduced and continued by the British (banishment and transportation), and a sample of exiles’ responses to their condition in the form of poems and petitions to colonial administrators. Anderson’s chapter and the two following it – on the exile of the last king of Kandy by Robert Aldrich and the exile of the Sikh rebel, Bhai Maharaj Singh by Anand A. Yang – form a “cluster” on exile and banishment from and within South Asia. Readers may choose to read them together, or move on after Anderson’s overview to other chapters.

Another cluster of chapters in the volume looks at exile from and within islands in the Indonesian Archipelago. Two of the chapters that should be read together are Ronit Ricci’s “From Java to Jaffna: Exile and Return in Dutch Asia in the Eighteenth Century” and Sri Margana’s “Caught between Empires: *Babad Mangkudiningratan* and the Exile of Sultan Hamengkubuwana II of Yogyakarta, 1813-1826.” Both examine narratives of royal exiles from Javanese kingdoms narrated in the *babad* (historical chronicles) produced during the Dutch East India Company’s (V.O.C) increased incursion into Java and the subsequent decades of Dutch (and briefly, British) conquest. Through Ricci’s and Sri Margana’s chapters, readers will be able to trace the exilic experience of the Yogyakarta royal family over three generations, and over diverse locations: Jaffna (in present-day Sri Lanka), Batavia (present-day Jakarta), Penang (a British Straits Settlement) and Ambon (in Maluku, eastern Indonesia). Ambon and the adjacent islands also figure significantly in the history of Dutch conquest and use of exile as a colonising tool in eastern Indonesia, as elaborated by Timo Kaartinen in “Exile, Colonial Space, and Deterritorialized People in Eastern Indonesian History.” Meanwhile, Jean Gelman Taylor examines archival records of the belongings of

slaves from the Indonesian Archipelago who were transported to the Cape of Good Hope on the tip of South Africa in the eighteenth century.

The other chapters in this volume feature more routes and networks of exile created by British and French colonisation in various territories in Africa, Australia, the Pacific Islands and South America. These can be read individually, according to the reader's distinct interest, and in no particular sequence. The final chapter by Penny Edwards is worth singling out for its detailing of the repeated and successful efforts of the Burmese prince, Prince Myngoon, to avoid exile in British and French territories as revealed in various archival records.

With these myriad narratives and approaches to colonial exile, this volume presents original and thought-provoking studies of a practice that had reconfigured and shaped Asia. The chapters, written by experts in history, culture and literary studies, expand the way we view Asia in the colonial period. Exile, while deployed by European colonisers to neutralise its opponents and rivals, often ended up putting in place links and networks across the continent as well as the Indian Ocean. Consistently reiterated by the contributors throughout this volume is, as Lorraine Paterson puts it, "the idea that flow and connection have long been elements of empire, but in ways that are uneven, often unpredictable, and relatively underexamined" (Paterson 240). Instead of limiting the movement, influence and memory of kings and rebels over their people, exile strengthened them by creating transregional cultural and ideological networks. Most notable are the case of Bhai Maharaj Singh as described by Anand A. Yang, and Sultan Hamengkubuwana II of Yogyakarta, whose exile and return are narrated in Sri Margana's chapter. These networks are some of "the unintended consequences of transportation" (Anderson 21), and include religious networks and reconfigured familial and kinship ties, in Ricci and Kaartinen's chapters respectively.

While exiled royal figures feature in several chapters in this volume, exiles from other social strata are also addressed. Being of lower social strata, the stories of slaves and convicts were not recorded in much detail in official records or in literary texts. However, Jean Gelman Taylor reveals how inventories of Indonesian slaves and former slaves' belongings kept in the Cape's Orphan Chamber can be rich repositories of their history. Using these inventories and other documents such as wills, Taylor reconstructs the lives of slaves and freed slaves in the Cape, showing how they adapted to life in a foreign land. Naming practices, marriage and items on the inventories indicate their social mobility and the construction of new identities. Similarly, Carol Liston and Lorraine Paterson's chapters feature exiles from non-elite backgrounds. It is worth noting how many of them adapted better to their conditions than their elite counterparts.

As a researcher of literature, my interest was piqued by Ronit Ricci and Sri Margana's studies of representations of exile in selected Javanese *babad*. Their readings of the selected *babad* explore the range of human emotions evoked by

the distressful experience of exile as well as the transformative effect that exile had on members of Javanese royalty. These chapters remind us how the study of classical Javanese and Malay literature is significant, by providing illuminating insight about social, cultural, political, religious and legal aspects of life in the region before and after European colonisation (see for example, Ruzy Suliza Hashim's *Out of the Shadows: Women in Malay Court Narratives* [2003] and Mulaika Hijjas' *Victorious Wives: The Disguised Heroine in 19th-Century Malay Syair* [2011]).

Collectively, the essays in this volume present colonial Asia as a region connected with the rest of the world through exilic routes and networks inadvertently created by colonial practices of banishment, imprisonment and transportation. Areas in South Asia, Southeast Asia, southern Africa and Australia were linked by the mobility of people, ideas, religions and texts across colonial borders. Some of the unforeseen after-effects of exile have shaped the present in surprising ways. The fate of Bhai Maharaj Singh, who was exiled to Singapore (1850-1856), is a case in point: his tomb in Singapore is now a shrine visited by Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims who believe that he was a saint (Yang 88). Other exiles managed to sublimate the pain of separation and distance from kin and homeland by serving others (as in the case of Pangeran Mangkudiningrat, who became a healer during his final exile in Ambon), by reconfiguring kinship ties into more expansive networks (the Bandanese, after the destruction of their homes and trade network by the Dutch) or by establishing new lives and new identities (as in the case of Indonesian slaves in the Cape and British convicts in Australia).

Exile in Colonial Asia points the way towards more creative and multidisciplinary projects of revisiting history, and towards future work on aspects of colonial exile still hidden in records, personal belongings, manuscripts, letters, diaries or petitions, waiting to be scrutinised. What were women's experiences of exile like, for instance? Or how were the lives of lower-caste exiles transformed by banishment to foreign places? These and many other projects will hopefully be the offshoots of this illuminating volume.

Works Cited

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Siti Nuraishah Ahmad
International Islamic University Malaysia
Email: aishah@iiu.edu.my