

The mythic separation of the *derato* and the Dusun was followed by their linguistic estrangement, so that today, laymen must seek the assistance of a priestly mediator versed in "spirit language" (*tuntut derato*) in order to communicate with the spirits. Thirty years ago the *belian* were called upon to treat all kinds of ailments. Today, most patients first consult a medical practitioner, and only if the latter fails, or improvement is slow, do the Dusun turn to *belian* for help (106).

The term *temarok* applies to all rituals in which one or more *belian* perform in priestly attire. The more elaborate the ritual, the more *belian* and musicians take part. As rituals, the *temarok* were, in the past, Kershaw argues, the principal arena in which the worldview of the Dusun was made visible and "where divine spirits and humans could interact" (123). Although the lay audience was excluded from direct contact with divine spirits, the laity acted as hosts and "walk-on actors." Today, as these rituals become less intelligible to younger Dusun, audiences become passive spectators, with the result, Kershaw tells us, that the *temarok* "cease to inspire the group spiritually and guide them morally" (123). They become "merely... a social get-together."

Formerly, the eclecticism of Muslims in the Tutong District meant that their Tutong and Kedayan neighbors "saw no harm in attending Dusun feasts and rituals" (191). But with an intensification of Islamic proselytization, the situation, Kershaw tells us, has changed. Today, there appears to be no place in Brunei for a Dusun priesthood on the periphery of Islam. In contrast to African examples, where mediumistic priesthods coexist with Islam, the Dusun are not a majority group subject to the penetration of Islam, but, rather, a small non-Muslim minority undergoing urbanization, and increasingly "subject to pressures to conform to the religion of the dominant group on terms laid down by its religious establishment" (198).

Under these circumstances, it seems unlikely that Dusun religion will continue much beyond the present generation. Even the *belian*, Kershaw reports, talk of the increasing powerlessness of the spirits. In the face of this seemingly imminent disappearance, we are especially indebted to the author, and to the Borneo Research Council, for providing us with this readable, detailed, and closely observed record of Brunei Dusun religion and traditional worldview.

There is much here that is certain to interest those concerned with Southeast Asian religion and relations between Islam and indigenous religious minorities. The book is well illustrated with 45 black-and-white photos, and includes a glossary of Dusun words and a short list of *belian* vocabulary (with both ordinary Dusun and English glosses).

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LIM, P PUI HUEN, JAMES H. MORRISON, KWA CHONG GUAN, Editors. *Oral History in Southeast Asia: Theory and Method*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1998. xii + 172 pages. Hardcover S\$69.90/US\$44.90; ISBN 981-3055-77-4.

*Oral History in Southeast Asia* is a collection of papers originally presented at a workshop organized by the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore in 1990. While the material is somewhat dated (there is no mention of the effects of new technologies such as the Internet and video on the process of oral history collection), it is nonetheless a unique contribution to the literature on oral history in Southeast Asia. Despite a noticeable absence of

Indonesian material, the volume's focus on Southeast Asia, primarily Malaysia and Singapore, and the fact that nearly all of the chapters are contributions by Asian sociologists, anthropologists, and historians make it particularly valuable. The volume compensates for its weakness on theory in its insightful and unusual methodological chapters.

In general, the contributors seem to take a more positivist approach to oral history than one might find in contemporaneous anthropological and sociological work. James Morrison's otherwise excellent introductory article only mentions in passing the complex reflexive nature of historical discourse, and in a theoretical chapter, Hong Lysa limits herself to a brief critique of positivist approaches.

The volume shines in its methodological sections, identifying and exploring methodological problems that the authors have found to be particularly acute in a Southeast Asian context, such as problems of social status and hierarchy, gender bias, a lack of a tradition of independent scholarship, and an expectation that scholars will promote national interests (as identified by Hong Lysa).

The volume pays special attention to the collection of "elite" oral histories. Among these are the life histories and biographies of the Asian upper class, the business and political elite of Singapore (e.g., Lim How Seng), former Thai Prime Minister M. R. Seni Pramoj (Yos Santasombat), and Tan Sri Fatimah Hashim, the first woman Cabinet member in Malaysia (Azizah Mokhzani). The volume lays out and addresses difficulties that an oral historian might encounter when engaging "elite" Asians, ranging from issues of gender and social status to practical concerns of scheduling and creating the appropriate interviewing atmosphere. Unfortunately, the "elite" histories examined here often seem to deteriorate into a kind of uncritical praise that borderline on "hagiography," an issue which is mentioned numerous times but never sufficiently addressed. It would have been interesting to read more about how the politicization of history can impact the oral historian's ability to collect accurate information and write about political elites.

While the volume's strength is in its methodological chapters, the substance of the oral histories nicely illustrates the diversity of cultural experience in Southeast Asia. One of the most interesting pieces is Chinese-Malaysian anthropologist Lai Ah Eng's report on doctoral research in a multi-ethnic public housing complex in Singapore. This insightful chapter explores the effects of ethnicity on the fieldwork process. Lai Ah Eng claims that "the single most important factor affecting fieldwork may be ethnicity and the ethnic status of the observer and the observed" (102).

Lastly, the volume includes two very useful appendices: (a) a bibliography of biographies of Malaysian and Singaporean Chinese, and (b) a directory of oral history institutions in Southeast Asia complete with addresses and telephone numbers. Overall, this collection of the work of Southeast Asian scholars constitutes an important milestone in the developing field of oral history in Southeast Asia.

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## INDIA

HILTEBEITEL, ALF. *Rethinking the Mahābhārata: A Reader's Guide to the Education of the Dharma King*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2001. x + 365 pages. Bibliography, index. Paper US\$25.00/£16.00; ISBN 0-226-34054-6. Hardcover ISBN 0-226-34053-8.

Although Hildebeitel originally projected that this second volume in his series on the oral and