

studies departments have turned their interest to local wisdom (*kearifan local*), which focuses on local traditions of practising Islam. Abbas describes the first and second acts of this metaphorical play, but without the third act, the final chapter is not as satisfying.

Despite these shortcomings, the book is well written and will be of primary interest to those focused on the international debates about the nature of scholarship on Islam. It is a book for specialists, but not narrowly Indonesia specialists, as it will also appeal to scholars across the Muslim world. I cannot recommend it as a reading for undergraduates and most graduate students unless they are interested in the specific issues raised in the book.

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*Wang Gungwu and Malaysia*. Edited by Danny Wong Tze Ken and Lee Kam Hing. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: University of Malaya Press, 2021. xxxii+338 pp.

The sixteen chapters in this edited volume by Danny Wong and Lee Kam Hing successfully capture a snippet of the formidable depth, breadth and impact of Professor Wang Gungwu's long and distinguished career in and beyond academia. Written primarily through the lens of Malaysian studies, *Wang Gungwu and Malaysia* is well-organized and engaging, and for any historian or scholar of Southeast Asian and Asian studies, an inspiring read. All the essay contributors are contemporaries, colleagues or former students of Wang. Hence, each essay provides a unique perspective of the person himself and of various aspects of his scholarship, as well as a much-needed glimpse into the possibilities arising from engaging with his scholarship. The essays are expertly tied together by the editors' introduction. Wang's academic career and relevant aspects

of his personal history are warmly outlined, giving readers a strong foundation to properly appreciate the insights provided in sixteen incisive and rich chapters.

The first four chapters offer glimpses of Wang from the perspectives of an undergraduate student, a graduate student and university colleagues. Arranged chronologically, the chapters situate Wang as a man and scholar caught up in various significant moments in Malaysian and world history, such as war and occupation, decolonization, and nationalism and nation-building. The last point is elaborated in rich detail, describing how he supported the young nation of Malaya, and later Malaysia, through the development of the history and Chinese studies departments at the University of Malaya from the early 1960s. Nation-building is often thought of and discussed conceptually from the perspective of leaders or broad policy. The rich insights and memories offered by Khasnor Johan, Lim Teck Ghee, Stephen Leong and Anthony Reid in their chapters allow us to delve deeper into and appreciate the actual building of one particular structure of a nation; i.e., tertiary education.

The next set of chapters—chapters 5 to 13—focus squarely on the topics that have defined and continue to define Wang’s scholarship. These topics can be broadly categorized as the dynamics between nation-building and politics, ethnicity—the Chinese community in Malaysia in particular, and the overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia in general—and maritime and transnational connections. What catches the eye is the interplay between personal experiences and scholarship (of both Wang and the authors) that is the basis of several chapters. That interplay is reflected in Lee Kam Hing’s masterful interweaving of Wang’s personal journey as a scholar with the development of Malayan/Malaysian nationalism, Barbara Andaya’s connections (via her dissertation and supervisor) to the state of Perak and its capital city, Ipoh (which Wang calls his “hometown”), and Abu Talib Ahmad’s reference to Wang’s wartime experiences as a basis to outline the utility of the Tengku Besar Pahang records to understand Pahang’s history during the Japanese occupation. Wang’s wide-ranging influence can be discerned in the essays by Leonard Andaya, Loh Wei Ling

and Jeyamalar Kathirithamby-Wells, all of whom connect Wang's 1958 monograph, *The Nanhai Trade: A Study of the Early History of Chinese Trade in the South China Sea*, to their respective research interests in the Malay world, maritime trade, and the environment. Similarly, the essays by Mavis Puthucheary, Tan Chee Beng, and Danny Wong engage Wang's thoughts and scholarship on Malayan nationalism, the dynamics between nation-building and ethnicity, and the evolution of community identity (Hakka) within a multiracial Malaysian society.

The volume ends with three chapters that demonstrate the interdisciplinarity of Wang's scholarship and his reach and influence beyond academia. Anthony Milner presents Wang's work as an "ideal starting point" (p. 329) on which to build Amitav Acharya's vision of an interdisciplinary approach that goes beyond "national interest and distribution of power" to include "other sources of agency, including culture, ideas and norms" (p. 328). In his essay, Peter Chang presents Wang as a member of a "pioneering class of bridge-building *junzi*" (roughly translates to gentleman or a noble-spirited individual) (p. 307), mainly to help explain China to the world and vice versa. Wang's influence goes beyond that of a simple bridge-builder, as Philip Koh's essay suggests. Comparing a historian's and a judge's approaches to evidence and truth, Koh's thought-provoking essay not only pays tribute to Wang's historical method but also encourages an appreciation of Wang as more than a historian and the embracing of his holistic approach to understanding the world around us.

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### **REFERENCE**

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