

BOOK REVIEWS

The Making of a Bureaucratic Elite: The Colonial Transformation of the Javanese Priyayi. By HEATHER SUTHERLAND. Asian Studies Association of Australia, Southeast Asia Publications Series, no. 2. Singapore: Heinemann 1979. Pp. xx, 182, Preface, Map of Administrative Divisions in Java, 1937, List of Illustrations, List of Abbreviations, Glossary, Bibliography, Index. Limp.

This book is the second in a series launched by the Asian Studies Association of Australia. It is important and its publication has given much credit to those who made possible its seeing the light of day.

The book appears to cater both to the general as well as to the specialist readers. For the former, Sutherland has surgically removed the elaborate panoply of footnotes normally characteristic of works originally submitted for doctoral degrees. Retaining only the most essential ones, Sutherland has achieved a balance (so often missing from many works) between getting her points across to her readers and giving them a chance to check on her most important sources. The result is a book that is readable and interesting. Also, the general reader will be able to get a glimpse of the world of the Javanese *priyayi*. In particular, Chapter 2 on the *priyayi* life style and social setting gives an absorbing description of the composition of the *priyayi* world. Whoever thinks that history is dull should refer to pages 20 – 21 in this chapter. These pages are an example of how history should be written. Sometimes, though, one would wish that Sutherland gives more explanation to important terms that would be less familiar to the general reader. An example is the mention of “social revolutions” on page 155. What are these?

To the specialist readers, the book is also not without its usefulness, although at first glance this may not be so apparent. For example, a reader may justifiably ask: in what way is this book breaking new ground? Has it penetrated beyond the perimeters set by B.J.O. Schrieke and Soemarsaid Moertono, two authorities whose researches were definitely influential in studies of the Javanese *priyayi*? To this it can be said that Schrieke did not have access to the primary sources available to Sutherland, and Moertono concentrated on the Central Javanese *priyayi*, while Sutherland ranged over the *priyayi* in other parts of Java (page ix).

One significant contribution of this book is to redress the image that the present-day Javanese political life is reverting to patterns found in the pre-Dutch part. There is a strong belief that to understand the nature of the current Javanese-centred administration, one has to study the pre-colonial Javanese government. This interesting proposition is rooted in the conviction that the Dutch colonial period was an aberration, an interruption in the conti-

nunity of Javanese history. Sutherland showed that this idea was too simple. In her view, many of the techniques in modern political behaviour had their roots also in the Dutch colonial period (pp. 160 – 61). This in itself is a ringing call not to neglect the importance of Indonesia's colonial past in moulding its present.

The book is not without its deficiencies, although these will not detract from the value of the work as a whole. One would wish for more light to be thrown on the attitudes of the nationalist leaders towards the *priyayi*. This would be important because on many occasions (e.g., during the Section B affair and the 1926/27 communist rebellion), the *priyayi* bore part of the brunt of nationalist opposition towards the Dutch. There is no extended discussion on the origins and meanings of *priyayi* titles like Raden and Adjeng. (The glossary is not of much help in this respect.) One would also wish for more description on the feudal relations between *priyayi* and the people.

The book remains a significant piece of work and should be a part of any respectable collection of materials on Indonesia.

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