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Review of ‘Patterned Splendour: Textiles Presented on Javanese Metal and Stone Sculptures Eighth to the Fifteenth Century’, by Lesley S. Pullen

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The monograph under review, based on a doctoral thesis submitted to SOAS in 2017, investigates the detailed patterns that appear on a body of free-standing figurative sculptures from Java and Sumatra dating from the eighth to the fifteenth century. It documents the “local response to successive arrivals of textiles via trade” (p. 18), and seeks to address some unanswered questions, namely what the inspirations behind the textile patterns were, and where they originated from. The sculptural body examined in the book consists in 73 stone and metal statues, both well-known or neglected, selected on account of their particular significance, located at numerous locations both within Indonesia and across the world.

Spearheaded by a foreword by John Miksic, the volume is divided into six chapters plus an epilogue, appendices, and glossaries, and enriched by 177 full-colour illustrations and five maps. The opening chapter discusses the historical and geographical background, including trade relations, various religious and political aspects, such as the power and patronage of the ruling elites. Chapter two analyzes Javanese textiles by addressing references in literary sources and comparing them with present-day fabrics alongside the stone examples. Chapter three presents a select group of metal and stone statues from Central and East Java from the eighth to the eleventh century. Chapter four (probably the most interesting and original chapter of the book) covers the Kaḍiri and Siṅhasāri periods from the eleventh to the thirteenth century, stressing the cosmopolitan outlook of Siṅhasāri and its translocal political, commercial, and religious contacts. Chapter five focuses on Majapahit (with particular attention being devoted to “deified statues”) from the mid-fourteenth to the early fifteenth century. Chapter six concludes the volume with a round-up of the corpus and advances some theories to account for the variety of textiles represented on the statues, namely the interplay between international trade and local response. The Epilogue contains a map illustrating the current locations of the statues and giving details about their acquisition histories.

The author’s approach, i.e. to compare textile patterns depicted on statues with examples from both within Java and Sumatra as well as overseas—most notably the Indo-Persian region, Central Asia, and China—, is an useful addition to the limited set of tools available to scholars to reconstruct the history, provenance, and social context of the artefacts. In the absence of data on artists, patrons, time and place of manufacture, or even findspots, the classification and comparison of textile pattern may be proposed as a realistic grouping of icons (p. 65). Indeed, this original vantage point could also help us to advance more general considerations about the socio-political and economic setting of the period to which the statues are ascribed, and even to corroborate hypotheses about certain historical trends. For instance, the much wider variety of patterns attested during the Siṅhasāri period compared to the Central Javanese period suggests a flourishing of trade and increase in wealth, as well as influences from overseas, most notably from the Indo-Persian region as well as the Mongol empire (pp. 37–38). A significant find is that in the Central Javanese period, a large number of Javanese bronzes are decorated with textile patterns compared to

the relatively few Indian ones. This possibly highlights the significance and wide availability of fabrics in Java.

One of the strong points of the volume is the author's detailed analysis of the textile patterns and general iconographical features of the statues. Being no expert of textiles, I must leave a more informed assessment of such analyses to the specialists in that field; still, the comparisons suggested by the author seem sound, even though the highly mobile and resilient character of textiles and their exchange and production, as well as the popularity of some key motifs and patterns across Eurasia through the centuries, make it difficult to identify exact prototypes and elaborate precise lines of historical and geographical filiation. Despite these difficulties, and also in order to achieve a greater historical precision and depth, it seems to me that the comparative discussion and photographic documentation of some relevant non-Southeast Asian material could have been developed more in detail. Witness, for instance, the similarities between the patterns depicted of a group of Central Javanese statues with Indian block-print textiles as depicted in Jain manuscripts of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, which must have been in existence long before that period (p. 64); the "textile patterns seen on the Central Javanese metal statues [...]" which "inspired eleventh to twelfth century Tibetan textile patterns, as is evident on bronze statues and depicted on Tibetan manuscript paintings" (p. 11; no visual examples provided); the Central and early East Javanese patterns reflected in eleventh and twelfth century statues and paintings from Kashmir and Tibet (which are especially interesting since the evidence from the archipelago seems to be earlier, suggesting the possibility of Javanese influence: cf. note 5, p. 121); or the similarity between pearl-chain jewellery on Tibetan paintings, including a Vajravārāhī from Western Xia (Khara-Khoto) of the late twelfth to thirteenth century, and early Siṅhasāri sculpture, for instance the Candi Singosari Prajñāpāramitā (p. 237). Furthermore, the author does not present an intra-archipelagic comparative analysis of textile patterns beyond Java and Sumatra, for instance with the traditions of Eastern Indonesia. She does not discuss the historiography and state-of-the-art of the field of Indonesian textiles that flourished after the 1990s either. In this respect, I find it rather surprising not to find any references to a recent PhD thesis by Sardjono (2017)¹ dealing with a similar topic, and to an older PhD thesis by Totton.²

Some hypotheses advanced by Pullen on the basis of her comparisons are bold and intriguing, and yet not unsound: see, for instance, the suggestion that the *balah kacang* pattern, which has disappeared from the textile tradition of Java but is nowadays still woven in the Minangkabau region of West Sumatra, might have been brought from Java to Sumatra by Ādityavarman in the fourteenth century (p. 213, n. 2; cf. 137–139). Further, her idea of a "transition style" between the end of the Siṅhasāri period and the beginning of Majapahit is interesting, but not devoid of problems due to the stylistic inhomogeneities and the relatively small number of icons belonging to this period, which makes classification and dating especially difficult. Equally debatable is the

1. Sandra Suryani Sardjono, *Tracing Patterns of Textiles in Ancient Java (8th–15th Century)*, PhD Thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 2017.

2. Totton, M.-L., *Weaving flesh and blood into sacred architecture: Ornamental stories of Candi Loro Jonggrang*, PhD Thesis, University of Michigan, 2002.

argument for regarding a pair of Pārvatī and Śiva as being commissioned as part of the courtly arts produced during the Śrīvijaya period in Sumatra (ca. eighth century) and being imported to Java (as opposed to a ninth century dating and Javanese provenance) on account of the similarity of the textile pattern with a modern one from Lampung (p. 114); given the prevalence of Buddhism at the royal courts of Sumatra, from which a very small number of Hindu icons has survived, it seems more reasonable to suppose that the pattern might have been imported from Java but only survived in Sumatra, as in the case of the aforementioned *balah kacang* pattern.

Another strong point of the volume is the rich photographic evidence that it presents, enhanced by detailed drawings depicting the patterns and conveniently represented in comparative diagrams at the end of each of the three central chapters. This evidence is all the more valuable since it documents statues that are endangered by erosion, theft, etc., or that are difficult if not impossible to access due to the strict accession and photographing policies applied by many institutions in Indonesia and overseas.

In the remainder of this review, I would like to focus on some problematic aspects of Pullen's work. In general, the author's prose often strikes me as unclear, and at times incoherent, with topics and/or sentences being arranged without following a strictly logical order. Parts of the conclusion would rather belong to the introduction; see also the discussion of *Suvarṇadvīpa*, the monsoons, and trans-Asian trade at the end of Chapter five (pp. 247–248), which could have been placed at the beginning of the book. Furthermore, there are several repetitions, especially when it comes to the discussion (flatly based on earlier scholarship) of the esoteric practices of Kṛtanagara, the (supposedly) "syncretic" Śiva-Buddha religion of East Java, and the adoption of Indian ideas (Indianization), all of which could have been subsumed under a single section in the introductory chapters. Even in such case where repetitions are unavoidable, cross-referencing would have been useful, especially because some discussions are not immediately intelligible without knowing details that are provided elsewhere in the book—cf., for instance, the reference to "the Dikpāla Nairṛti" and "the Brahmā" on p. 39, whose whereabouts are not mentioned, and which are described only on p. 194 as part of the Candi Singosari icons; or the detailed discussion of the *balah kacang* pattern on four statues of Candi Jago on pp. 137–139, which could have been cross-referenced in the description of the Jago icons on p. 178.

While the volume is handsomely typeset and printed, and lavishly illustrated, some editorial aspects leave much to be desired. Typos, mistakes, and inconsistencies are virtually unavoidable in any book, and yet this volume is marred by an unusually high quantity of them. Such mistakes and inconsistencies encompass grammatical errors and poorly constructed sentences (including logical inconsistencies and *non sequiturs*),³ orthographical mistakes/incorrect transliterations of Sanskrit and Old

3. [1] "Described as the peaceful coexistence of Buddhism and Śaivism, different paths were taken; however, the same peak was reached in the end, so avoiding the term *syncretism*" (p. 7): poorly constructed sentence; [2] "perhaps as an indigenous ..." instead of "perhaps an indigenous ..." (p. 9); [2] "but that Indonesia did not derive ..." instead of "but Indonesia did not derive ..." (p. 9); [3] "the ancient Javanese literature *kalangwan*, such as *kidung* and *kakawin* poems" (p. 32): instead of "literature *kalangwan*", read "belletristic literature"; [4] "The figures associated with the Amoghapāśa, however, have all been allocated positions on the upper levels of Candi Jago, so this information helps us

Javanese terms,⁴ incorrect or imprecise bibliographical references⁵ and, perhaps more egregiously, unacknowledged paraphrases of secondary sources.⁶ There are also a

to determine the original location for Mañjuśrī Arapaçana as he is a man with an unusual manner of tying his hair” (p. 141): read: “... as a man...” (the clause seems irrelevant to the point made in the sentence); [5] “control of the Singhasāri” should be either “... control of Siñhasāri” or “control of the Siñhasāri Kingdom” (p. 207); etc.

4. Kṛtanāgara > Kṛtanagara (throughout the book); Estoteric > Esoteric (p. 7); Navagraha/ Nawagrah [?] (p. 59); Pavarti > Parvati/Pārvaṭī (map 3, p. 62); Katakaamudrā > Kaçakamudrā (pp. 93, 299); Mahapratīśara (p. 98), Mahapratīśarā (p. 120) > Mahāpratisarā; Ronggoworsito > Ronggowarsito (p. 111); Aṣṭasāharsrikā > Aṣṭasāhasrikā (p. 119); Kozok and reign > Kozok and Rijn (p. 141); Lorong Jongorang > Loro Jonggrang (p. 145); Kertarājasa > Kertarājasa/Kṛtarājasa (p. 182); Gañcakra > Gañacakra (p. 211); Mūla-mulurung > Mūla-malurung (p. 215); Arci > Acri (p. 247); Korawacrama Kakwin > Korawāśrama Kakawin (p. 270); etc.

5. [1] “As Andrea Acri has stated, the [which ones?] Newar artists were situated at Caṇḍi Jago” (p. 207): the relevant ‘statement’ in Acri 2016: 21 (not mentioned in the volume’s bibliography) actually refers to previous scholarship by O’Brien, Schoterman, Lunsingh Scheurleer, Lokesh Chandra, etc. [2] “Lunsingh Scheurleer has suggested that a skull is a ‘tantric attribute’, and that Gaṇeśa was integrated into Javanese esoteric practices at the time of King Kṛtanāgara” (p. 16): that interpretation goes back to Pott, while Lunsingh Scheurleer has actually stressed the influence of indigenous elements (rather than, or besides, Tantra) on Siñhasāri statuary: cf. p. 173, where Pullen refers to “Juni 1998 pp. 15–16” (not in bibliography, and which is apparently a mistake for Lunsingh Scheurleer 1998a) as the source of the association between skulls and headhunting, ancestors, fertility etc. Compare Lunsingh Scheurleer 1998b in the volume’s bibliography (which should rather be Lunsingh Scheurleer 2000, on the basis of the actual year of publication); [3] “Old Javanese dictionary translated [?] by Petrus Zoetmulder in 1972” (p. 174): the actual publication year is 1982; [4] Pullen refers to a lecture delivered by Bautze-Picron at SOAS in 2018 as the source for the identification of the colossal Padang Roco statue as a Mahākāla rather than a Bhairava (p. 177), but the same identification was already advanced by the same scholar in a 2014 publication, which is listed in the bibliography as Bautze-Picron 2014b; [5] “Hadi Sidomulyo ‘describes irrefutable evidence for a major shift in the religious orientation of the royal line of East Java sometime after 1255 (Sidomulyo 2010, p. 22)’” (p. 164): the clause from “irrefutable” to “1255” is actually from Hunter 2007: 38, cited in Hadi Sidomulyo 2010, p. 98 (the correct page numbers in the bibliographical entry Sidomulyo 2010 are not 1–62 but 77–138); [6] “Acri has argued ‘for treating Indonesia and India as an integral unit well into the ninth century’ and has suggested that Borobudur Buddhism had an influence on India” (note 5 p. 121): the bibliographical reference to Acri is not given by Pullen (Acri 2016: 11), and I cannot be attributed the paternity of the arguments quoted in the above clause, as I was actually citing Woodward (2004: 353; Woodward, H., “Review article: Esoteric Buddhism in Southeast Asia in the Light of Recent Scholarship,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 35/2, pp. 329–354); [8] correct “Fontein 1990, p. 50; 1998, p. 8” to “Fontein 1990, p. 50; Lunsingh Scheurleer 1998a, p. 8”; “(Brown, pp. 42–44)” to “(Brown 1999, pp. 42–44)” (p. 105); “Lunsingh Scheurleer 1998: 4–5” to “Lunsingh Scheurleer 1998a: 4–5” (p. 164); “Krom 1926b” to “Krom 1926” (p. 12); “Tarling 1992, pp. 225–26” to “Hall 1992, pp. 225–26” (Hall’s chapter in Tarling’s *Cambridge History of Southeast Asia*) (p. 131); “O’Brien and Mpu 2008” (listed in the bibliography as “O’Brien, K., and T. Mpu”) to “O’Brien and Mpu Tantular 2008” (p. 164).

6. The examples provided here concern my own work (Acri 2016, not included in the

number of problematic or factually wrong statements about various aspects of the literary, cultural, and religious history of the premodern Indonesian Archipelago, which it seems useful to rectify here. I offer a selection of significant examples below.

Unclear, imprecise, inconsistent, or otherwise problematic statements:

[1] “The icons produced in these now Indianized kingdoms may have been Indian in appearance as a direct consequence of Indian commercial exploitation. The content, however, was entirely local, as the Indonesians decided what to appropriate from India” (p. 3): I am unable to grasp the meaning of the word “content”, as opposed to “appearance,” referred to a (Hindu or Buddhist) statue.

[2] “The idea of the practice of Buddhism in the context of East Java is particularly misleading—it might be better to term it Esoteric [*sic*] Buddhism; however, esoteric practice is as much Śaivite as it is Buddhist. The term Esoteric Buddhism is therefore perhaps a better way of describing this merging or cohesion of Hinduism and Buddhism. [Why would it be so?] [...] But the evidence of Esoteric Buddhism in the Indonesian Archipelago is also profoundly syncretic, containing both Hindu and Buddhist elements whose separate identity was further offset by the local Javanese and Balinese genius”—contrast the statement on p. 7: “Another definition, that of syncretism, the ‘fusion’ of elements or beliefs, might be proposed. But it would appear that Śaivism and Buddhism did not undergo merger or synthesis of religious doctrine or praxis but rather they maintained their independence as two discrete systems with their separate religious structures (Acri 2015, p. 269)” (pp. 7–9).

[3] A similar contradictory statement is found on p. 164 where, having quoted the sentence “in terms of religious praxis we are not looking at a merger of religious establishments [...]” (Hunter 2007, p. 33),⁷ in the sentence following thereupon the author states: “this merger of religious establishments was evident in the period.”

volume’s bibliography): [1] “There appeared to be a mobile network of human agents who carried texts and icons through which Esoteric Buddhist discourses and practices spread far across Asia and into Sumatra and Java” (p. 6)—compare Acri 2016, p. 1: “mobile networks of human agents [...] and artefacts (‘Icons’) through which Esoteric Buddhist discourses and practices spread far and wide across Asia.” [2] “Esoteric Buddhism appears to have shared significant common elements with Tantric Śaivism to such an extent that the two religions participated in the interdependence of discourse in such [*sic*] disparate domains [which domains?], evident in both ritual and iconography (pp. 6–7)—compare the first sentence with the following Acri 2016, p. 4: “Esoteric Buddhism shared significant common elements with Tantric Śaivism, to the extent that the two religions participated in an interdependence of discourse in such disparate domains as philosophy, soteriology, ritual, and iconography.” [3] “The temples at Pagan from the eleventh and twelfth centuries display Tantric features as a result of relations and marital links between the rulers of Pagan and those of Bengal” (p. 147): compare Acri 2016, p. 20: “The temple of Abeyadana (late 11th century) at Bagan displays Tantric features, arguably as the result of contemporary religious links and marital relations between the rulers of Bagan and those of Paṭṭikerā in Bengal.”

7. Hunter, T.M., “The Body of the King: Reappraising Singhasari Period Syncretism,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 38/1, 2007, pp. 27–53.

[4] "... [in the eleventh century] there was also an increase of Esoteric Buddhism, at which point in time 'classical' Buddhism had virtually disappeared" (p. 12): what is "'classical' Buddhism"?

[5] "The Kālacakra cult appeared to have gained a powerful following during the Singhasāri period" (p. 16): this statement is not necessarily incorrect, yet it is largely unsubstantiated (mainly based on early scholarship by Moens).

[6] "The reliefs [of Borobudur] are based on six Buddhist texts: *Mahakarmavibhanga*, *Jatakas*, *Avadanas*, *Lalitavistara*, *Gandavyuha* and *Bhadracarī*" (p. 29): Jātakas and Avadānas are not texts but rather genres, while the *Bhadracarī* is part of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* (although, admittedly, it achieved the status of an independent text in the course of transmission).

[7] "The *kawung* pattern in the Hindu-Buddhist period is synonymous with Java" (p. 57): does the expression "synonymous with Java" mean that this pattern was especially popular in Hindu-Buddhist Java?

[8] The section on the icons of Central Java Group 1 ("overall repeated textile patterns") starts with the clause "Many examples of this simple pattern exist in Central Java" (p. 65), but the following sentence is about an Avalokiteśvara from Sambas in Kalimantan, which according to Pullen might have been made in Sumatra in the seventh to ninth century, as it displays a "Śrīvijayan style" (cf. p. 121, note 2); contrast the caption of the icon's photograph, reading "probably made in Java" (p. 66; compare the tenth-century Padmapāṇi from Sambas, p. 67).

[9] "Pārvatī of Singosari" (pp. 147–148): this is the "legacy" identification, advanced by earlier scholarship, yet a reference to Lunsingh Scheurleer's (2008)⁸ recent proposal to identify the group as an Ardhanarīśvara would seem to have been in order.

[10] "the idea of a syncretic fusion of religions in the Singhasāri period is apparent in the image of Kṛtanāgara undertaking initiations as Akṣobhya and as Bhairava" (p. 164): does the word 'image' refer to a statue, or to an abstract idea? No details are provided about these initiations and the textual and visual evidence justifying this statement.

Factually wrong statements:

[1] "north of Kedah on the Malay east coast" (p. 34): Kedah is on the west coast of Malaysia.

[2] "Change from Hīnayāna to Mahāyāna Buddhism in Central Java" (p. 3): to the best of my knowledge, hardly any evidence of so-called Hīnayāna or Theravāda Buddhist is found in Central Java, most of which relates to Sanskritic Buddhism (from Sarvāstivāda and other early Sanskritic schools to Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna).

[3] "The *Sutasoma* tells us that King Kṛtanāgara in his last years fervently embraced the Javanese form of Mahāyāna Buddhism" (p. 7): the *Sutasoma* does not contain this information, as no explicit reference is made to Kṛtanāgara; at most, one could say that, as argued by O'Brien, the poem may represent an allegory of Kṛtanāgara vs Kublai Khan.⁹ Apparently, the author here has the *Nāgarakṛtāgama* in mind.

8. Lunsingh Scheurleer, P. "The well-known Javanese Statue in the Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam, and its Place in Javanese Sculpture," *Artibus Asiae* 68/2, 2008, pp. 287–332.

9. O'Brien, K. *Sutasoma, The Ancient Tale of a Buddha-Prince from 14th Century Java by the Poet Mpu Tantular*. Bangkok: Orchid Press, 2008, pp. 229, 236.

[4] “Kublai Khan in China would be an incarnation of Viṣṇu, along with Jayavarman VII” (p. 7): to the best of my knowledge, Kublai Khan, a follower of Buddhism, did not conceive himself as an incarnation of the Hindu god Viṣṇu, but rather of the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī.

[5] “The evidence of Esoteric Buddhism is apparent in the details of the textile patterns on the sculpture of the Siṅhasāri period” (p. 9): later in Chapter four, the author discusses the *candrakapāla* motif, which strikes me as Śaiva rather than (Esoteric) Buddhist, as being typical of the textiles carved on Siṅhasāri statuary; contrast the eminently Buddhist *vajra* or *viśvavajra* motif, which does not seem to be found on Siṅhasāri statues.

[6] “The influences of Buddhism certainly reached the island of Java through centres of Buddhist art in Eastern India, and Hinduism arrived from contacts with the Chola in South and Western India” (pp. 9–11): Hinduism reached Java at least three hundred years before the early Cholas, which rose to power in Tamil Nadu only in the mid-ninth century.

[7] Pullen maintains that the literal translation of the Old Javanese phrase *atyanta riñ śobhita* is “bright, beautiful, extraordinary” (p. 206), while its actual translation would be “exceptionally beautiful.”

[8] “*Bhaṭāra* in Old Javanese means ‘divine ancestor’” (p. 214 n. 16): while it is not impossible that in some contexts this word may have carried that meaning, the expression “divine ancestor” is not included among the glosses given by OJED (p. 224); the commonest meaning of the word is “god, the deity; (often before the name of a god) the lord... highest god (Śiwa).” A better word for “divine ancestor” would be *dewatā* (OJED p. 398: “god, deity; having entered the divine state, deceased”).

[10] “Atiśa spent twelve years at the Buddhist site of Muara Jambi” (p. x120): the exact location of Atiśa’s stay in “Suvarṇadvīpa” remains hypothetical: while Inandiak (2013, p. 120)¹⁰ speculates that it was Muara Jambi, Sinclair (2021)¹¹ argues that it was Kedah in the Malay Peninsula.

[11] “A Nepalese manuscript written circa 1015 CE contains drawings of well-known Buddhist images. The drawings are thought to be of Lokanātha” (p. 243): Lokanātha is by no means the only deity represented in the drawings of said manuscript.

[12] “The temples at Padang Lawas reveal they were occupied by priests who followed Esoteric Tantric Buddhism [*sic*], of Śiva and Buddha together” (p. 244): to the best of my knowledge, no hard evidence of a syncretic Śiva-Buddha cult can be found at Padang Lawas.

[13] “The Majapahit rulers were powerful and wealthy. They had control over most of the Indonesian archipelago to as far as the Philippines Islands and New Guinea” (p. 245): this statement, not supported by any evidence except (and only partially so) a passage in the *Deśavarṇana*—which can hardly be taken as providing an accurate historical account in this respect—, seems to be based on modern nationalistic

10. Inandiak, E., “Atiśa: Voice of the Ashes,” in *Atiśa Śrī-Dīpankara-jñāna and Cultural Renaissance. Proceedings of the International Conference 16th–23rd January 2013*, edited by Shashibala, pp. 109–122. New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 2013.

11. Sinclair, I., “Dharmakīrti of Kedah: His Life, Work and Troubled Times,” *Temasek Working Paper* No. 2, 2021.

historical reconstructions superimposing an imagined “Indonesian” (intended as the modern nation state) past on Majapahit.

The problematic passages, in terms of both contents and form, discussed to above seem to reflect a not entirely ripe PhD manuscript rather than a rigorously peer-reviewed and copyedited publication. While these defects negatively impact the overall quality and credibility of this publication, I should stress that there is no need to “throw the baby out with the bathwater”; rather, I would advise to read the book critically, and profit from the wealth of iconographic data as well as the comparative analysis provided by the author. The material presented in the volume will no doubt prove to be useful for scholars to support historical scenarios of intra-Archipelagic and intra-Asian contacts, to fine-tune our still imperfect knowledge of major stylistic trends in the arts of ancient Java, or to get new insights on the (too often) obscure histories and social contexts of ancient Javanese statues.

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Friederike Trotier, *Nation, City, Arena: Sports Events, Nation Building and City Politics in Indonesia*. Copenhagen, NIAS Press, 2021, 329 p., numerous maps, tables and figures, ISBN 978-87-7694-293-9

For long, Indonesia exemplified the prototype of a centralized state. Under authoritarian presidents Sukarno and Suharto, the capital Jakarta monopolized political, economic, social and religious power and resources, distributing them only in a tightly controlled manner to other cities, regions, and islands beyond Java. This Jakarta-centrism was broken down during the democratization process that started in 1998 and that demanded a thorough decentralization of the country, combined with a reevaluation of the outer regions, their cultures, languages, and religions. While the implementation of this decentralization process has been relatively successful and even culminated in the large-scale project to move the capital to Kalimantan in 2024, renaming it ‘Nusantara’ (‘archipelago’, thus giving symbolic credit to the whole of Indonesia), several ambiguities in the power relationships between the different regions and questions of autonomy and the appreciation of local cultures remain. The most obvious case is the continued unsettled status of West Papua and its people as controlled by the national government. Furthermore, Indonesia’s religious policy of promoting a moderate Nahdlatul Ulama-linked ‘Islam Nusantara’ (‘Islam of the archipelago’ – Islam Berkemajuan and Islam Wasathiyah constituting additional concepts) has been criticized as being culturally too Java-centric and thus not suitable for the entire nation. Most recently, in early 2022, the Ministry of Religious Affairs launched a new national halal-logo whose design is inspired by traditional Javanese cultural elements such as wayang forms and batik patterns. Hence, it seems that despite ongoing concrete measures of power sharing, decision makers located in Jakarta regularly engage in reproducing Java’s and its cities’ dominant position within the country.