

evidence from written sources (ch. 2 and 3) and that of oral tradition (ch. 4). Next she shows the relation of Ratu Kidul to other mythical characters such as her only son Raden Ronggo, the snake lady, Nyi Blorong, and one of the *wali* ("apostle" of Islam in Java), Sunan Kalijaga (ch. 5). The next chapters deal with the sacred sites, the rituals and ceremonies (ch. 6) and the spiritual specialists, both male and female, who perform these activities (ch. 7). The following chapter discusses the representations of Ratu Kidul in the ancient and modern arts (painting, dance, theatre) and the mass media (ch. 8). The two concluding chapters offer two different perspectives about the material presented so far. In ch. 9 the authoress presents a set of Western scientific approaches, including political explanations, gender, psychological interpretations, ecological explanations and religious references and relations. In the final chapter (ch. 10) Schlehe introduces the perspective of the Javanese themselves, quoting at length the personal accounts of two Javanese, a man and a woman, about their experiences and interpretations of Ratu Kidul in order to show the role and the significance of the Queen of the Southern Seas in their individual lives.

It would go beyond the range of a review to discuss all the aspects and details of this study. Judith Schlehe presents Ratu Kidul as a figure that can be used in various contexts and interpreted in many ways and directions. Its function can thus be both stabilising or revolutionary. The authoress convincingly shows the complexity of the Javanese concepts, reflecting the multitude of influences over time and the flexibility of their usage by the Javanese themselves. Since the subject matter always involves the researcher not only as a scholar but also as a person, it is very interesting to see how Schlehe positions herself vis-à-vis her topic and her resource persons, both believers and non-believers. This is a book rich in details and insights, contributing to our knowledge and, more importantly, to our understanding of the Javanese world view and daily practice.

The book is complemented with several lists of offerings (*sesaji*) for various ceremonies, the summaries of some *ketoprak* plays, a glossary, and an extensive list of references. An index, however, is missing.

Klaus H. Schreiner

GRAHAM SAUNDERS, *A History of Brunei*. Second Edition. London/New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002. XX, 231 pages, 4 maps, illustrations, £ 55.00 (hb.). ISBN 0-7007-1698-X

It must be revealed that the reviewer has addressed this work previously (*Asian Affairs*, October 1998), and has taken an interest in the second edition because he anticipated meeting improvements in the light of a number of serious errors discovered in the first, published by Oxford University Press (Kuala Lumpur) in 1994. Obviously the author has revisited his text, because the new publisher speaks not only of an edition "updated to the present" but adds tantalisingly:

"Newly presented are interpretations of events since 1945 during the transition from protected state to full independence, and thence to the present Malay Islamic Monarchy."

All expectations have been disappointed. Instead of a conventional "Preface to the Second Edition", we find merely the "Acknowledgements" of 1993. Thus, not only are we not informed when this edition was updated, and to what chronological point in the history (this emerges from an 11-page new chapter at the end, "Brunei to 2001"); nowhere is it mentioned that the master of Brunei historiography and chider of its myths up to the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, Robert Nicholl, to whom Saunders owes so much and still dedicates the book, has since passed away. With one exception, the Introduction and Chapters 1–12 are reproduced unchanged, even down to the Oxford University Press font and original pagination.

A curious case of self-censorship on p. 183 in Chapter 12, where the reference to a possible succession challenge by the present Sultan's abdicated father in 1985 has been watered down, is the single exception to "continuity". Thus one searches in vain, in Chapters 9–12, for the "new interpretations of events since 1945". But one is inclined to search, if only because there was nothing startling in the first edition either. And in searching the second edition, one is reminded of anomalies not previously noted.

Royalty is a major focus of the book, not only because the modern Sultanate is an absolute monarchy, but because, as Saunders diligently argues, its historiography has an important legitimating function today. For this reason among others, the Brunei royalty themselves are sticklers for correct use of titles. It is thus surprising that Prince Sufri is wrongly entitled "Pengiran Pemancha" (p. 176; read "Pengiran Bendahara"), while the Sultan himself is bestowed the quality "Sir Hassanal" (pp. 188, 190; this British title was deliberately dropped at independence). But it is little short of breath-taking that the Sultan's second marriage – which "for some time remained secret" (p. 169; for nine days according to *Borneo Bulletin*, 7 November 1981) – is said to have been to "one of a new generation of young Brunei women", whose status as a commoner "was perhaps the main stumbling block" in the eyes of a hostile royal family (*ibid.*; a far more significant objection to air hostess Mariam was surely that she was not a Brunei [a Malay of the old Water Village] but the daughter of a Eurasian [but latterly converted] Customs Officer, Jimmy Bell – a fact which may have some relevance, in retrospect, for understanding the sensational divorce in February 2003). Of far less import, yet symptomatic in their way, in the new chapter, are the dating of the Constitution Revision Committee headed by Prince Mohamed as 1996 (p. 193; it submitted its initial report in 1994) and the misspelling of the flawed conglomerate of the fallen Prince Jefri as "Amadeo" (pp. 194–5, 202–2; read "Amedeo").

More to the point, if one is intrigued by the "dynamics of publication" on and in Brunei, are further examples of obfuscation. Reference has already been made to a case of self-censorship from one edition to the next. One speculates that distribution of the book in Brunei was being held up, and that this amend-

ment was a condition for movement. Not that the authorities were anything less than generous – or unperceptive! – in letting through some gratuitous, Western moralising about the anachronism of absolute monarchy and pitfalls of Islamisation in the modern world. But they may have been reassured by the author's handling of the controversial issue of the Sultan's wealth. Saunders goes out of his way to distinguish the Sultan's private wealth from that of the state, saying that the former "had accumulated over the years" (p. 181). Its sources are not mentioned, but an impression is given that it was from earlier business activity, certainly not national hydro-carbon income. Attention is somewhat diverted from autocratic control of the state finances since 1959 (p. 137) by a reference to an undefined authority vested in the Legislative Council.

Seen as a book for the layman, which perhaps it is intended to be, *A History of Brunei* is certainly a fine condensation of facts and several historiographical issues. In the modern sections it even becomes tentatively analytical at times. But if this leads to an assumption of a broadly complete and reliably accurate coverage combined with vital insights, one is misled. The author is well aware of "the dynamics of absolute monarchy" but such awareness is reflected in a selective approach rather than a penetrating treatment. Even his interest in historiographical controversies and the importance of the official orthodoxies for national identity has not led him to cite any of the growing literature from Bruneian agencies in Malay.

Regrettably, this review is likely to meet disfavour in those British circles which passed harsh judgement on a review article later published in German translation (*Periplus* 2000). It was judged both "embittered", and (by one referee referring to the section on a work of history, offered discretely) guilty of comprising a critique which was "already familiar to Brunei specialists" (thus otiose) and moreover capable of compromising the position of the historian in his university (thus despicable). The possible consolation of that episode was that it confirmed, obliquely, the reviewer's thesis that scholarship in Brunei is conducted within tight political parameters: why else could a critic of vigorous reviewing think that an author's job security at the local university would be compromised by the mere suggestion that he was nervous about insecurity? Although the historian here reviewed taught at the Sixth Form College, and left the country before publishing, his book shows symptoms of labouring under similar constraints.

Roger Kershaw