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京都大学

Kyoto University

William Collins' *Guritan of Radin Suane* is the first book in English to present the text and translation of an oral epic of the Besemah of the South Sumatran highlands of Indonesia.

The *guritan* is a genre of verbal art which in the past was often recited by Malay speaking highlanders of South Sumatra at times of funeral gatherings. It is believed that a *guritan* performance after a burial would cheer up relatives of the deceased. There are several popular *guritan* stories, all of which deal with the world of ancestors, spirits and magic. Due to an orientation towards an animistic view of the world, the Besemah and neighbouring ethnic groups in the South Sumatran highlands, being followers of Islam, are no longer keen to uphold the practice of *guritan* performance at funeral gatherings. Traditional *guritan* performance as well as other rituals relating to ancestral spirits have now been replaced by Islamic mortuary practices such as the chanting of *Tahlil* or the *Surat Yasin.*

In this context, this book constitutes a pathbreaking study, bringing to our attention a disappearing genre of verbal art. The translation is based on the recording of a *guritan* performance over two nights in the early 1970s when the author was undertaking fieldwork in the Besemah highlands.

The first part of the epic depicts a courtship journey undertaken by Radin Suane, the eldest son of Ratu Agung of Tanjung Larang. After completing a series of tests and challenges with his magic and charms, Radin Suane manages to win a bride, but he and his wife are captured by an enemy soon after their marriage. The second part of the epic, performed on the second day, deals with the journey of Radin Suane's younger brother, Radin Alit, who is sent to rescue his elder brother and his sister-in-law and take revenge on his enemy. Through a series of challenges and tests, Radin Alit succeeds in his rescuing mission, which concludes the story.

The story of Radin Suane centres on three important social themes in the South Sumatran highland: marriage, honour and vengeance. As the *guritan* depicts, marriage is a matter of connections between two lineages which involve an expensive payment of brideprice as well as a matter of romance between two individuals. The *guritan* depicts the tension between *rasan tue* (marriage arranged by parents) and *rasan mude* (marriage arranged by the youth and maiden, usually without the knowledge of parents), a tension which often occurred in Besemah society. This tension, however, is no longer felt so strongly in the region as *rasan mude* has become the dominant marriage arrangement.

Vengeance and honour are related concepts which underpin South Sumatran society. The disgraced honour of the lineage and/or village needs to be reaffirmed by loyalty and vengeance, and this is what underlies the story of Ratu Alit's mission to rescue his elder brother and his wife. Vengeance and honour still dominate the highlands of South Sumatra, and the high rate of homicide in the region is attributed to this.

The author tries to unfold these key themes as dealt with in the *guritan* by extensive commentary and a comprehensive glossary, both of which follow the text translation. South Sumatra belongs to an area whose culture and society remains unknown to many readers. Taking this into consideration, as an anthropologist, Collins explains the social institutions and concepts operating in the Besemah society in his commen-
tary. The glossary and index also enable readers to examine specific themes dealt with in the epic, thereby making the *guritan* more accessible to readers.

What we would hope for in the near future is an audio-visual tape or a CD-ROM of a *guritan* performance from which this text derives. A *guritan* is not to be read through as a written text, but to be performed and interacted with.

Similar to the well-known shadow puppet performance to promote greater understanding of South Sumatran highland society.

(Minako Sakai <坂井美奈子> • The University of New South Wales)


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What we would hope for in the near future is an audio-visual tape or a CD-ROM of a *guritan* performance from which this text derives. A *guritan* is not to be read through as a written text, but to be performed and interacted with. Similar to the well-known shadow puppet performances of Java, people wander off, chat with friends over strong coffee, and crowd around the singer. As shown in the text translation, the singer occasionally improvises and responds humorously to the audience. As we live in multimedia times, it would be a further asset to have a visual version of a *guritan* performance to promote greater understanding of South Sumatran highland society.

(Minako Sakai <坂井美奈子> • The University of New South Wales)


A thousand and one martial arts dance 訳語としては、「護身術舞踊」の他にも「武術舞踊」という日本語が考えられる。この言葉の中では、インドネシア語でシラットあるいはプンチャ・シラットのことを *seni bela diri*（「自分を守る芸」を意味する）と表現することが多いため、その表現に合わせて「護身術舞踊」という訳語を用いた。

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