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Ooi, Keat Gin (Ed.). *Brunei—History, Islam, Society and Contemporary Issues*. London: Routledge, 2016.

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Overall, *Brunei—History, Islam, Society and Contemporary Issues* is an easy read and presents current thinking on its topics. The topics range from Brunei's early history—regarding which there are many puzzles and not a few serious disagreements—to a detailed account of the fishing activities and industries now stretching out from or centered upon Brunei. I will discuss each paper in the order it appears, after first noting that an Introduction, presumably by Ooi Keat Gin, presents a wonderfully concise history of Brunei.

Stephen Charles Druce's essay, "The 'Birth' of Brunei: Early Polities of the Northwest Coast of Borneo and the Origins of Brunei, Tenth to Mid-fourteenth Centuries" presents an early history of the region. Many readers will not be familiar with the names of the various polities—mostly known from the archaeological record—that existed in early times in the general area that we know Brunei subsequently dominated. In the earliest periods, Hindu-Buddhist influence is clear. There are Chinese records of possible names of the early polities, though there is much disagreement about linking the Chinese names with actual sites. There is evidence that a proto-Malay language developed in this part of Borneo. The polities of the area appear to have developed locally.

Ampuan Haji Brahim bin Ampuan Haji Tengah's contribution is entitled "Silsilah Raja-Raja Brunei: The Brunei Sultanate and Its Relationship with other Countries" and presents a genealogical history of Brunei's rulers. The history exists in three versions, which constitute the most important indigenously produced histories of Brunei before modern times. The texts assert particular prestigious historical relationships with such polities as Majapahit, China, Aceh, Johor, and so on. Conflict with Sulu (in the south of the Philippines) is also recounted. The texts digress on non-historical matters at various points. The paper closes with an eye-witness account of the coronation of a Brunei Sultan in 1914.

Mikio Oishi's contribution is "Brunei's Foreign Relations: Maintaining and Developing Its Identity in a Rapidly Changing World." The orientation of this paper is modern, beginning in 1958, with Tunku Abdul Rahman's "Malaysia Plan," which would include northwest Borneo and other territories in a post-colonial greater Malaysia. This brought Brunei into the world of foreign relations a decade before achieving independence. Since then, its status as a "microstate" has been a key consideration in its foreign relations. Equally important has been its considerable petroleum-based wealth. Brunei has carried its weight in ASEAN, and has developed especially close and significant relations with Singapore, China, and Japan, sometimes serving to balance relations between great powers, including the U.S.

Mohd Shahrol Amira bin Abdullah's contribution, "Being 'Malay' in Modern Brunei" addresses who is or isn't Malay in Brunei—a serious national issue for the state (just as it is in Malaysia). To define its citizens, Brunei has opted to include as "Malay" several ethnicities that are native to Brunei but who are not necessarily Malay-speakers or Muslims. By contrast, it had long been the practice in the area to reserve the ethnic label "Malay" only to those who spoke that language and were Muslims. The essay includes concise descriptions of the various ethnicities native to Brunei, along with details on their social orders. Beside the Bruneis, the other ethnicities are the Belait, Bisaya, Dusun, Kedayan, Murut, and Tutong.

Haji Awg Asbol bin Haji Mail and Awang Haji Tassim bin Haji Abu Bakar's contribution is "To Live on Water: Lifestyle of the Kampong Ayer Community during the British Residency Period, 1906-1941." There are many senses in which Kampong Ayer—a

collection of villages or wards built on stilts over the Brunei River—*is* Brunei. It was the capital of Brunei for centuries. During the period described (and more than two decades thereafter), British authorities sought to move its inhabitants onto land. But that policy had mixed results. Some people readily moved ashore; the majority did not. This paper first outlines the administrative system of old Brunei and Brunei under the British Residency, then moves on to the economy of Kampong Ayer, particularly the economic specializations of its various kampongs. Various aspects of social life in Kg. Ayer are described. (Although not within the scope of this review, Kampong Ayer is now very much enlarged, and has much improved living conditions).

Datin Hajah Saadiah binti Datu Derma Wijaya Haji Tamit gives both a legally informed and general summary in her chapter, “Women’s Rights in Brunei under the Islamic Family Law, 1999.” Why this law is officially entitled an “emergency order” is not explained, but I presume it was not an emergency enactment in common-sense terms. The description is detailed, and the impression given is of careful consideration of women’s rights in a Muslim context. An important part of the essay is the author’s speculations on why some Muslim women of Brunei fail to exert their rights under the law.

Noralipah binti Haji Mohamed’s work, “Foreign Labour in Brunei: Demand, Issues and Implications” describes the nation’s labor force and industry. As a wealthy nation with a small population, Brunei has long relied on both manual laborers and technical experts to fill out its workforce. The scope and particular occupations of the imported workforce are summarized. By the 2000s, Indonesia was the primary source of laborers, followed by Malaysia and the Philippines. Half of the Indonesians are domestic helpers. The strength of the Brunei dollar adds to the allure of non-Bruneians taking employment in the county. Labor organizations are seriously discouraged. The social pluses and minuses of having foreign workers in Brunei are assessed, finding that, overall, foreign labor in Brunei is clearly beneficial.

If there is anything you wish to know about Brunei’s modern fisheries, it very likely can be found in Pengiran Khairul Rijal bin Pengiran Haji Abdul Rahim’s “Fishing in Brunei: Developments of the fishing industry in the post-independence period, 1984-2000s.” Given the country’s location, fishing of one sort or another has long been a key part of Brunei’s subsistence economy. In more recent times, there has been experimentation with more industrial-scale fishing, abetted by Brunei’s international allotment of waters in the South China Sea. The people of Brunei eat a lot of fish. They catch much of it themselves. But there is substantial importing of fish products, too.

Three essays in the volume refer to Brunei’s highly contentious loss of its Limbang district late in the 19th Century, resulting in the striking geographic bifurcation of Brunei and, later, a long dispute with Malaysia. The dispute is apparently now resolved (or has been pushed way onto the backburner). In addition to the texts, there are figures, tables, descriptions of the contributors, a Foreword by Victor T. King, Preface, acknowledgments, a list of abbreviations and acronyms, glossary, a lengthy and well-organized bibliography, and a good index. It’s a pity the volume was not subsidized in some way, as the price (presently US\$128 on Amazon) is stiff.

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