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## **Introduction: structures, cycles, and scratches on rocks**

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# Introduction

## *Structures, Cycles, Scratches on Rocks*

*David Henley and Henk Schulte Nordholt*

The purpose of this book is to celebrate the work of Peter Boomgaard, recently retired from the University of Amsterdam and the Royal Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV) in Leiden. Boomgaard is among the leading historians of Southeast Asia in the *longue durée* – that is, over very long periods of time. He single-handedly pioneered the field of Indonesian environmental history, and is the author of the only comprehensive book to date on the environmental history of Southeast Asia as a whole (Boomgaard 2007b). He has written the standard work on the population history of Java (Boomgaard 1989a), and the only book to date on the history of the relationship between tigers and people anywhere in the world (Boomgaard 2001a). Besides his own books he has edited or co-edited 15 collective volumes, written more than 70 chapters in edited volumes, and published more than 40 journal articles, most of them dealing with environmental history or with other aspects of the *longue durée* in Southeast Asia. His fascination with the long term is illustrated by such characteristic Boomgaard titles as ‘Land Rights and the Environment in the Indonesian Archipelago, 800–1950’ (Boomgaard 2011), ‘Economic Growth in Indonesia, 500–1900’ (Boomgaard 1993), and even ‘Early Globalization: Cowries as Currency, 1600 BCE–1900’ (Boomgaard 2008c).

Boomgaard’s eye for the broad scheme of things has led him to some unexpected and trail-blazing conclusions. He showed, for instance, that Java de-urbanized under colonial rule, the proportion of its population living in towns falling in the course of the nineteenth century, whereas the opposite had usually been assumed (Boomgaard 1989a:110–116). He definitively disproved the once popular theory that Javanese villages were colonial inventions or creations (Bremen 1980; Boomgaard 1991). He pointed out that tigers, in Southeast Asia, were not creatures of the natural forest, but thrived where human action created open landscapes rich in large prey animals like deer and pigs, so that tigers were effectively symbiotic with people and for a long time tiger numbers rose rather than declined as the human population of the region increased (Boomgaard 2001a:22–24). He was among the first to understand the importance of traditional fertility control methods to the demographic history of

Indonesia (Boomgaard 1989a:192–196), and later showed how traditional social institutions such as bridewealth and slavery created incentives for women to practice birth control (Boomgaard 2003a, 2003b). His ongoing work on the histories of medicine and forestry in Southeast Asia may be expected to yield comparably radical and productive insights.

For all his fascination with the ‘big picture’, Boomgaard has seldom been tempted into abstract or theoretical speculation. On the contrary, a look at his publication list (reproduced at the end of this volume) reveals a trademark interest in the worldly, the earthy, even the seamy and sinister side of Southeast Asian history: roots and tubers, leprosy and syphilis, cockfighting and tiger-baiting, bestiality and incest. Above all, Boomgaard is a richly empirical scholar whose publications are mines of information that others, if they wish, can use to generate and test hypotheses quite different from those which he himself advances in relation to them. We believe that the contributions included in the present volume are written in this same empirical spirit, with attention to detail as well as to the broad sweep of history.

In order to honour Peter’s contribution to Southeast Asian history, in 2011 we invited some of his closest colleagues to address the question of what new insights a long-term historical perspective adds to our understanding of Southeast Asia. This book is the end result. The time span covered is from about 800 to 2000 CE: that is, from the time of Borobodur to the present. While few chapters cover the whole of this period, all deal with a time span of at least two centuries, and all are concerned with the historiographic big picture: the identification of processes and events that have shaped and changed the region in lasting ways. The immediate methodological advantage of such a long-term perspective is that it forces us to overcome the compartmentalization imposed by conventional historical periodization, by which each era tends to be portrayed in terms of a different set of analytical concepts coined by a different group of historians claiming expertise in that particular era.

Among Boomgaard’s most important sources of intellectual inspiration over the years has been the great French historian Fernand Braudel, by whose work he has described himself as ‘deeply influenced’ (Noordegraaf 2006:50). It was Braudel and his ‘Annales School’ who made the term *longue durée* common currency among historians everywhere, and who inspired a grand debate about the causes of historical change which still continues today. Before going on to discuss the historiography of Southeast Asia in the *longue durée* and to preview the contents of this volume, some words are in order about Braudel and the origins of the *longue durée* as a historiographic concept.

Fernand Braudel (1902–1985) is perhaps most famous for his three-volume history and historical geography of *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean world under Philip II* (1949, 1972–73). In 1958, however, he also distilled his practical experience of writing ‘broad sweep’ history into a theoretical article on the relationship between structure and time in historical research that was to prove agenda-setting. Entitled ‘History and the Social Sciences: The *Longue Durée*’ (Braudel 1958, 1960, 1980), this was partly a reaction against the views of the anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss, who argued in *L’Anthropologie Structurale* (1958) that in order to isolate the fundamental structures that order human life, it is first necessary to eliminate the interference of time and history. Braudel admired Levi-Strauss’s structuralist quest for a ‘social mathematics’, but insisted that no human phenomenon is ultimately independent of historical change.

In elaboration, Braudel proposed a hierarchy of three interlocking historiographic time frames: the ‘history of events’, the history of cycles, and the *longue durée* or long duration. The history of events corresponded to traditional historiography, describing events from day to day, month to month, and year to year. As an example of cyclic history, Braudel cited the 50-year cycle of rising and falling prices identified in European history by the economist Nikolai Kondratiev. The third time frame, the *longue durée*, Braudel saw mainly in terms of persistent structures embedded in environmental constraints.

Certain long-lived structures are stable elements for many generations; they encumber history, and by disturbing it they determine its course. [...] As constraints, they are the limitations from which man and his experiences can liberate themselves only with difficulty. [...] Geographical constraint is a ready example. Through the centuries, man has been the prisoner of climatic and other geographical limitations, and of a slowly-achieved equilibrium, from which he can depart only at great risk.

BRAUDEL 1960:6

It was the influence of geographical and environmental factors on the history of the Mediterranean which had been the topic of the first, and in many ways most innovative, volume of Braudel’s own magnum opus (1949). Another important type of structural constraint in the *longue durée*, for Braudel, was the momentum of established cultural forms, such as those of the Latin civilization which led the elites of medieval Europe to live for centuries ‘by the same themes, comparisons, commonplaces, and slogans’ (Braudel 1960:6).

Braudel did not specify to what extent his three time frames were related to each other, or by what kinds of causal connections he believed they were linked. But he clearly believed that the longer the time perspective employed, the greater the chance of interpreting a given event or development correctly. For Braudel, 'short-run time', measured 'by our illusions and fleeting moments of consciousness', was 'the most capricious and deceptive of durations'.

The surpassing of short-run time seems the outstanding accomplishment of the historiography of the last one hundred years. Thus one can understand the pre-eminent role of the history of institutions, religions, and civilizations; and, thanks to archeology, which covers vast chronological spaces, the importance of studies of classical antiquity.

BRAUDEL 1960:4–5

His main intention, in fact, was to redirect the attention of historians away from the study of political events, which can be as evanescent as newspaper headlines, and toward persistent structures, such as those of culture and geography.

Among historians of Southeast Asia, attention to persistent structures is in itself nothing new. Indeed, historical continuity was something of an obsession among the most influential pioneers of the field in the mid-twentieth century. Still a nice quotation to begin a lecture with is B.J.O. Schrieke's bold declaration (1955–57, II:100) in *Indonesian Sociological Studies* that 'the Java of around 1700 AD was in reality the same as the Java of around 700 AD'. In the colonial period (and to some extent up to now) it was conventional to divide the Indonesian past into an evolutionary sequence of periods according to the presence of external civilizing influences – prehistoric, Indian, Islamic, European. But this, Schrieke argued, was misleading.

In such studies one is too much under the influence of the dynamism of the familiar modern Western world, whereas the static society [...] cherished no other ideal than to remain as it was, shunning all change. [...] [T]he primary factors which determined the structure of Javanese society remained unchanged. The first of those primary factors was the Javanese people, vis-à-vis of whom the foreign, immigrating elements always formed an insignificant minority [...]. The second factor was the Javanese landscape, which was able to retain its dominating influence through the ages because of the fact that in all those ages [...] there was no technological development making it possible to overcome the obstacles of the geographical situation.

SCHRIEKE 1955–57, II:99–100

In this view, which Schrieke believed was also the view of the Javanese themselves, historical change in the precolonial period had largely been limited to the cyclic rise and fall of transient kingdoms and dynasties.

The static character of the primary factors has had the result that if history has repeated itself anywhere it has certainly been on Java [...]. [R]epetitions recurred time and again. The Javanese themselves appear to have observed this: in any event (perhaps in connection with Indian *yuga* concepts) the belief arose among them that in each dynasty a number of similar events must needs occur [...].

SCHRIEKE 1955–57, II: 100–101

Like Schrieke (1890–1945), other scholars of his time also sought to relativize the impact of foreign civilizations on Southeast Asian cultures and ways of life. In French Indochina, Paul Mus (1902–1969) argued that the Cham and Vietnamese peoples had assimilated Indian and Chinese religious concepts and practices to their own autochthonous cults of agricultural fertility and ancestor-worship, in which chiefs and their ancestors mediated between the community and its earth-gods (Mus 1933, 2011). Schrieke's colleague Jacob van Leur (1908–1942) emphasized the late date of the colonial transformation which was ultimately to end the age of cyclic history and cultural continuity, arguing that 'there is an unbroken unity in the state of Asian civilization from the seventeenth century through the eighteenth and into the nineteenth' (Van Leur 1955:284).

Even in the heyday of colonialism, there was in fact an influential opinion that the impact of the West should itself not be overestimated. 'Our influence', as Indies journalist and intellectual Willem Walraven (1992:882) memorably wrote on Java in 1941, 'does not amount to a scratch on a rock'. Orientalist colonial scholar J.H. Boeke (1884–1956), in a book on economic and social 'dualism' in Indonesia that would influence a generation of writers on underdevelopment, proposed that due to profound cultural differences, Indonesian society could never develop along Western (capitalist) lines and was destined to remain permanently poor and irrational (Boeke 1940, 1953). In so far as colonialism had made a difference, Boeke argued, it had been to reinforce, rather than erode, traditional institutions.

When, in the wake of the Second World War, decolonization came to the region more quickly than anyone had thought possible, and when the democratic systems initially created in the newly independent states began to crumble, some historians responded by thinking in terms of Southeast Asian history having 'found a way back to its own moorings' following a temporary 'diversion'

into the alien domains of (colonial) bureaucracy and (post-colonial) democracy (Benda 1964:453). Western power had been nothing more than ‘a thin layer resting on top of large and essentially intact societies’ (Smail 1961:101), and the rapid breakdown of Westernized institutions once it was removed reflected the inevitable resurgence of old indigenous norms favouring personalistic, charismatic, and authoritarian government.

Was the colonial era, then, nothing more than ‘a fleeting, passing phase’ in the history of Southeast Asia, as the last British governor-general of Malaya once put it (Tarling 2001:199)? Today, in the aftermath of a whole series of further revolutionary changes in the late twentieth century – the deadly struggle between communism and capitalism in the 1950s and 60s, the astonishing and unpredicted economic miracle of the 70s, 80s, and 90s, the return of surprisingly stable democratic government in the Philippines, Indonesia, and now perhaps Burma – it is much harder to entertain any idea of Southeast Asia’s history having any ‘natural’ direction to which its course automatically returns. Meanwhile, cumulative historical and archaeological research on the period before 1500 has undermined any idea of a long precolonial stagnation by illuminating dramatic early transformations that were once partly hidden from view: mass religious conversions that deeply affected the life of peasants as well as elites, periods of commercial expansion long before the colonial trade boom, and changes in technology and agriculture that had nothing to do with European science.<sup>1</sup>

Yet for all the sophistication and nuances of our emerging view of Southeast Asia’s *longue durée*, it remains clear that both the geographical and the civilizational (cultural) structures which Braudel saw as ‘encumbering’ European history do find ready parallels there. On the geographical front, the classic tripartite agricultural ecology of Southeast Asia, based on wet rice in irrigated fields, dry rice on rotational swiddens, and commercial arboriculture, has been a constant from earliest times almost up to the present, affecting the size and distribution of populations and the development of states and trade. The three farming systems reflect constraints imposed by the infertility of Southeast Asia’s tropical forest soils, constraints which each of the three provides a different way of overcoming (Henley 2002, 2008). It is partly through growing awareness of environmental influences on Southeast Asian history that the modern historiography of the region has been increasingly inspired by the spirit of Braudel. Many authors have even discerned a direct geographical parallel between Braudel’s ‘Mediterranean World’, in which water, rather than land, is the connecting and unifying element, and the maritime world of

1 Bellwood (1985); Boomgaard (2007b); Lieberman (2003, 2009); Reid (1988–93); Hall (2011).

Southeast Asia with its shallow, readily navigable seas, its extended coastlines, and its island chains (Sutherland 2003).

Some of the environmental conditions which shape and limit human activity are affected by natural changes which, although cyclic in nature, take place over timespans that place them in the realm of the *longue durée* rather than that of Braudel's 'history of cycles'. Long-term climate change is the prime example. Evidence from growth rings in teak and other deciduous trees from Java, Burma, Thailand and Vietnam reveals extended periods of repeated drought and climatic instability which have been linked with the collapse of Angkor in the fourteenth century (Buckley et al. 2010), with the 'seventeenth-century crisis' in Indonesia (Reid 1990b:654–657), and with political crises in Burma and Thailand in the mid-eighteenth century (D'Arrigo et al. 2011:4).

Turning to persistent structures in the cultural sphere, it remains an undeniable fact that religious and political models derived from South Asian sources structured the societies and states of Southeast Asia during more than a millennium of 'Indianization'. In the Theravada Buddhist countries of the Southeast Asian mainland, their influence is still strong today. In island Southeast Asia, local conversions to Islam in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries established paths of cultural development which were to shape the lives of hundreds of millions over the subsequent half millennium (Ricklefs 2006, 2007).

Not all cultural goods that initially developed major traction in the region, of course, went on to have such lasting influence. In the mid-twentieth century, the ideology of communism unleashed cataclysmic political forces in many countries and seemed set to shape the future of the whole region; but today it already appears a spent force. By the same token, not all environmental forces shape human history only as steady constraints in the long term: some, such as the volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and tsunamis which Indonesians in particular are once more all too familiar with in the early twenty-first century, are more sudden, more intermittent, and more violently destructive in their effects than is any war or economic crisis. Others, such as the quasi-periodic El Niño climatic oscillation, occur in cycles of short duration: episodes of drought and flooding in Indonesia, we now know, are linked to the El Niño phenomenon with its average recurrence interval of about five years (Boomgaard 2007b:100–101, 122–123).

Environmental influences on human activity, then, may be much less permanent and invariable than Braudel assumed. But even when intermittent, they can still shape the history of the *longue durée* – whether because they occur at short and regular enough intervals to form systematic and predictable

constraints on subsistence, as in the case of El Niño, or because their effects on all aspects of life are so destructive that they continue to have repercussions for centuries, as in the case of certain seismic and volcanic events which will be described in the following chapters.

This book aims to underline the importance of persistent patterns and structures in Southeast Asian history, the effects of which are felt in multiple domains of human activity and at periods widely separated in time, including the present. These patterns and structures can help us to understand both the course of the region's history, and what makes it distinctive in relation to other parts of the world. Our book attempts to identify and explore some of them, yet without falling into the trap of essentializing them – that is, of suggesting that they are permanent and inescapable, or that they are unique and intrinsic to particular peoples or cultures.

Examples of persistent and characteristically Southeast Asian historical patterns explored by our contributors include environmentally determined features such as the periodic natural disasters associated with the region's tectonic structure (Chapters 4 and 5), and the structural openness to seaborne commerce which is dictated by its geography (Chapters 7, 8, and 9). Persistent economic, political and cultural features considered include the role played over many centuries by ethnic Chinese traders as an occupationally specialized business minority in the region (Chapter 10), and the resilient pattern of social organization known as patronage or clientelism, whereby political power is based on an unequal exchange, between individuals of higher and lower status, of resources and loyalty on the one hand for protection and security on the other (Chapter 11). Other chapters (2, 3, 6 and 12) focus less on persistence and continuity than on long-term change, respectively in the areas of vegetation cover, domesticated animal populations, human fertility, and visual representations of Indonesia.

Following our introduction, a series of chapters focus on the environmental and demographic themes central to much of Boomgaard's work. Greg Bankoff's 'Deep Forestry: Shaping the *Longue Durée* of the Forest in the Philippines' (Chapter 2) showcases a 'biocentric' approach to environmental history in which nature, not man, occupies centre stage, and human activity figures as just one of many factors influencing the development of Philippine forests. While the sheer scale of human forest clearance has overshadowed other changes in the period since 1946, in the long sweep of forest history this is a mere moment. Nor does the modern era of anthropogenic deforestation mark the end of a primordial equilibrium. At earlier periods natural disturbances, such as climatic cycles and changing fire regimes, already made the forests of Southeast Asia dynamic in extent and composition. When humans appeared

on the scene, moreover, their influence interacted dynamically with that of natural agents such as fire, hydrology, and termites. Bankoff concludes by stressing the roles which forests still play in ‘mitigating the potentially destructive power of natural forces in an increasingly less predictable world’.

Chapter 3, ‘Breeding and Power in Southeast Asia: Horses, Mules and Donkeys in the *Longue Durée*’, by William Clarence-Smith, continues the biocentric theme in a piece which, although styled as a tribute to pioneering work in the same area by Boomgaard (2004, 2007a), introduces two quite radically new propositions regarding the origins of Southeast Asia’s horse and donkey populations. The first proposition is that Tibet, not India or China, has been the main external source of equine diffusion into the Southeast Asian region. The second is that historians have tended to overestimate the significance of equids brought in from outside the region, both in terms of the numbers imported and in terms of their genetic contribution. Where successful new breeds appeared in Southeast Asia, they were mainly the result of selection and management, not of crossbreeding with imported stock.

Chapters 4 and 5 deal with a class of natural events that are intermittent and catastrophic, yet may ironically may be reckoned among the most persistent and characteristic influences on the history of Southeast Asia in the *longue durée*. The Indonesian archipelago is to a large extent structured by a ‘ring of fire’, an arc of volcanoes running from Sumatra via Java and the Lesser Sunda Islands toward the Philippines. Well-known volcanic disasters include the eruptions of Krakatau in 1883 and Tambora in 1815, which affected not only Southeast Asia but also the rest of the world. The Tambora eruption launched so much ash into the air that temperatures were lowered worldwide, so that 1816 was called ‘the year without summer’ (De Jong Boers 1995). The movements of colliding continental plates beneath the ring of fire make the region tectonically active, causing earthquakes and tsunamis. Together, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and tsunamis have produced historical ruptures, fundamental changes with long-lasting effects.

In Chapter 4, ‘Under the Volcano: Stabilizing the Early Javanese State in an Unstable Environment’, Jan Wisseman Christie investigates the impact of volcanic eruptions on political relationships and religious attitudes in Central Java during the tenth century. Basing herself on a meticulous analysis of contemporary inscriptions, she concludes that a series of volcanic eruptions at the beginning of the tenth century destabilized the kingdom of Mataram with two lasting consequences. One was that the kingdom abandoned Central Java and moved its centre to East Java, where a new and long history of state formation was initiated. A second consequence, Wisseman Christie argues, was a lasting change in religious attitudes. Mahayana Buddhism and its central place of

worship, the Borobudur complex, were abandoned and replaced by the worship of the Hindu god Shiva, together with that of Javanese mountains and ancestors. Buddhism, it seems, had no answer to the volcanic violence that overtook Mataram. Instead the god of destruction, Shiva, won in prestige, as did local ancestor-deities associated with mountains. In the centuries that followed, it was Shivaism that dominated the rituals sustaining the continuity of royal rule in East Java.

The tsunami disaster that struck northern Sumatra on 26 December 2004 stimulated historians to search for evidence of similar events in earlier times. In Chapter 5, 'History and Seismology in the Ring of Fire: Punctuating the Indonesian Past', Anthony Reid argues on the basis of recently discovered geomorphological evidence that northern Sumatra was very likely hit by a devastating tsunami around the beginning of the fifteenth century. As a result Buddhism was literally swept away, leaving hardly any trace of its previous existence, while the spread of Islam accelerated. In Central Java, a hitherto forgotten tsunami of 1618 may likewise have been the cause of major social and political change. Reid suggests that the well-known goddess of the southern sea, Niai Loro Kidul, with whom the Central Javanese kings maintained a mystical relationship, should be associated with the threat of tsunamis, to which people living in coastal plains were particularly vulnerable. The chapter concludes by noting that the recurring damage caused by eruptions, earthquakes and tsunamis offers a new part of the solution to the old puzzle of low population growth in precolonial Indonesia.

Chapter 6 is Linda Newson's 'The *Longue Durée* in Filipino Demographic History: The Role of Fertility prior to 1800'. Drawing on extensive research in published and archival sources, Newson follows the example set by Boomgaard in the Indonesian context by arguing that in the Philippines too, variations in population density and growth over time and space can be ascribed partly to variations in the frequency of traditional fertility control practices such as induced abortion and infanticide. Since the evidence of indigenous birth control is strongest in the oldest available sources, it is clear that essential facts about the dynamics of demographic change in the Philippines do not become apparent unless a very long-term historical view is taken.

Chapter 7, 'Glimpsing Southeast Asian *Naturalia* in Global Trade, c. 300 BCE–1600 CE', by Raquel Reyes, forms a natural bridge between the environmental themes of earlier chapters and the economic, social and political themes of those which follow it. Reyes explores the little-known history of the trade in exotic natural objects – from bezoar stones to rhinoceros horns – between Southeast Asia and the rest of the world. Despite its obscurity, this trade is an ancient one and true to the panoptic spirit of Boomgaard's own

work, Reyes surveys it over a timespan of fully nineteen centuries. She also takes in both the European and the Chinese markets for Southeast Asian *naturlia*, and considers the impact of the trade on the development of Western science, on Chinese medicine, and on the environments and societies of Southeast Asia.

In Chapter 8, 'Ages of Commerce in Southeast Asian history', David Henley provides a brief critical survey of the growing literature on very long-term Southeast Asian commercial and political cycles inspired by Anthony Reid's seminal *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce* (1988–93). Two responses to Reid receive particular attention: that of Geoff Wade (2009a), who identifies an earlier period of trade-based economic and political florescence (900–1300) to place alongside Reid's early modern Age of Commerce (1450–1680); and that of Victor Lieberman (2003, 2009), who argues that the long-term development of mainland Southeast Asia followed a very different pattern from that of island Southeast Asia, on which Reid's argument is mostly based. The chapter concludes by suggesting that the idea of environmental change as an underlying pacemaker of economic and political cycles may help to reconcile the competing maritime and mainland perspectives.

Heather Sutherland provides further critical reflection on the Reid paradigm in Chapter 9, 'Pursuing the Invisible: Makassar, City and Systems'. Here Sutherland uses detailed historical evidence from Makassar to evaluate and nuance Reid's proposition that a comprehensive economic and demographic crisis, marking the end of his early modern Age of Commerce, followed the establishment of VOC control over Indonesia's international trade in the mid-seventeenth century. She finds that although the conquest of Makassar by the Dutch in 1669 did have serious economic consequences, it did not by any means leave the city a shrunken, inward-looking shadow of what it had been in its spice-trading heyday. The economy of its former political hinterland, meanwhile, was little affected by Makassar's fall, since regional commerce simply shifted in large part to different harbours. Continuity, more than change, characterizes South Sulawesi's history in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Chapter 10, by Kwee Hui Kian, continues and concludes the commercial theme with a condensed history of the development of ethnic Chinese trading networks in Southeast Asia from 1400 to 1850. Successive waves of Chinese sojourners and settlers in the region engaged in long-distance trade with China itself, and gradually also penetrated into regional trade and local markets, before in some cases ultimately becoming directly involved in the production of key trade commodities: sugar, gambir, pepper, rice, tin. Their commercial networks were knitted together partly by intensive cooperation among

migrants sharing the same surname or geographical origin, which enabled newcomers to obtain jobs and cheap credit. Equally important to their success, however, was the political context that enabled Chinese migrants to fill vital niches in the Southeast Asian economy. Power-holders, first indigenous and later European, allowed and even encouraged Chinese migrants to occupy strategic commercial positions. Kwee's long-term perspective reveals how the basis was laid for the dominant role Chinese entrepreneurs and traders were to play under colonial and postcolonial capitalism.

In Chapter 11, 'From Contest State to Patronage Democracy: The *Longue Durée* of Clientelism in Indonesia', Henk Schulte Nordholt reviews the history of patron-client relationships as a structuring element in political life over two millennia. Although his focus is on Indonesia, his observations are largely generalizable to the rest of Southeast Asia. Having argued elsewhere for a similar continuity with respect to forms of political violence (H. Schulte Nordholt 2002), here he proposes that the phenomenon of patronage forms a continuous link between the precolonial contest state and today's patronage democracy. The leaders of modern civil militias, he believes, resemble in many ways the 'men of prowess' who dominated traditional political systems. Nevertheless the form of the patron-client relationship has changed over time, adapting itself to new institutional conditions. Whereas in precolonial times relationships between leaders and followers were unstable, in the colonial period they were to a large extent stabilized by incorporation into a system of indirect rule. With national independence, clientelism did not disappear. Indeed, it can be argued that new chains of patron-client ties, stretching from the capital into the villages, actually glued the young and fragile nation-state together. Similar relationships were the oil that kept the New Order running, despite its image as a strong bureaucratic state. Reviewing recent developments, Schulte Nordholt concludes that patronage will probably continue to structure the political system in the foreseeable future.

The twelfth and final chapter, by Jean Gelman Taylor, concentrates on the visual representation of colonial encounters over a period of three centuries. Inspired by Peter Burke's remark that paintings are 'painted opinions', Gelman Taylor traces the visual experiences of the colonial encounter through paintings, photographs and film. Not all of the images referred to are reproduced in this book; to see the remainder, and many more, the reader is invited to visit (virtually or otherwise) the relevant collections of the KITLV, KIT, and Rijksmuseum. For discussion purposes, Gelman Taylor divides her materials according to six thematic series. The first depicts ships, harbours, markets, and traders, grouped under the rubric 'From ship's deck to shore'. The second

depicts encounters with Asian arts. The third contains portraits, the fourth, landscapes, and the fifth, depictions of historical events. The final series consists of photography and offers 'glimpses of modernity'. Gelman Taylor argues that photographs, on a greater scale and with greater social impact than portrait paintings before them, 'document the emergence of the named individual in Indonesian life', and that the camera 'is an indelible part of contemporary Indonesian culture'.

By following Peter Boomgaard in taking a *longue durée* perspective on Southeast Asian history, it is possible to overcome the compartmentalization of conventional historical periodization, which often obscures underlying structures. Each historical period tends to have particular characteristics ascribed to it, together with a particular analytical vocabulary that is 'owned' by an authoritative group of experts. With regards to the Indonesian archipelago, the following 'compartments' can be identified. Early history was traditionally owned by archaeologists, who developed their own discourse about forms of kingship and processes of Indianization. The early modern period was for a long time dominated by VOC historians, while the nineteenth century was the domain of experts on agrarian exploitation and colonial expansion. The late colonial period was the hunting ground of historians who traced the rise of nationalism.

In the middle of the twentieth century, shorter periods, each with its own contingent of experts, succeeded one other more rapidly: the Japanese occupation, the national revolution, and the 1950s, a decade typically discussed with an emphasis on nation building. Writers on the 1970s and 1980s, for their part, tended to focus on the political economy of the strong state. It was possible to write on nation building in the 1950s without considering the development of nationalism in previous periods, and to concentrate on the revolution without bothering much about its effects on the events of later years. In this way the lives of Indonesians who were born in the 1920s, and lived through the various periods, were cut into disconnected pieces. Moreover, the connection between similar relationships (such as clientelism) in different eras was often overlooked. Against such compartmentalization, a *longue durée* perspective opens up the possibility of identifying patterns and changes which transcend the confines not only of particular decades, but of the nation-state itself.

A great many topics have not been addressed in this volume, which of course cannot pretend to represent the whole state of the art in its very broadly defined field. In the future, new studies of long-term continuity and change in literary themes, religious practices, eating habits, and many other aspects of

life, as well as new comprehensive *longue durée* studies of particular places and regions, will no doubt uncover further hidden layers in the history of Southeast Asia. But as far as the present state of the art is concerned, our book does at least give a taste of some of the latest ideas and insights. As such, it is an invitation to undertake further exploration of Southeast Asian history in terms of its *longue durée*.