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BOOK REVIEWS

Laksono, P.M., Jajang Agus Sonjaya, Ons Untoro, Y. Tri Subagya, Almira Rianti, Aprilia Budi Hendrijani, 2006, *Pergulatan Identitas Dayak Dan Indonesia. Belajar dari Tjilik Riwt* [The Struggle for Dayak and Indonesian Identity. The Teachings of Tjilik Riwt]. Yogyakarta: Galang Press, 248 pp., ISBN: 979-24-9921-0.

This book, *Pergulatan Identitas Dayak dan Indonesia. Belajar dari Tjilik Riwt*, is a biography of Tjilik Riwt. It was written by a group of authors and edited by Pusat Studi Asia Pasifik (Center for Asia-Pacific Studies), University of Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, in collaboration with the publisher, Galang Press.

The book opens with two forewords, one by the Social Secretary of the Republic of Indonesia, H. Bachtiar Chamsyah, the second by the current Governor of Central Kalimantan Province, Agustin Teras Narang. Next follows a preface by Tjilik Riwt heiress, Mrs. Enon Riwung Toemon, a preface by the authors, an introduction, and five chapters (pp. 1-213). In order, these five chapters are: *Kasongan, Bukit Batu, dan Kalimantan* (Kasongan, Bukit Batu and Kalimantan); *Palangka Raya: Rumah Betang* (Palangka Raya: The Longhouse); *Membangun Identitas Dayak Lewat Tulisan* (Establishing a Dayak Identity through Writing); *Kenangan para Staf, Ajudan dan Kaum Muda* (Memories of the Staff, Adjutants, and Younger Generation); *Di Tengah Kerabat dan Keluarga* (Among Relatives and Family). It closes with a conclusion (pp. 217-228), a bibliography (pp. 229-234), including press articles and family manuscripts, a resume of Tjilik Riwt's life, a list of descendants, and brief profiles of the authors.

The authors state that Tjilik Riwt was a "common man who was uncommon." Tjilik Riwt was a common man because he was born a native of Southern Borneo in the small village of Kasongan (now a city) on 2 February 1918. He was an uncommon man because he became an important man in Indonesia's political history. He died in Banjarmasin's Suaka Insan Hospital on 17 August 1987 and was designated a *Pahlawan Nasional* (National Hero) in 1998. He is a renowned figure in Kalimantan not only because he was the first appointed governor of Central Kalimantan Province, but also because of his effort and hard work in establishing the province and making it an integral part of Indonesia.

The book traces the history of Tjilik Riwt's political and cultural life from 1939, during the period of Dutch colonial occupation, until his retirement. The key phrase in the title of this book is *Pergulatan Identitas*. The root of the word *pergulatan* is *gulat*, which, in the Indonesian language, means 'wrestle,' hence *Pergulatan Identitas* highlights his difficult struggle to define an identity for himself and his people. Being a Dayak at a time when Dayak culture was little known and, even worse, known through negative stereotypes, was difficult. Like other Dayaks of his time, Tjilik Riwt became one of those who experienced how difficult it was to deal with their ethnic identity within wider ideological, political, social, and cultural spheres. He realized that both his desire to preserve a Dayak identity and, at the same time, promote his Indonesian nationalism were two quite different things. Therefore, the authors use the word *pergulatan* in a rhetorical way to illustrate how Tjilik Riwt took an active part in gaining recognition of Dayak identity in Indonesia, by embracing "the opponents" (the Dayak themselves,

Indonesians, and the Indonesian government) as if in wrestling, and so integrating them into one another by nationalizing Dayak customs and traditions among Indonesians and by localizing Indonesia in Central Kalimantan Province among the Dayaks. The authors note that he not only applied this strategy in his political and cultural life, but also in his personal life. His wife, Clemetine Suparti (Ibu Pong), his soul-mate, was from the Island of Java. Java was a symbol of the central government of Indonesia since everything which related to the government then came from Java, hence the island came to symbolize Indonesia as a whole. Therefore their union was his way of nationalizing Dayak customs and traditions in Java (Indonesia) and of localizing Java (Indonesia) in Kalimantan.

Arguing along these lines, the authors begin by first focusing on Tjilik Riwut's origins and locate Kasongan and Bukit Batu as the places where his future concerns took form. Kasongan was the place where he was born and received his early education in a Dayak way of life; Bukit Batu was the place where he meditated in order to gain self-reflection, the place which inspired and empowered his soul to accepted his destiny to go to Java at the age of 18 and then, later, back to Borneo to create the province of Central Kalimantan.

The authors next present the strategies Tjilik Riwut pursued in creating an Indonesian Dayak identity. His efforts began when he was 28 years old. On 17 December 1946, Tjilik Riwut swore a loyalty oath to the Republic Indonesia, executing it in a Dayak traditional manner in front of President Sukarno, Vice President Mohammad Hatta, and the Governor of Borneo, Ir. Pangeran Mohammad Noor, at Yogyakarta (pp. 1-4). One of his most important efforts, which occupied his entire life, was to unify Central Kalimantan and to make it part of Indonesia by creating it as a separate province (23 May 1957). On 17 July 1957, Palangka Raya was established as the capital of Central Kalimantan. In establishing the province, Tjilik Riwut developed the "*betang* concept" as the basis of its socio-political structure. The authors explain that since the *betang* (longhouse) comprises more than one family, each with its own interests, the objective of the *betang* concept was similarly to develop a sense of communalism among the many different ethnic groups living in Central Kalimantan so as to overcome the differences and the tensions between them through joint deliberation, reflecting the unity of the whole.

Politically, Tjilik Riwut's first step was to join the Pakat Dajak party in 1939. In doing so, he sought to promote Dayak unity and gain recognition of Dayak customary law and cultural rights. The authors stress that even though Tjilik Riwut was determined to promote Dayak culture, he was not a separatist, but pursued the principle of *Bhineka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity) in both Kalimantan and Indonesia. The authors recount in detail how Tjilik Riwut succeeded in convincing Sukarno to choose Pahandut—the name of a small village before the founding of Palangka Raya—by appealing to the spirit of nationalism. Thus, he argued that it was the best choice to be the capital of Central Kalimantan Province because the village was without any trace of colonialism (i.e., prior to the creation of modern Indonesia, it had no previous history as a center of colonial trade and administration). Moreover, geopolitically, Pahandut was centrally located within the region and Tjilik Riwut was able to persuade the many parties in

Central Kalimantan to accept it as the provincial capital. At the same time, he began the process of localizing Indonesia in Central Kalimantan by bringing President Sukarno, its central symbol, to Palangka Raya. The authors explain that these successful efforts helped unify the Dayak people and strengthened the nationalistic spirit of the citizens of Central Kalimantan Province and their sense of connection with Indonesia.

As a writer, the authors show how Tjilik Riwt “wrestled” to gain acknowledgement of a Dayak identity using a series of pseudonyms drawn from Dayak mythology. In their bibliography they list 28 titles of works written by Tjilik Riwt (pp.231-234). These they divide into two periods. During the first of these, at the time of Dutch colonial rule, his writings were more concerned with social and political issues. During the second period, beginning with the Japanese occupation, he became more interested in Dayak culture and religion. It was then that he collected and wrote down accounts of Dayak customs and traditions. As the authors note, Tjilik Riwt also sought to erase negative images of the Dayaks by writing more generally on the Province of Central Kalimantan, its natural resources, and about Palangka Raya and its development. Tjilik Riwt’s books on these topics are *Kalimantan Memanggil* (Call from Kalimantan, 1958) and *Memperkenalkan Kalimantan Tengah dan Pembangunan kota Palangka Raja* (Introducing Central Kalimantan and the Development of Palangka Raja, 1962). The authors also note that Tjilik Riwt tried to enrich the Indonesian language by writing some of his books in both Ngaju and Indonesian. Among others are *Auh Oloh Balian Hapa Tiwah* (1962), *Maneser Panatau Tatu Hiang* (1965), and *Peladjaran Bahasa Dajak Ngaju (Bahasa Indonesia-Dajak Ngadju)* in 1970.

Chapter Three (*Membangun Identitas Dayak Lewat Tulisan*) describes the public career of Tjilik Riwt. Here the authors mention his use of a series of Dayak mythological pseudonyms such as: Sanaman Mantikei, Dereh Boenoe (*dereh*: stem; *Boenoe*: the name of a character in the Batang Garing myth), Kameloh, a woman’s name and that of a character also in the Batang Garing myth (Tjilik Riwt used this name in an article entitled *Waktu*, which refers to the stages of change in Dayak women’s ways of thinking); Njaru Menteng, and Rambang, which means ‘hesitate.’ In regard to the pseudonym *Sanaman Mantikei*, the authors explain that according to Ngaju legend, *Sanaman Mantikei* is a poisonous, highly flexible metal which is used for making *mandau* (swords). By using this pseudonym, Tjilik Riwt described himself as strong steel, able to withstand blows (suffering), having an adaptable, resilient character. The sharpness of the *mandau* also describes his sharp writings which are incisive and critical. The pseudonyms used by Tjilik Riwt in his nationalistic writings are Putera Kesatrija, Pentjinta Kemerdekaan, Sanaman Mantikei, Njaru Menteng, and Dereh Boenoe. As a writer, Tjilik Riwt also collected and rewrote Dayak animal fables. He used the animals’ world as a metaphor in his stories and, interestingly, he used the word *saudara* (brother/sister) to inspire values of social solidarity. In the pre-war Indonesian nationalist movement, the word *saudara* was used in a political context to emphasize companionship and the equality of human beings. After his death, his capacity for writing about Dayak culture was bequeathed to his daughter, Nila.

Regarding the personality of Tjilik Riwt, the authors portray him as a highly disciplined man, always on time, a hard worker, determined, courageous, diligent,

thorough, communicative and encouraging. In the view of his colleagues, Tjilik Riwt was an originator, a pioneer, an avant-garde, forward-looking man. He had an avant-garde perspective; always looking towards the future. To solve the problem of Dayak isolation, for example, he proposed a road from Palangka Raya to Sampit (to access the harbor) and construction of the Palangka Raya airport.

Tjilik Riwt had a close relationship with traditional Ngaju religion (Kaharingan) and, as the authors explain, led efforts to conserve the Kaharingan faith and secure its status as a recognized religion in the law. Indeed, there is a strong spiritual bond between Tjilik Riwt and the Ngaju people, so strong, in fact, that in death he has become a mythologized, spiritual figure for the Ngaju. It is believed that his soul is still in the earthly world and that he sometimes reappears in other forms. The authors portray Tjilik Riwt as the spiritual father of Central Kalimantan Province, a role model, symbol of a fighter against injustice (colonialism), a *putra daerah* (native son) who founded his own *daerah* (region) and constructed an ethnic identity for himself and his people.

The authors complete their portrait of Tjilik Riwt by viewing him as he was seen through the eyes of his family and relatives. Although austere and a workaholic, he was, nevertheless, warm and passionate and never forgot his family. The authors describe how Tjilik Riwt and his family put into practice the concept of a *betang* way of life, even though they did not live in a longhouse (*betang*). When faced with problems, they solved them in the *betang* way by deliberating together openly. His household consisted of his family, relatives (close and distant) and many animals.

Finally, as part of his personality, the authors note Tjilik Riwt's close identification with the number 17, which was a sacred number for him. It was also an important number in Indonesian political history, and, in the end, it was the date of his final departure. Tjilik Riwt died on 17 August 1987.

I found several errors and gaps in information in the book that I would like to respond to briefly here:

1. The authors describe Dr. Hans Schärer as a "Dutch preacher" (p. 18). Schärer was, instead, a Swiss ethnologist and a member of the Basler mission who worked among the Ngaju from 1932 to 1939 and in 1947.
2. There is a misspelled name: "Bekker" (p.19) should appear as "Bakker." Bakker was a Dutch missionary from Classis Amsterdam who lived in Kasongan from 1921 through 1939.
3. Referring to the pseudonym Nyaru/Njaru "Menteng," the authors define Menteng as a strong brave man, but can provide no definition of "Nyaru" (footnote 12, page 106). The difficulty here is that the authors interpret the name Nyaru Menteng as two names (*Nyaru* and *Menteng*), instead of as one name. The definition of Nyaru Menteng can be found in Nila Suseno's book *Maneser Panatau Tatu Hiang, Meyelami Kekayaan Leluhur*, on page 487: "*Nyaru Menteng* is a divinity who rules over warfare, the wind, thunder, lightning, and fire, and has responsibility for the safety and security of the clan." Hence, by using this pseudonym, Tjilik Riwt expressed his willingness to care for the Dayak people by means of his "divine powers."

4. Referring to the pseudonym Rambang (p.106). Again, a character named “Rambang” appears in Nila Suseno’s book *Maneser Panatau Tatu Hiang, Meyelami Kekayaan Leluhur* (pp. 432-436), in the story of *Pertempuran Pulau Kupang* (The War on Kupang Island) where a character named Temanggung Rambang is described as a hero, a brave man who fights in this war to defend Nyai Undang.
5. On page 107, the authors write that Boenoe is “the first man in the myth of Batang Garing.” Instead, he is the first man who descends to the earth (Kalimantan). In the myth of the creation of life (*Batang Garing*), the first man to be created is named Manyamei, the father of Boenoe.
6. The authors write that the Sala River is located on the upper course of Katingan River (p.168). Geographically, the upper Sala flows towards Bukit Batu and the lower Sala River empties into the lower middle course of the Katingan River, which is located in front of Kasongan city.

Pictures and political history source materials richly illustrate this book. For readers looking for detailed descriptions of various aspects of Tjilik Riwut’s political life, this book has a lot to offer. It includes extensive information on his political activities from the moment he entered politics by joining Pakat Dajak (1939), continuing through the Japanese occupation (1942-1945), and into the Indonesian war of independence period (1945-1949), when Tjilik Riwut took part in the retaking of Kalimantan. Although, as a biography, it contains less information concerning Tjilik Riwut’s cultural life, *Pergulatan Identitas Dayak Dan Indonesia. Belajar dari Tjilik Riwut* is nonetheless a great book from which to learn how to achieve, keep and respect one’s identity, both one’s ethnic identity as well as one’s identification with a nation.

(Junita Arneld Maiullari, Museo della Culture, Lugano, Switzerland)¹

¹ **Editor’ note:** The author of this review, Junita Arneld Maiullari, is herself Ngaju and a distant collateral descendant of Tjilik Riwut.