

## Book Review/*Ulasan Buku*

*Orang Rejimen: The Malays of the Ceylon Rifle Regiment* by B.A. Hussainmiya. Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1990. 185 Pages. M\$28.00

The author is presently a lecturer in History at the Universiti Brunei Darussalam. Besides his monograph, *Lost Cousins: The Malays of Sri Lanka* (1987), published by Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, he has contributed many articles on Sri Lanka Malays and their tradisional Malay Literature to Malaysian journals. He was also the Chairman of the Second Malay World Symposium held in Sri Lanka in 1985 and all credit goes to him for the honour bestowed on the Malay community of Sri Lanka.

The book is a slightly revised version of his Doctoral Thesis on the Malays of the "Ceylon Rifle Regiment – Orang Rejimen". The purpose of this study has been to trace the history of the Malay community of Sri Lanka, with particular reference to their role as colonial troops, especially in the Ceylon Rifle Regiment (1827 – 1883). "The Malays have been often thought of as brawny, if not mindless colonial mercenaries and least of all to have indulged in any cultural or higher literary pastimes. The study presented here revises such erroneous notions about the Sri Lankan Malay Community's past.

In regard to the role and rule of the people of Malay origin, the study does not accept Professor Paranavitana's theory that in the medieval period, it was much more extensive than the single historical episode of the invasion of the Malay King Chandrabhanu in the middle of the 13th century. The Malays of Indonesian and Malaysian origin are indentified as "Ceylon Malays".

The study "sets out for the first time to throw light on the history of the Malays of Sri Lanka and a pleasantly readable account of their origin and evolution in the island. More specifically the study highlights the induction of the Malays into the first Military service and the consequent developments which shaped their own outlook of life, attitudes and cultural ethos".

In this study, the author has gathered together material from first-hand sources and personal interviews with elderly knowledgeable Malays who were in a position to impart information on the life-styles and other traits of the preceding generation who served the Regiment. The material thus offered, well documented and systematically arranged presents a vivid and intimate picture of life of the Sri Lankan Malays from their origins down to the present times. The monograph is all the more reliable as it has been culled from authentic historical sources and adequately supplemented with maps, facsimilies of ancient writing, portraits, photographs, genealogies and statistics.

The book provides the answer to the 'lacunae' in the historical and cultural ethos of the Sri Lankan Malays. It provides useful research material and should help activate further research on the history etc., of Sri Lankan Malays by the Universities of Malaysia and Indonesia.

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