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bibliographie. Surtout, le lecteur doit admettre qu'en publiant pareille étude sur un sujet pourtant sensible, politiquement explosif, concernant une république réputée très portée sur la censure et le contrôle de l'opinion publique, l'auteur et son éditeur ont réussi un coup de maître. Plusieurs devront revoir leurs opinions sur la nature de l'autocratie et de la méritocratie singapouriennes.

Rodolphe De Koninck

Malais de Sri Lanka

Ronit Ricci, *Banishment and Belonging. Exile and Diaspora in Sarandib, Lanka and Ceylon*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019, 282 pages, ISBN: 978-1-108-72724-2 Paperback, ISBN: 978-1-108-48027-7 Hardback.

In her prize-winning *Islam Translated* (2011) Ronit Ricci treats versions in different languages of a single text, the *Book of One Thousand Questions*, as “lenses” through which she examines “the intricate relationships between Islamization and literary and linguistic transformation” (4) across languages and cultures in the Arabic Cosmopolis of South and Southeast Asia over several centuries. In her new book, texts, translations, and movement of people and ideas through time and space are still central to what interests her, but all three elements are now conceived of as expressions of a single “place” and group of people, known today as Sri Lankan “Malays,” who have come to call that place “home.” The scare quotes are important since all three words have complex, fluid meanings in this prodigious study of the “exilic experience” (14).

The community of Malays formed out of the exiles, convicts, slaves and soldiers the Dutch began bringing to Ceylon in the late seventeenth century consisted of people of many ethnicities who adapted culturally and linguistically to their new home but never forgot the many different parts of Indonesia from whence they had come. The exiles became a diaspora. Ricci calls the people who interest her “a diasporic Malay community” that “maintained its culture through the preservation of language, the transmission of literary and religious texts, and the maintenance of genres and of a script” (23). The approach Ricci takes to understanding Malay experience in Sri Lanka is a “slow reading” (Nietzsche’s phrase for what a good philologist does) of texts in Dutch, Arabic, Malay and Javanese that she found in colonial archives and manuscript collections in the Netherlands, Indonesia, Malaysia, the UK and Sri Lanka as well as in the homes of Sri Lankan families she visited during her years of research. With the assistance of funds from the British Library’s Endangered Archives Programme, Ricci filmed and assembled an archive of the privately held texts, letters, and personal diaries she discovered, making

them available for viewing online at the British Library's website <https://eap.bl.uk/project/EAP450>.

Starting in Chapter 2, Ricci slowly and insightfully reads her way toward an understanding of Malay experience in Ceylon, also known as Sarandib and Lanka, two other names for the island that contribute crucial meanings to its 'simultaneity of stories-so-far', an inspired definition Ricci borrows from the geographer Doreen Massey to describe the physical/imaginary "space" in which Sri Lankan Malays have lived since the late seventeenth century (149). In Chapter 2 a miscellaneous collection of mainly Arabic and Malay-language texts called the *Malay Compendium*, dating from the nineteenth century and belonging to the Saldin family, yields insights into connections between the Malay community and the Arab world. Ricci's most serendipitous (more about this word in a moment) discovery in the *Compendium* was an entire poem in Javanese, the well-known *Kidung Rumeksa ing Wengi*, used, like the many *doas* and *wasilans* she discusses later in the book, as a personal protective amulet to ward off danger.

In Chapters 3-5 Ricci explores diasporic memories of Java from various perspectives. In Chapter 3, she examines personal expressions of loss and longing in correspondence, found in archival Dutch translations, between exiled Javanese royalty in the 1720s, then discusses two religious texts in Malay, a fragmentary biography of Sunan Bonang and the much longer *Hikayat Tuan Gusti* (1897) about Sunan Giri, to derive a sense of collective Sri Lankan Malay anxiety about their Muslim identity. In Chapter 4 Ricci assembles "fleeting ... concise and laconic" (80) accounts in Javanese *babads* from Surakarta of the exile and posthumous return of Amangkurat III (*diselongake* in 1708; his body, accompanied by his relatives-in-exile and the sacred *pusaka* he had taken with him, returned to Kartasura in 1737) and Pangeran Arya Mangkunagara, father of the Mangkunagara I, who was exiled in 1728, his body returned to Java in 1753. As brief as they are, Ricci's "slow reading" of these *babad* passages reveals how they transformed Javanese disempowerment into supernatural superiority over the Dutch, a posthumous victory still remembered in oral histories about "Tuan Pangeran" and his vacant tomb, which is located in the Peer Saib Mosque and was visited by Mangkunagara VII and his wife in 1936, circulating in Colombo today. In the next chapter Yasadipura I's fuller and more nuanced *Babad Giyanti* account of the return of Pangeran Natakusuma (renamed Pangeran Juru) and his wife to the court of Hamangkubuwana I in 1758 enables Ricci to say something about women's voices and exilic experiences. In Yasadipura's description of Raden Ayu Juru's visit to the court of Pakubuwana III after her return to Java, the "female voice speaking is personal, emphasizing small moments of sadness and resilience, relationships, and the power of the unseen" (106). The same poetic passage also makes mention of charismatic Islamic teachers who offered Raden Ayu Juru and her family religious inspiration during the years of painful exile

as well as comfort in the form of favorite Javanese fruit and dishes magically transported to Ceylon every Friday (107). *Babad* accounts of the return of another exiled aristocratic woman, called “Putri Selong,” offer a second example of an eighteenth-century Javanese woman who endured the tribulations of her life while remaining “beautiful, graceful and resourceful” (117).

In Chapters 6 and 7 Ricci offers penetrating analyses of two interrelated stories of exile: Nabi Adam’s fall from Paradise to a mountain, known today in English as Adam’s Peak, on the island of Sarandib, the Arabic name for Ceylon, and the *Ramayana*, a story of successive exiles and sorrowful separations. The story of Adam’s fall to Sarandib derives from early Arab traditions, surveyed by Ricci, and is also recalled in Arabic and Arab-Tamil stories about the prophets written in Sri Lanka; the *Malay Compendium*, mentioned above, offers a particularly striking version of the tale (130-131). Ricci answers the question of whether or not exiles to Ceylon identified themselves with Adam’s “paradigmatic human and Muslim banishment” (133) by turning to the religious writings of Yusuf al-Makassari who was exiled to Ceylon in 1684, spending a decade there before being sent even further into exile to the Cape Settlement in Africa. One text in particular, the *al-Nafḥat al-Sailāniyyah fi manḥat al-raḥmāniyyah*, “The Whiff/Fragrance of Ceylon Concerning the Setting Out of Mystical Topics,” makes the connection between Adam’s fate and that of exiled Malays explicit (134). Ceylon and Sarandib were not just places of “wretched exile,” however. The island was also a paradisiacal place of “fragrance,” filled with fruit trees, pearls, emeralds, rubies, and sapphires, particularly in the neighborhood of Adam’s Peak, that made the island famous from the beginning of the Common Era (135). Adam’s story and its invitation to exilic readers to “see beyond present realities into other temporal and spiritual realms” (136) are found in many other Malay manuscripts written in nineteenth-century Ceylon, while in late eighteenth-century Java, Yasadipura I placed one of the adventures of Amir Hamzah, or Menak Amir Ambyah in Javanese, on the island of Selan/Serandil in his *Serat Menak Serandil*, where in a dream, among other allusions to Ceylon’s fabled wealth, Adam promises Menak’s companion Umarmaya “a pouch out of which anything he desired would emerge” (143). Pure “serendipity,” one might say, using the English word that was coined in 1754 by a near contemporary of Yasadipura I, Horace Walpole (1717-1797), who thought it up after reading a Persian tale, “Three Princes of Serendip,” about good fortune obtained entirely by accident (145). Ricci argues that Adam’s imaginary presence in Sarandib/Ceylon potentially transformed the unfortunate accident of exile into the good fortune of returning “home” to Sarandib, at least in the imaginations of the descendants of those who had been banished there. Even a “heartrending” letter written in *pegon* and sent by an eighteenth-century Javanese exile, Tumenggung Surapati, to his wife in Java expresses the consolation the writer found in comparing his

fate to that of Adam, who was eventually, “ ‘... through the mercy of Exalted God ... restored to his wife’s side ...’ ” (146).

No less formative for the Sri Lankan “Malay exilic imagination” was the *Ramayana* story, as Ricci argues beautifully in Chapter 7. A key text in South and Southeast Asia (popular in eighteenth-century Java, it is repeatedly alluded to, Ricci shows, in Yasadipura’s *Serat Menak Serandil*) as well as in diasporic Indian communities around the world, the *Ramayana* story is found in two incomplete Sri Lankan manuscripts of the *Hikayat Seri Rama* dating from the late nineteenth century. What makes the Sri Lankan Malay-language versions of the *Ramayana* story a fascinating expression of “the intertwining of Ceylon’s exilic traditions and their place in the literary and religious imagination” (160) is the fact that the exilic Adam and Sarandib Mountain are central to its telling of the story. Ricci examines other references to the *Ramayana* in the Sri Lankan Malay imaginary: the name of the first Malay newspaper, the *Alamat Langkapuri*, founded in Colombo in 1869 by Baba Ounus Saldin; a long *pantun* published in the July 11, 1869 issue of the paper; a *wasilan*, called the *garisan Laksmana*, for protection against approaching enemy soldiers on the battlefield, alluding to the magical line Laksmana draws around Sita to protect her when he rushes off to find Rama who has been tricked into chasing a demon ally of Rawana, Marica, disguised as a golden deer. In a brilliant insight, Ricci sees a connection between Adam and Sita, both of whose names refer to the “earth,” as “paradigmatic exiles.” In the *Hikayat Seri Rama*, Ricci writes, Sita’s “life, which even after her return from captivity in Rawana’s Langkapuri continued as a form of exile in the forest hermitage due to Rama’s distrust, suggests that there is no possibility of a true, complete, unblemished return” (176).

In her final two chapters Ricci examines paratextual elements in a wide variety of texts – literary manuscripts; family diaries, genealogies and notes; letters – to bring the literary and cultural life of Sri Lankan Malay members of the British colonial Ceylon Rifle Regiment (or Malay Regiment, formed in 1795 and disbanded in 1873) and their descendants into full view. She examines personal details of authors’ lives; discusses how literary works were copied back and forth between Ceylon and Singapore; and shows how *syairs* about Malay military exploits reveal the core Islamic values of the Sri Lankan Malay community: “We are Allah’s slaves, / Kept far from any affliction. / If willing [to] commit no wrong / The path shall be flawless” (195). The inner world of the Malay community, as revealed by their literary tastes and the paratextual details of their literary activities, is full of ambivalences, struggles and insights into life under colonial rule. Ricci concludes her book with an examination of the biography and writings of Baba Ounus Saldin (1832-1906), mentioned above. Ricci’s Saldin, whose grandfather left Sumenep, Madura in 1800 as a recruit in the British colonial army, is a fascinating pioneer on the

shifting “frontiers of a Malay-Muslim presence on the stage of contemporary world events” (229).

Ronit Ricci’s *Banishment and Belonging* is a huge scholarly accomplishment on many levels. It assembles a new archive of texts for others to explore. It brings Malays “back into” the history of Sri Lanka. It connects Sri Lanka, through her “slow reading” of what must be hundreds of texts, to the wider world of Islam and across the Indian Ocean to Southeast Asia, where Islamic tales, as she points out in a serendipitous gem of a footnote (165, n. 41), have undergone “Ramayanization,” a fact with particular salience for the study of the Sri Lankan “exilic experience.” Her deft and modest use of key insights drawn from theoretical writings is exemplary. Her situated interpretations of texts allow the “place,” Ceylon/Sarandib/Lanka, where her primary sources were written, copied, read and heard, to acquire rich new meanings and for the texts themselves to mean something new because of that multidimensional, multitemporal place. Has she also managed, in this beautifully written and masterfully researched book, to “liberate philology” and make a major contribution toward allowing philology to “realize its full potential as a unified transregional and transhistorical academic discipline” (Pollock 2015, 18)? My answer would be “yes.”

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