

Claude Guillot, Lukman Nurhakim et Sonny Wibisono, *Banten avant l'Islam: Étude archéologique de Banten Girang (Java-Indonésie) 932?-1526*. Paris: Publications de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient, Monographies, no. 173, 1994)

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This account of archeological work begins by invoking Hoesein Djajadiningrat.. Djajadiningrat was a scholar native to the region whose excellent work, which relied primarily on European sources, brought the history of the Muslim sultanate of Banten to light. His study was so well done, says Guillot, that it obscured the long history of Banten before Islam. Guillot corrects the impression left by Djajadiningrat, who thought that Banten only achieved importance with the coming of Islam, by showing that Banten was a trading state of considerable size for six centuries before 1526. Moreover, Islamic Banten retained the same structure of trade and myths of state that had been in place throughout the earlier era, from the tenth to the sixteenth century.

It is often the pride of archeologists to uncover something where no one thought to look before. In this case it is different. Little had been done on the site because everyone believed Djajadiningrat:: before Islam there was not much worth the effort to uncover. But the site was well known by inhabitants of the region as the center of the region's political authority in pre-Muslim times. One only had to make an effort to dig there. But to do that, one had to suspect Djajadiningrat despite the high quality of his work, and one had to resist the strong tendency of archeologists in Indonesia (and in the Indies) to concentrate on sacred rather than urban sites. Guillot's report, then, is not the usual archeological account of finding something whose importance was known beforehand but its location unknown. It is a story of finding something whose significance had been minimized to the point of obscuring its very existence, but whose location was known.

The results of the digging amply show the substantial role of pre-Muslim Banten in trade. There was an important city at this site whose history Guillot traces. His account is limited to reporting the archeological work at the site, but his close account of the archaeological discoveries provides a wealth of information about the culture and myths of this extinct trading center. Guillot's many articles on Banten, mostly published in *Archipel*, need to be consulted in order to appreciate the amplitude of the findings. This particular report is divided into three sections. The first part describes the site. The third contains analyses of various materials by diverse experts. The interpretation is modestly set in the middle.

To interpret his findings, Guillot puts them in the context of others. He is concerned in part to show that Banten was more than a port city; it was also a state. As a state it shared with other Javanese states the Hindu notion of the sacred mountain. Here Guillot shows himself to be a detective, uncovering not a crime but a cultural logic. He begins with the myth of Syeh Haji Manggur recounted in *Wawacan Haji Mangsur*. It is the story of the son of Sultan Ageng who, returning from China, finds that he has a double who is now the ruler of Banten. Instead of contending for the throne, he isolates himself in the manner of priest-kings in the mountains. Guillot interprets this as showing the importance of the magic mountain for Banten, even after Islam. And surely it is an odd story. Why should a myth whose function is to legitimize the kingdom in effect claim that a king is false and that the real king is somewhere else? It only makes sense if one understands the function of the double; it is to show that the 'real' king exists in the sacred mountain; that therefore the port city is connected with sources of the sacred. Guillot several times shows the continuity

between the Hindu and Islamic kingdoms, not only in the structure of their economies but in the continuity of this myth. Even at the end of the sixteenth century, after a considerable period of Islamic rule, the kingdom supported a group of Hindu priests secluded in the mountains. He further finds Shivite statues in the National Museum which he traces first to the garden of the Assistant Resident of Caringin and from there to the sacred mountains. These statues attest to an important religious sanctuary dating from the time of the founding of Banteng. All this indicates that the pre-Islamic port, whose importance can no longer be contested after his archeological work, was also a state .

The discovery is significant because it demonstrates the perdurable influence of a Hindu idea. But the significance of Guillot's analysis extends further than this. The Hindu notion of the magic mountain is intriguing because it is found in conjunction with trade. One wants to know its function in a port city. Guillot addresses this question by pointing out that Banten was not merely a trading, but also a producing state; one begins to see how a localizing myth might be of more importance to an agricultural than to a trading state. But there is another dimension to the material Guillot has gathered. Guillot relates the story of Hasannudin, who first went to Mt. Pulsari before conquering Banten and initiating the Muslim period of its history. Having departed from the mountain, Hasannudin made a journey to the island of Panaitan; there, in the sea, he found a sacred gong. Guillot finds in this story an explanation for the presence on Panaitan of statues of Shiwa and Ganesha. The long passage of the *Sajarah Banten* that tells this story "intends to describe the spiritual conquest of the territory which later he defeated by arms." (102)

Guillot describes what at first one might assume to be a melding of traditions, a condition common throughout the archipelago. But perhaps it could be pointed out how strange this particular fusion of traditions is. Why, for instance, if it is a question of 'spiritual conquest,' should the story be told in code? If one unravels the code it means that Hindu elements were defeated by a Muslim prince. Why, then, not tell the story outright? It is a parallel to the story of the double of Syeh Haji Manggur. Understanding that story, one sees that the real king is in the sacred mountain, which is certainly desirable; but the king on the throne, presumably the ancestor of later kings, has replaced the original *syeh*, an imperfect situation that cannot be fully accounted for by referring to the inexplicable character of other people's myths.

The Hindu mountain localizes; it situates the city in relation to a sacred site which it includes as part of its own political territory. (The mountain is, in fact, moveable. It starts out in India. Guillot, elaborating an idea of Pigeaud, traces it to Mt. Mahameru, the tip of which is said in the *Tantu Panggelaran* to have moved from central to east Java.) The origin of the state is to be found within the locality, visible to anyone there who looks up. The tendency here to anchor vision and imagination in one place contrasts with the tendency of Malay coastal trading states to extend themselves outward, legitimizing themselves by connection to the distant. One thinks, of course, of the numerous claims of descent from Rom. And one thinks how frequently inhabitants of these states, not merely traders but sometimes the rulers, were immigrants from other places. Guillot points out how infiltrated with Malay the Javanese language of Banten is. Recognizing the significance of this linguistic evidence, he rightly sets up his study as an examination of Malay states. Later in time one finds Buginese reigning in Malay-speaking states on the peninsula. One also finds the language of the Acehnese court to be Malay and the language in the countryside to be Acehnese. In these multilingual and multiethnic situations, there were cultures that took in the foreign and preserved its foreign quality. Guillot points out, for instance, that Banten was a vassal state and notes how it was founded by Javanese under the aegis of Sriwejaya,

how it revolted against Sriwejaya in favor of Javanese suzerainty, and continued to pose itself between Javanese and Malay worlds. He finds it remarkable that it never succeeded in establishing itself as a truly independent state. It was always a vassal with only a "relative independence." "It would be better to speak of a theoretical dependence which, in practice, left its rulers every latitude so long as they respected certain rituals of submission to a suzerain too distant or too weak to demand more." (118). This, he points out, was often true in the region. But it raises the question of why. Real vassalage has certain advantages; it might be part of a system of order that ensured the peace necessary for trade, for instance. Such arrangements show again the connection to distant places and sometimes distant ancestors.

It is not so much that Banten or Malay trading states were part of larger entities, perhaps. It is rather that such states demonstrated their capacity to take in the foreign. They localized it precisely through the contradictions that Guillot so skillfully uses to trace Bantenese history. A contradiction is the presence of something that does not fit. The myths of these states accept and even welcome contradiction; they do not teach the necessity of assimilation. The double of the ruler, who actually ruled, had the advantage of the sacredness of his second in the obscurity of the mountains. But as a double himself, as imposter, he was also a stranger of sorts, evidence of the power of the state to absorb the foreign. Islamic Banten took in Hinduism in this way. At the heart of the trading state was its capacity to take in. The history of Banten displays a process of incorporation, one that keeps what it takes in unnoticed. One can imagine a rich variety of foreign elements existing, unnoticed but findable, in ancient Banten. Given this tradition, it is appropriate that Guillot found pre-Islamic Banten intact within its Muslim successor.

One thinks again of the Bantenese scholar, Hoesein Djajadiningrat, a man who compiled an extraordinary Acehese-Dutch dictionary though he was not a native speaker of either the Acehese or Dutch language. In obscuring the pre-Islamic history of Banten, Djajadiningrat left the signs of it in place in the *Critische Beschouwing van de Sajahar Banten: Bijdrage ter Kenschetsing van de Javaansche Geschiedschrijving*. He perceived the contradictions and eliminated them; evidence of his method can be traced. Guillot points out how he refused to use local sources when they contradicted European ones, and he chose his Portuguese sources poorly. But in rejecting the *Sajahar Banten* and other non-European sources, Djajadiningrat called attention to them. In this action he is not unlike Hasanuddin, who changed one Hindu relic for another and relegated them all to insignificance. As I have tried to show elsewhere, Djajadiningrat's dictionary demonstrates the untranslatability of Acehese into Dutch. Nevertheless, translation seems to take place so that the original appears as something the Dutch contains but cannot render; the foreign remains as foreign. Guillot, from his perspective, does not show the melding of traditions. His advantage, precisely, is to indicate how insignificant signs, the ruins of Banten well-known to local inhabitants and ignored by everyone else, contained another history which is at once part of the tradition of Islamic Banten and incompatible with it. Guillot is an appreciator of Djajadiningrat. He shows it in this brilliant revision; shows, that is, that he saw that the insignificant matters in a peculiarly Malay way.