Yumi Sugahara and Willem van der Molen, *Transformation of Religions; as Reflected in Javanese Texts*. Tokyo: Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa (ILCAA) [Javanese Studies Series 5], 2018, ix + 179 pp., ISBN: 9784863372580, price: free on application to the publisher (see <http://www.aa.tufs.ac.jp/en/publications/inquiry>) (paperback).

Anybody with an academic interest in Java sooner or later comes across the fascinating conundrum of Java's religious condition. For over a century and a half, questions regarding the core of the Javanese religious system (is it animist or Islamic?), the nature of Javanese Islam (is it an Islam that has been Javanized or a Javanese religion that has been Islamized? Both?), and the historical processes and religious dynamics by which this phenomenon has come about have dominated many scholarly agendas. Given the reported deepening of Java's Islamization over the last decades, these types of issues have all but lost their relevance and poignancy.

Against that backdrop the research project of the Research Institute for Languages and Culture of Asia and Africa of Tokyo University of Foreign Studies initiated in 2013 is highly relevant, as it centers on the interpretation and transformation of received religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam in Java on the basis of textual analysis of Old and Modern Javanese. Bringing together leading experts engaged in the study of these languages and this topic, makes this initiative both remarkable and laudable. The current title is the first published result of these efforts.

Java's transition from Hindu-Buddhism, as epitomized by the Majapahit empire, to Islam has been of special interest to anyone who wants to come to grips with the specific configurations of the latter religion on the island. Although the scholarly publications on Javanese Islam and Islam in Java are abundant, how the transformation occurred remains unclear. This is to a large extent due to the fact that most of the Javanese and Old Javanese literature is not yet accessible, especially not to the academic public that does not master these languages. Among other reasons to recommend this book, this alone makes it worthwhile.

The present edited volume contains eight separate contributions, each reflecting different research specialties. Every individual essay contains, in some measure, an analysis of a Javanese text or texts, with a particular focus on how it reflects religion, or certain religious categories. The individual essays are ordered more or less chronologically, from the ninth century CE until now.

Stuart Robson's contribution discusses a number of key concepts underlying the Old-Javanese, *kakawin* literature. To this end, Robson analyzes several

BIJDRAGEN TOT DE TAAL-, LAND- EN VOLKENKUNDE

© JOCHEM W.P. VAN DEN BOOGERT, 2019 | DOI:10.1163/22134379-17502015

This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the prevailing CC-BY-NC license at the time of publication.

works ranging from 1157 to 1222 CE. The discussed concepts give us some idea of the religious, philosophical, and political concerns of both authors and public. Some of the concepts prefigure ideas from *aliran kebatinan* ('mystical movements') and *Kejawen* ('Javanism' or 'Javaneseness').

Toru Aoyama analyzes a Ramayana scene found on one of the Prambanan reliefs, which is not featured in the Old Javanese and Sanskrit textual tradition of this same story. On the basis of textual analysis and comparison with scenes from dramatic Ramayana performances, Aoyama ventures the interpretation that the reliefs depict the moment of liberation (*moksa*), when someone is released from his/her body. Thus, it seems the Javanese had both a profound understanding of Indian culture and had managed to disseminate this in a localized manner.

Miho Yamasaki's essay investigates the gods addressed in imprecations found on ninth and tenth century official inscriptions in Central and East Java. This sheds light on the way Indic elements were employed in the practice of imprecations. Interestingly, these Indic elements did not supplant indigenous elements. Moreover, a difference in addressed deities in the Central Javanese from East Javanese imprecations is noticeable. This difference might be related to matters of royal authority or status.

In *Javanese calendar and myth*, Koji Miyazaki deals with *pawukon*, i.e. descriptions of *wuku* or Javanese 30-week calendar, in relation to the Watun Gunung story, which narrates its origin. His discussion touches upon the different versions and interpretations of this story.

Bernard Arps analyzes the shadow play of *Bima Suci*, at the Surakarta court of Paku Buwana IV. Laying bare its 'quest narrativity,' which resonates with the intellectual court life of the period, Arps identifies Bima's quest as the path to mystical union with God, which is a quintessential Sufi theme. This essay provides a detailed exposition of religious transformation.

Serat jiljalaha ('Satan's sermon') by Raden Riya Ranadiningrat, a treasurer of the Yogyakarta court, is a late nineteenth century text, which Edwin Wieringa discusses thoroughly. In this text the reader is instructed by the devil himself to indulge in five cardinal vices, that are in fact an inversion of the basic Javanese Islamic ethical codes. The piece is a satirical yet sharp critique of the hedonistic lifestyle of the *priyayi* ('Javanese nobility') at the central Javanese court.

George Quinn relates how Adburrahman Wahid, the leader of Nahdlatul Ulama and president of Indonesia from 1999 to 2001, is by many Javanese regarded as a *Wali* ('Sufi saint'). The tales told about Gus Dur echo themes from Javanese literature such as the meeting of Sunan Kalijaga with the Prophet Khidr and that of Wrekudara with Dewa Ruci.

Ronit Ricci discusses textual sources of the Javanese (Malay) diaspora in colonial Ceylon, specifically with regard to Javanese religious life. From the fragmentary materials emerges a complex and layered picture. This opens up new avenues of research, such as the questions of if and in what way Javanese religious beliefs and practices might have changed in this diasporic setting.

Each contribution in this volume provides valuable insights into momentary transformations and adaptations, as well as continuities. Consequently, one should not expect from such a collection a simple answer as to how the shift from Hindu-Buddhism to Islam in Java came about. Generally speaking, the investigation into the dynamics of the Javanese reception and adaptation of traditions and religions is in need of a proper theoretical grounding. The current publication provides useful building blocks for such a discussion, and we hope that a next volume will also venture further into theoretical aspects.

Jochem W.P. van den Boogert

LIAS, Leiden University

j.w.p.boogert@hum.leidenuniv.nl