

Abdur-Razzaq Lubis, *Sutan Puasa: Founder of Kuala Lumpur*. Areca Books, Penang, 2018, xxxii + 615 pp. ISBN: 9789675719332, price: RM 144.00 (hardcover).

This book is a long-awaited sequel to an earlier study by the same author, *Raja Bilah and the Mandailings of Perak*. In this monograph, the author shifts his focus to another nineteenth-century Mandailing leader, Sutan Puasa, and the Mandailings in Selangor, Pahang, and the broader Malay Peninsula, as well as the connections with their homeland regions in Sumatra. While the book purportedly deals with the historiographical debates over the origins of Kuala Lumpur, adding another dimension and historical figure, Sutan Puasa, to the contest between supporters of Yap Ah Loy and Raja Abdullah as the founder of what became the capital of Malaysia, it also addresses a wider range of historiographical issues in the Malay world and its constituent national histories. These issues include: the role of migration in Peninsular and Malaysian history, the history of Mandailing (and also Rawa and other Sumatran) migration in the Malay world, and the roles of the communities and their leaders in the nineteenth-century Malay Peninsula's political economy, and the transnational histories of Sumatra and the peninsula, well into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The historiography of the Malay world region has long been shaped by the ethnic politics of colonial rule and the post-colonial nation-state. Concomitant with this politics was the reduction of the many identities and communities to the Chinese, Malay, Indian, and Others typology in Malaysia and Singapore, and the "mosaic" framing of ethnicity and identity onto the imperial/national map in Indonesia, and different stereotypes highlighting the difference and "uniqueness" of the different communities. Thus, migration is almost always synonymous with the Chinese, European, Indian and other communities, while Muslim communities from around the region, at least in the eyes and classifications of the colonial and nation-states in Malaysia and Singapore, were increasingly subsumed within the category of "Malay." In these schemes, entrepreneurship and business came to be associated with foreign groups, and agriculture and the rural with the Malay. During the late colonial period and the early decades of independence and nation-building, the state claimed the role of mediator, and highlighted and reinforced these categorizations and the racialized politics. While these categorizations and classifications are increasingly critiqued by historians and anthropologists, they remain very powerful historiographical frames to understand the Malay world's past.

Abdur Razzaq's study of Sutan Puasa is an important contribution to recent efforts to question these stereotypes and to reframe Malaysian as well as Malay

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world history. While the title suggests a more modest project to advance Sutan Puasa as the founder of Kuala Lumpur, vis-à-vis the Malay and Chinese candidates, what the book documents is the story of Mandailing migration in the nineteenth century, especially in the context of the Padri War in western and central Sumatra, and their adaptation to new environments in the peninsula, through tin-mining and through trade. The roles of Sutan Puasa and his contemporaries, like Raja Dori, provide important histories of entrepreneurship, and the Mandailing perspective complicates the Malay-Chinese-European ethnic model that had previously been used to tell this history.

This history of migration highlights the need to transcend colonial/national boundaries in writing the history of the Malay world. The Sumatran mobilities across the Straits of Melaka and the Malay Peninsula represent the continuation of earlier mobilities within the maritime/riverine zones, but they were caused by late eighteenth-century and early to mid-nineteenth century developments on both sides of the straits, from the Padri movement and their extension into the Batak lands, followed by the Dutch colonial expansion in western and Central Sumatra in the 1830s, as well as the tin wars on the peninsula from the 1850s, and the wars surrounding the British intervention in Perak, Selangor, and the tin-mining states of Sungei Ujong in the 1870s.

Looking at the history of the region from these mobilities provides an alternative to the narratives centering on foreign expansion and indigenous resistance/collaboration, while blurring the lines between foreign and indigenous in the historiography of the Malay world. It emphasizes the diversity and fluidity of identities and alliances in the region, especially the diversity and “mixedness” of Malayness. Abdur Razzaq’s retelling of the nineteenth-century history of the west coast states also shows how the Chinese migration and expansion of tin-mining and trade to the region might not just have been at the invitation of the contesting Malay rulers or princes in the region, but could have been at the behest of the Mandailing leaders in the Kuala Lumpur area. This migration and working of the tin could certainly happen only with the invitation and/or the assistance of the Mandailing communities settling there, thus highlighting the cooperation and close relationships between leaders in these communities and networks.

The biography of Sutan Puasa and his role in the history of Kuala Lumpur and the peninsular Malay states along with other Mandailing leaders highlight the limitations of national and ethnic boundaries in understanding the structural dynamics of Malay world history. It covers an important gap between the maritime mobilities of the early modern period in the region’s history and the ethnic histories of late colonial Malaya and the new nation-states of Malaysia and Singapore, and Indonesia. The title belies the deeper significance of the

book. It is an important addition to the growing literature seeking to reframe the history of the Malay world and Southeast Asian historiography from the perspective of mobility.

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