

SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES

<https://englishkyoto-seas.org/>

<Book Review>

Yerry Wirawan

Ge Song. *Indes néerlandaises et culture chinoise, deux traductions malaises du Roman des Trois Royaumes (1910–1913)*. Paris: Archipel (Hors-Série 1), 2021.

Southeast Asian Studies, Vol. 12, No. 2, August 2023, pp. 367-369.

How to Cite: Wirawan, Yerry. Review of *Indes néerlandaises et culture chinoise, deux traductions malaises du Roman des Trois Royaumes (1910–1913)* by Ge Song. *Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 2, August 2023, pp. 367-369. DOI: 10.20495/seas.12.2_367.

Link to this book review:

<https://englishkyoto-seas.org/2023/08/vol-12-no-2-book-reviews-yerry-wirawan/>

View the table of contents for this issue:

<https://englishkyoto-seas.org/2023/08/vol-12-no-2-of-southeast-asian-studies/>

Subscriptions: <https://englishkyoto-seas.org/mailling-list/>

For permissions, please send an e-mail to:

english-editorial[at]cseas.kyoto-u.ac.jp



standing the challenges faced by unions, workers, and governments in newly independent nations in promoting the interests of workers, ensuring that they enjoy the full benefits of hard-won independence, while also maintaining a functioning economy and polity.

Colin Brown

Griffith Asia Institute, Griffith University, Brisbane

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8239-6963>

Indes néerlandaises et culture chinoise, deux traductions malaises du Roman des Trois Royaumes (1910–1913)

GE SONG

Paris: Archipel (Hors-Série 1), 2021.

Song Ge's *Indes néerlandaises et culture chinoise, deux traductions malaises du Roman des Trois Royaumes (1910–1913)* is a detailed study of the translations of *Sam Kok* (*Sanguo Yanyi* [Romance of the three kingdoms]) by Lie In Eng (c. 1890–1941, b. Padang) and Tjie Tjin Koeij (1890–?, b. Sukabumi) into Chinese Malay during the colonial era of the Netherlands East Indies. Both translators published their works in Batavia in 1910–13, when the Chinese Peranakan in the Netherlands East Indies were rethinking their cultural and political identity. In her study, Song Ge connects classical Chinese literature and culture with the rising modern world of translators and readers in the Netherlands East Indies (p. 13). She extends her analysis with a multidisciplinary approach using literature, philology, history, and sociology to give a comprehensive context to the translated work.

Song Ge has divided her book into three parts. In the first part (three chapters), she provides the basic literary and historical background for studying the two translations of *Sanguo Yanyi*. In Chapter 1 she traces the translation of Chinese works in the Netherlands East Indies before 1910 with a list of 31 translators and their works (pp. 31–34). In the next chapter the author details the origin of *Sanguo Yanyi* and its evolution. Chapter 3 deals with earlier adaptations of the work into Malay and other local languages. This chapter also contains a brief profile of the two translators (pp. 58–68).

Since the role of translators is central to works such as this, Lie In Eng and Tjie Tjin Koeij deserve greater attention; unfortunately, we have little knowledge of their lives.¹⁾ Both translators are remarkable since they started work on *Sam Kok* while in their twenties. Their education—Lie In Eng's in a Chinese school and Tjie Tjin Koeij's with a private tutor—allowed them to gain

1) In 1976, Tjie Tjin Koeij worked as a guardian of a Chinese temple in Surabaya (Salmon 1981, 351).

proficiency in Malay and Chinese. Lie In Eng's translation (5,308 pages) was first published in *Sin Po* and was then sold in 65 fascicles, while Tjie Tjin Koeij's work (4,665 pages) was printed by a Batavia publisher (Tjiong Koeng Bie) in 62 fascicles.²⁾ The close publication dates of their works (1910–13) demonstrated the popularity of *Sam Kok* and resulted in a rivalry between the translators for readership (pp. 73–74).

The book's second part (five chapters) provides a comprehensive literary study of the translated work. The author highlights the aims of Lie In Eng and Tjie Tjin Koeij in translating *Sam Kok*, which included commercial reasons—such as for the daily *Sin Po* to expand its circulation—and, more deeply, a desire to reconnect the Chinese Peranakan with traditional Chinese values. The author then examines the version of *Sam Kok* probably used for the translations and ends by discussing the linguistic, literary, and cultural aspects of the translations.

The third part (three chapters) evaluates the social and political impact of *Sam Kok* on the Chinese Peranakan of the Netherlands East Indies. The author begins by narrating the rise of Chinese national consciousness (*Bangsa Tionghoa*). She analyzes the impact of *Sam Kok* on the Chinese Peranakan community in the Netherlands East Indies by looking at the mentality of readers, examining the role of *Sin Po* in bridging modernity and tradition, and reflecting on the national imagination of Benedict Anderson (pp. 226–232). This conceptual discussion on nation using Anderson's theory leads us to think of the development of nationhood (*Minzu*) within the diverse ethnic groups in the Chinese community in the Netherlands East Indies (*Bangsa Tionghoa*). As mentioned earlier and highlighted in the conclusion, the story of *Sam Kok* published in *Sin Po* allowed Chinese Peranakan from different regions to connect with their ancestral land.

In the final chapter, the author shares her observations and analyses of the translated work as a construction of the past. She provides examples of how *Sam Kok* has been cited by writers online to explain political conflicts in contemporary Indonesia. Interestingly, these writers have chosen to focus on political figures with a Chinese background, such as Basuki Tjahaja Purnama alias Ahok (b. 1966, governor of Jakarta 2014–17), or political leaders idolized by the Chinese in Indonesia, such as Abdurrahman Wahid or Gus Dur (1940–2009; fourth Indonesian president, 1999–2001) (pp. 242–243).³⁾

The book includes three appendices citing Tjie Tjin Koeij's translated works: "Preface" (pp. 273–278), "To the Reader of *Sam Kok*" (pp. 279–288), and "Thirty Teachings and Chinese Proverbs Translated into Malay" (pp. 289–294). A glossary at the end of the appendices provides us with a list of loanwords from Minnanhua, a dialect from the south of Fujian, in the Malay language used by Peranakan Chinese in Java at the beginning of the twentieth century (pp. 295–296).

Overall, this book goes beyond a translation study. It provides an extensive analysis of the

2) Salmon (1981, 226–227, 351–352).

3) Once Gus Dur declared himself as a Chinese descendant.

role of *Sam Kok*'s translations in highlighting social and cultural changes among the Chinese Peranakan in the Netherlands East Indies at the beginning of the twentieth century. The author illuminates the multifaceted significance of *Sam Kok*. First, the translations show the cultural connections between Chinese literature in the mainland and overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia. Second, the fact that the translations are read even today indicates the intergenerational readership of these works within the Chinese Peranakan community. Further study is warranted to compare these translations of *Sam Kok* with translations in other Southeast Asian contexts (p. 270).

Yerry Wirawan

Independent researcher

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8290-696X>

References

Salmon, Claudine. 1981. *Literature in Malay by the Chinese of Indonesia: A Provisional Annotated Bibliography*. Paris: Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme.

Community Movements in Southeast Asia: An Anthropological Perspective of Assemblages

RYOKO NISHII and SHIGEHARU TANABE, eds.
Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2022.

In *Community Movements in Southeast Asia*, Nishii Ryoko and Tanabe Shigeharu center the idea of community movements as forms of assemblages in which power arises in collectivity. The contributing authors understand power not as emanating from the state alone but coming into being in assemblages of people—a community. Their edited volume, hence, centers people's everyday experiences with power and participation in community movements, decentering and putting the role of the state into perspective. In effect, the book shows that power is fluid, multidirectional, and changing according to the assemblages that people are embedded in. Nishii summarizes community movement as being “the process by which people create alternative communities and worlds that can persist under inescapable hegemony” (p. 8). She further states that community movements distinguish themselves from social movements by being defined by heterogeneity, coincident formation, and joint action rather than homogeneity of members. As such, they are to be understood as assemblages without an assumed “pre-existing organic wholeness” (p. 9) to them. This theorization of community movements is drawn out by Nishii in dialogue with the individual chapters of the book, giving brief summaries of what readers can expect.

The first three contributing authors look at different community movements across Thailand