

KOENTJARANINGRAT: *Anthropology in Indonesia: a bibliographical review.* (Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde. Bibliographical Series, 8.) viii, 343 pp. 's-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975.

In Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies 42, 1. 1979: 173-4.

One of the least-known traditions in anthropological studies must be the Dutch scholarship on Indonesia. Despite the effort made in translating at least the major monographs, their work has, sadly, remained somewhat inaccessible to the general reader because of the difficulties with language, and few anthropologists working outside the area are acquainted properly, if at all, with their often distinguished writing. So the publication of a review of the development of social anthropological studies on Indonesia has been sorely needed. In this scholarly and readable book, Professor Koentjaraningrat has written an essential work for all, whether anthropologists or not, who have an interest in either Indonesian societies or the development of Dutch social anthropology.

Anthropology in Indonesia discusses the documentation of Indonesian societies from the first contacts with sailors through to the post-war period and concludes with an account of the research and teaching at Indonesian universities and the possible application of anthropology to the problems of contemporary society. From the first chapters, the author moves to the distinctive developments of the Dutch academic tradition in the region. Appropriately, he does not confine himself to the relatively new discipline of social anthropology in the strict sense—as he points out in the introduction, such a book ‘would amount to no more than a discussion of the works of seven or eight persons’—but extends to include the field of Dutch Indonesian studies, or *indologie*. Of particular importance in this was the growth of studies on customary law, *adatrecht*, which has since fallen into a degree of disrepute, but from which the Dutch form of structuralism emerged by way of van Ossenbruggen, to be expanded in the classic work of W.H. Rassers, and later by J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong (not to be confused with P.E. de Josselin de Jong as the author wryly notes that Marvin Harris recently did). This important but little acclaimed development predated the later celebrated work in a similar direction by Lévi-Strauss in France. The last two chapters are an outline, one feels perhaps regrettably brief, of post-war studies, which are available for the most part in English, and a discussion of the place of anthropology in Indonesia in the present.

The work contains a clear, concise discussion of the writings and arguments of the main scholars in the growth of Indonesian social studies and an outline of some of the major criticisms, with bibliographical reference to others. There is an appraisal of the early sources (often cited enthusiastically by anthropologists for their supposedly pristine observations) which ignores the often heavy ethnocentrism, or downright vulgar chauvinism, and worse the apparently serious deliberations which are more subtly skewed. Sometimes, however, from strange beginnings such great works grew as Schärer's *Die Gottesidee der Ngadju Dajak in Süd-Borneo* (translated by Needham in 1983), which Koentjaraningrat mentions only in passing. The detailed review of the various scholarly contributions contains items of general anthropological interest in the application of the theories of Durkheim and Lévi-Bruhl, and in the criticism, both theoretical and ethnographic, of the contemporary American writer, Professor Clifford Geertz, by Indonesian scholars, and also of the now notorious arguments by Rassers and subsequent authors about the putatively original moiety systems upon which conceptual dualism was said to be founded. Finally, the author turns to examine the fields in which anthropology may have application to Indonesian social problems. Recent experience in this country of the problems encountered in the application of sociology makes one hope that the Indonesians will have more success.

The book is subtitled *a bibliographical review*, but this does not really do justice to its scope, which offers not only an overview, but a reasoned argument about the growth of a tradition of social anthropology in Indonesia. One striking feature is Koentjaraningrat's scrupulously fair presentation of views, marked by a pleasantly controlled, perhaps Javanese, sense of irony. As an instance, after a not ungenerous review of the contribution of Geertz who attempted to break with and supersede the Dutch tradition, the author remarks that by 1972 'Geertz came to the conclusion, as Dutch philologists had four decades earlier, that a tendency towards mysticism was the main continuous underlying theme of Javanese culture' (p. 216). Professor Koentjaraningrat on the history of Indonesian anthropology makes interesting and enjoyable reading.

MARK HOBART