

Between orientalism and ornamentalism:colonial perceptions of southeast asian rulers: 1850 - 1914

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Abstrak

ABSTRAK

Finding distinguishing characteristics of Southeast Asia has proven to be a significant challenge: by focusing on the encounters which primarily colonial British writers had with the region state rulers, it becomes possible to recover the early conceptualizations of regional governance. The writings of Henry Yule, Anna Leonowens, Sir George Scott, and Hugh Clifford all document the orientalist features of Western discourses because these writers at once were affected by it as they contributed to it. The discourse about royalty and rulers was central to many of the tropes associated with orientalism, but also with ornamentalism. David Cannadine has shown that ornamentalism (in which British conceptualized many imperial practices in relation to their own hierarchical conceptions of society) was as critical a feature of imperial outlook as was orientalism. The need to understand ruling elites was at the heart of the imperialist project. Tracing the ways in which colonizing powers represented the region ruling elite offers a new avenue for recognizing the affinities of the regional experience. Beyond orientalism, the paper explores questions about the representation and presentation of authority. Understanding the conceptualizations of rulers is connected to the comprehension of social organization including representations of traditional society.