

Recent Books on Indonesia – March 2011 (2)

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Hugo Grotius, the Portuguese and Free Trade in the East Indies / Peter Borschberg
Singapore: NUS Press, 2011
xxv. 482p. ; 23cm.
ISBN-13: 9789971694678
\$ 35.00

In 1603, Dutch Admiral Jakob van Heemskerck plundered a Portuguese merchantman, the Santa Catarina, travelling from Macao to Melaka. The sale of the cargo at a public auction made traders across Northern Europe aware of the riches to be reaped from Asian trade. However, the episode raised legal questions and the United Dutch East India Company (VOC) commissioned the young Hugo Grotius to defend Heemskerck's actions. Grotius produced two classic legal texts, The Law of Prize and Booty and its spin-off, The Free Sea, among the greatest works in the history of international legal and political thought. His observation dealt with free trade in the East Indies, the Dutch Republic's military conflict with the Portuguese and Spanish in Asia, and the legal and moral grounds for attacking and plundering Portuguese and Spanish mercantile shipping.

<http://www.marymartin.com/web?pid=110237>

BANDITRY in West Java 1869 – 1942 / Margreet Van Till
Singapore: NUS Press, 2011
ix. 282p. ; 23cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index
ISBN-13: 9789971695026

1. Brigands and robbers – Indonesia – Jakarta – History
2. Outlaws – Indonesia – Jakarta – History
3. Brigands and robbers in literature
4. Brigands and robbers – in motion pictures
5. Jakarta (Indonesia) – History

\$ 35.00

Banditry was rife around Batavia (modern Jakarta) during the late colonial period. Banditry in West Java identifies the bandits and describes both their working methods and their motives, which often went beyond simple self-enrichment. The author also explores the world of the victims of the robbers, mainly city-dwellers, who viewed them as the antithesis of civilization and made them into convenient subjects onto which respectable citizens projected their own preoccupations with sex, violence, and magic. Banditry was brought under control following reforms to the colonial police force in the Dutch East Indies in the early 1920s, but the bandit tradition lived on in Javanese popular imagination and folk culture. In particular it is found in tales of Si Pitung, a Robin Hood figure who flourished in nineteenth-century Batavia.

<http://www.marymartin.com/web?pid=123543>