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Illuminations: The Writing Traditions Of Indonesia



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Customer Reviews

Indonesian manuscripts offer us a wealth of insight and knowledge into the diverse writing traditions of the Indonesian archipelago. 'Illuminations' attempts to rectify the possibility that many of these Indonesian manuscripts could soon be lost as a result of human oversight and neglect, or the ravages of a humid, tropical environment. The preservation of such manuscripts, requiring a modified, air-conditioned environment under the care of experts, is an expensive task, and one that is perhaps justifiably low on the list of priorities for many Indonesians. However, the beauty of these manuscripts alone - in addition to the wealth of information they yield - would be a major cultural loss for Indonesia, and 'Illuminations' is the first book of its kind to acknowledge the importance of researching and preserving Indonesia's writing traditions. 'Illuminations' explores the development of the art of writing - and it truly is an art - in Indonesia, looking at the introduction and incorporation of Indic, Arabic, and Chinese scripts to the Malay world. The book is academic in its approach: both informative and analytical, characteristics not one typically associated with merely decorative coffee-table books. This book also explores manuscript techniques such as the production of lontar leaf as writing material (therefore preserving the technique in the face of encroaching technology), the use of materials other than 'paper' for recording words (gourds, belts, betel containers) and the many other factors - religious, environmental, cultural - that cause us to see the written word not in isolation but as art of a broader and continually evolving context. The use of manuscripts within the archipelago is clearly a form of recording significant religious/cultural stories (ones to be read aloud

to an audience), yet also a tradition involving great beauty, decoration and art as well. This book is not cheap - I finally bought it for myself as a graduation present - and it has been worth every cent. It is visually stunning, and offers a wealth of information and stimulation in addition to its many glossy pictures. Highly recommended to anyone interested in Indonesia, the history of writing, art, etc.

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