

A survey of indigenous scripts of Indonesia and the Philippines

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Indigenous writing systems of Island Southeast Asia have long been poorly documented and understood compared to those of India and mainland Southeast Asia, not least because their social position has been encroached upon by Jawi and then Latin script, which has replaced earlier scripts for nearly all social functions. Increased scholarly interest in the older scripts over the past century culminated in the 1996 publication of *Illuminations: The Writing Traditions of Indonesia* (Jakarta: Lontar), the first volume to tell the story of a broad variety of indigenous Indonesian scripts, combining scholarship with a reverence for the beauty of the scripts as expressions of the cultures in which they took root.

In parallel with the increase in work on Indonesian scripts, the past several decades have seen advances in research on indigenous script varieties in the Philippines and increased interest in their preservation and revival. This workshop is at once the first meeting dedicated to the topic of Island Southeast Asian scripts and the first occasion in which the scripts of the Philippines and Indonesia will be discussed together in a single forum transcending the political boundaries and identities established during and since the European colonial era.

Great advances have been made over the past decades in understanding the nature and history of the various scripts of Island Southeast Asia. Nonetheless, much of this knowledge has not yet become widely known. This survey presentation is designed to contrast widespread conceptions based on a small set of early reports with the far richer picture now surfacing from other previously little-known early work and research carried on over the last few decades. This literature gives a picture of a wide variety of non-Latin and non-Arabic/Jawi scripts used in the region, and reveals new details on the appearance and usage of scripts already attested. This profusely illustrated presentation will take the form of a “quick tour” through the various scripts attested in the region, in particular those not treated in other presentations, and dwelling in particular on important documents that reveal new perspectives on the form and usage of various scripts. Scripts covered in the survey:

Philippines

- *Baybayin*
- Kapampangan varieties (historical and modern)
- Palawan island varieties
- Mindoro island Mangyan varieties
- Eskayan script (non-Indic elaborated syllabary)

Sulawesi, Bima and Ende

- Bugis-Makassarese *Lontara'*
- Makassarese *Lontara' jangang-jangang* (“bird script”)
- *Lontara' bilang-bilang* cipher script
- A possible North Sulawesi Minahasa script
- Bimanese offshoot of *Lontara'*
- *Ende Lota* offshoot of *Lontara'*

North Sumatra

- Batak varieties

South and central Sumatra

- Rejang and Central Malay varieties (including Tanjung Tanah)
- Lampung varieties
- Kerinci varieties
- A possible old Minangkabau script

Others

- Borneo: a non-phonographic Iban mnemonic writing system
- *Gangga Malayu* cipher script of the Malay Peninsula