Reinventing the wheel

Hoodwinked by the enigmatic title, I expected to review a book on my preoccupation with anthropological fieldwork.

Nicholas Tarling

National politics, local contexts

Jacqueline Vel’s book provides a comprehensive account of socio-political developments in one of the most understudied regions of Eastern Indonesia. Based on extensive fieldwork over the last 20 years, Vel describes how changes in national politics have affected the conduct of local politics in West Sumba, a small district in East Nusa Tenggara province. With its broad temporal scope and its great attention to ethnographic detail, it will be an important reference for scholars working on Eastern Indonesia. However, it should be noted that a significant amount of the material presented in this book is actually not new (some data is based on fieldwork in the 1980s) and several chapters or parts thereof have already been published elsewhere.

Véronique de Vries

‘Inventing’ the horse

This book is full of interest. The geographical and historical core of it may be found in the sub-title. Its chief authors, Greg Bankoff and Sandra Swart, are respectively authorities on the Philippines and Southern Africa: the former discusses the introduction of horses in the Philippines, while the latter in Southern Africa and the emergence of the ‘Besoto pony’ in Lesotho.

Nicholas Tarling

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"I am going to try something a bit different and unorthodox with this book review — not one of my usual 5000 words or so, but more the size of a blog entry (600 words). The book we are reviewing is a small volume published by Oxford University Press in 2008 entitled, ‘Horses and Humans’ by Nicholas Tarling. It is short, it is sweet, it is..."