



# The Malay Archipelago

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## **The Malay Archipelago** Alfred Russel Wallace

A work of astounding scope and originality that provides some of the first evidence of the modern theory of evolution. Wallace, a contemporary of Charles Darwin, spent nearly a decade cataloging the plant and animal species which inhabited the unique geographical area of the Malay Archipelago, and remains to this day one of the most extensive works of natural history ever written.

## **The Malay Archipelago Details**

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Author : Alfred Russel Wallace

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## **From Reader Review The Malay Archipelago for online ebook**

### **Archer says**

This has been permanently shelved for the time being. A brief note: from what I read, one of the more interesting aspects were the pure imperial aspects and different attitudes of the time. This man was, in as much as we could say of that era, a naturalist. Yet, the way he enacted this was more or less to kill any interesting animal he saw and preserve it for science. I had a hard time stomaching the massacres of orangutans, the orphanage of a baby, which he attempted to feed on coconut milk, and which subsequently starved to death. Herein lies the question, what is best for the environment. Unquestionably, this man's methods seem contrary to the preservation of animal life, but the knowledge he brought to the western world through the preservation of the dead specimens would eventually help to bring recognition of the amazing ecological diversity of lands outside their own, and the need to preserve them. BUT, would these places and their creatures be in danger at all if not for the spread of imperialism and western culture, which promotes intensive agriculture for export and convinces people of a need to live a very inefficient and wasteful lifestyle? Who is to say again that those very same people would eventually not develop these things on their own? So many questions.

In one of David Attenborough's videos on youtube, he is reflecting on the things he has just seen, and then pulls out this book and proceeds to read from it. Apparently this was also Conrad's "Bedside Companion," and Wallace, who wrote it, proposed a theory of natural selection in a letter to Darwin only a short while before Darwin himself was to publish "On the Origin of Species."

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### **Margaretha Quina says**

Wallace makes natural history really fun! A tour across our archipelago through the detailed, easy to read description within the book. Wallace is definitely a great writer; and it's amazing that he can achieve this level of detail with all the hurdles and difficulty in exploring all kinds of ecosystem Indonesia had to offer. His talent in describing any species, including human race (and his feelings, and his judgment to various race) is very entertaining. A recommended reading to anyone who's traveling Indonesia, or who want to simply explore the vast archipelago through papers and pages.

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### **Nurul says**

Tadinya saya ragu2 mau baca edisi bahasa Indonesia ini. Tujuan penerbitnya mungkin untuk collectible, tapi tetap rasanya terlalu besar dan kurang praktis. Sementara edisi bahasa Inggris milik Periplus yang lebih dulu saya baca, lebih untuk menunjang hal-hal yang tengah saya geluti.

Tapi saat saya mulai membaca, saya sedang berada di tengah hutan hujan tropis Sumatra. Dimulai dengan pengantar dari Tony Whitten yang berkeinginan berkenalan dengan Mr. Wallace, saya menjadi tergugah. Masa Tuan Wallace hingga masa saya, masalah yang dihadapi tak jauh berbeda, mulai dari mencari guide yang cocok, berhadapan dengan kultur yang berbeda-beda di tiap tempat, hingga menemukan obyek yang

dicari. Dan Tuan Wallace menyampaikannya kisahnya bagai alunan burung kutilang di pagi hari, berlanjut dengan kerikan cicada saat mentari pagi mulai menyengat, hingga saat hawa udara sore yang membuat para siamang ingin segera pergi tidur. Cerita yang mengalun santai dan selalu ingin diikuti. Eh, ini baru bab 11.....

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## **Stephen Joyce says**

The Malay Archipelago by Victorian English naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace was first published in 1869 and dedicated to Charles Darwin. Wallace is perhaps most famous for postulating the view, without specific reliance on Darwin's theory, that life evolves. The Malay Archipelago was an instant and resounding success and has since been republished and translated many times.

Published by the National University of Singapore (NUS), this latest version is unique on several counts. Most notably, editor John van Wyhe, a historian of science at NUS and an expert on both Wallace and Darwin, has used his extensive knowledge to skillfully annotate Wallace's original text—the first of its type in English. Hundreds of footnotes point out factual errors, provide explanations for inconsistencies, add more detail to illuminate certain points, provide context for certain sections and give common names for species of animals, insects and plants.

The book is beautifully produced with a mid-section of color drawings that depict animals, birds, insects and flowers. Dotted through the chapters are new charcoal sketches of exotic birds, animals, indigenous people and significant places. As well as an updated itinerary and wonderful maps that brings Wallace's epic journey even more to life, the original illustrations are also included.

The Malay Archipelago text itself is, in Wallace's own words, the result of "eight years of wanderings among the largest and most luxuriant islands which adorn our earth's surface." He travels across current day Java, Borneo, Sumatra, Sulawesi, The Philippines, Bali, Timor, Papua New Guinea and many more islands in between. We are treated to his thoughts, impressions, experiments, findings and analysis of scientific data on what he saw, experienced and collected during his wanderings.

From a very modest background, Wallace survived by selling his specimens to museums in Britain—but he was no mercenary. His love for travel and commitment to the study of nature are revealed in every chapter. This, on a butterfly now called Wallace's Golden Birdwing:

The beauty and brilliancy of this insect are indescribable, and none but a naturalist can understand the intense excitement I experienced when I at length captured it.

In the course of his trip over 100,000 creatures, insects, flowers, plants were collected, captured and studied by him and his team of assistants, most from indigenous populations. Of course, many birds and animals were shot and killed—the orang-utan being the most famous. Indeed, among the most astonishing sections are those that contain details of Wallace's encounters with Borneo's orang-utans. It is not for nothing the book is subtitled "The Land of the Orang-Utan, and the Bird of Paradise".

Despite shooting dead its mother (warning: there is little remorse for killing in the name of science) he shows incredible compassion and affection for an injured and orphaned infant orang-utan:

When handled or nursed, it was very quiet and contented, but when laid down by itself it would invariably cry. I fitted up a little box for a cradle, with a soft mat for it to lie upon...and I soon found it necessary to wash the little Mias\* as well...and when I brushed its hair [it] seemed perfectly happy.

\* Dyak name for orang-utan

As well as being an adventurous explorer and skilled botanist it is clear Wallace was also a talented writer. The literary merit and page-turning qualities of his prose are evident at every turn. His writing is vivid and evocative, in particular, the extensive descriptions of the birds he caught, dissected or studied. On finding a new species of the famous Bird of Paradise, beautifully illustrated in this edition, Wallace writes:

The general plumage is very sober, being a pure ashy olive with a purplish tinge on the back; the crown of the head is beautifully glossed with a pale metallic violet and the feathers at the front extend as much over the beak as in the rest of the family.

\* \* \*

In later chapters, Wallace moves away from flora and fauna, giving us “A general sketch of the races of man in the Archipelago”. Seemingly incongruous with what has come before, these sections are nevertheless important because they define his views on the clear racial and cultural differences between the Malay and Polynesian peoples, i.e. that they developed almost entirely separately from each other.

Some readers may wish to approach the ‘human’ chapters with caution. Wallace’s comments on “savages” and the relative beauty and moral character of different races appear insensitive or even racist to today’s ears. But he was of course a man of his era and the terminology he used needs to be viewed in the light of more respectful comments on the native populations.

In one of more profound moments of philosophical insight in *The Malay Archipelago*, Wallace praises the law-free yet peace-loving societies he comes across all over the region and contrasts them favourably against Victorian Britain, with its growing socio-economic problems. Perhaps intending to criticise European society more than to proclaim the superiority of the people he met on his travels, Wallace writes:

...it is very remarkable that among people in a very low stage of civilization, we find some approach to such a perfect state. In such a community, all are nearly equal. There are none of those wide distinctions, of education and ignorance, wealth and poverty, master and servant which are the product of our civilization.

\* \* \*

The publication of this book is a triumph for the NUS. Those interested in expanding their knowledge of natural sciences, including students and others already aware of Wallace, will find this edition rewarding. But it deserves to find a wider audience among lovers of the region’s flora and fauna as well as those attracted by a great historical travel saga. In his excellent, informative Introduction, John van Wyhe claims that Wallace was “indisputably one of the great naturalists” of his age.

Elegantly written, *The Annotated Malay Archipelago* containing Wallace’s seminal contribution to science and nature, runs to almost 800 pages and can be dipped into now and again or enjoyed as a long involved read.

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## **Dedi Setiadi says**

3,5 stars!

a nice insight on natural and sociological condition of Indonesia (and the surrounding area) in the late 1800s.

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## **Aravena says**

Buku yang berat (\*dalam arti sebenarnya) ini merupakan catatan perjalanan Alfred Russell Wallace di Nusantara dalam rangka meneliti keanekaragaman hayati di belahan bumi tersebut.

Wallace adalah seorang naturalis dan penjelajah yang namanya kelak diabadikan sebagai Garis Wallace, garis zonasi persebaran flora dan fauna yang melintasi kawasan Indonesia dan memisahkan zona persebaran Asia dengan zona transisi antara Asia dan Australia. Membaca kisah Wallace di wilayah tengah dan timur Indonesia kala itu menumbuhkan berbagai perasaan dalam benak saya, antara kagum melihat kegigihannya mengembara di kawasan yang penuh marabahaya, geli karena bahasanya yang blak-blakan dan kadang terkesan 'begajulan', serta takjub karena penjelasannya yang begitu rinci mengenai begitu banyak hal yang belum saya ketahui dari negeri saya sendiri. Buku ini mungkin kadang melelahkan untuk dibaca karena kepadatannya, gaya bahasanya yang 'antik', dan penuturannya yang sering melantur ke mana-mana, tetapi Wallace juga membuatnya terasa begitu 'hidup' berkat antusiasmenya yang bagaikan seorang kanak-kanak yang sedang bertamasya ke kebun binatang terbesar di dunia.

Pada dasarnya, pokok pembahasan adalah teori pola persebaran fauna dan metodologi dalam pencarian serta investigasi spesimen. Buku ini menjadi begitu panjang karena kecenderungan Wallace untuk membahas segala sesuatunya dengan rinci, tentunya lengkap dengan berbagai catatan kaki dan entri glosari yang masing-masing bisa mencapai satu halaman penuh. Bila Anda keberatan membaca >10 halaman deskripsi mengenai sarang burung endemik, berarti buku ini memang bukan untuk Anda, hehe. Selain flora dan fauna, Wallace juga banyak membahas tentang aspek sosial budaya masyarakat Nusantara saat itu dan hal-hal apa saja yang menurut dia menarik. Pembaca modern (khususnya orang Indonesia) mungkin akan mengerutkan kening membaca pemikiran Wallace yang kadang terkesan arogan dan memosisikan diri sebagai bangsa kolonial yang superior, tetapi di lain sisi sangat jelas bahwa ia juga mengagumi banyak hal dari Nusantara. Bagaimanapun, gaya narasinya yang jenaka dan sarkastis itu membuat beberapa kejadian yang diceritakannya menjadi terkenang di hati pembaca, baik itu saat ia debat kusir dengan penduduk pribumi ataupun meratapi nasib spesimen-spesimennya yang habis dilalap serangga. Sebagai bumbu penyedap, terdapat galeri foto-foto margasatwa yang berhasil didapatkan Wallace dengan susah payah.

Saya merasa bersyukur telah ikut berkontribusi untuk proyek produksi buku ini dalam bahasa Indonesia oleh Komunitas Bambu. Banyak sekali hal yang saya pelajari, baik dalam proses pengerjaannya hingga naik cetak maupun dari Mr. Wallace sendiri sebagai seorang manusia dan ilmuwan yang sangat mencintai apa yang ia lakukan.

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## Mark says

Alfred Russel Wallace's 1869 account of his travels and observations in what is today Indonesia and that occurred mostly in 1858, the year that he and Darwin published on the Theory of Evolution. Wallace describes his adventures visiting the many islands in the archipelago and his constant search for and preparation of bird and insect specimens that he sent back to England and with which he supported himself. At one point he comments that he is the only white person residing on the thousand-mile-long island of New Guinea, where he is primarily interested in finding new examples of the Bird of Paradise. His description of hunting the Orang-Utan is especially disturbing in light of its recent endangerment. Wallace discusses the biogeography of the archipelago at length including the faunal divide that would later be called the Wallace Line. He also discusses the people of the islands at length, frequently comparing the Malay and Papuan "races" and their degrees of civilization or barbarity. This Victorian view of humanity is sometimes trying, although Wallace makes several comments admiring the noble savages around him who live in peace and harmony without any of the oppressive social structures that are necessary at home. (Later in life he became a social activist supporting women's suffrage and opposing eugenics, the destruction of the environment by human activity, and militarism.) The Folio Society edition of this book has beautiful color plates with drawings by the author and some photographs.

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## **Maryeni Auliyati says**

Ini buku keren banget! Saya sangat menikmati setiap perjalanan Wallace. Setiap pergerakannya di The Malay Archipelago terdeskripsikan dengan baik. Kebahagiaan yang luar biasa saat Wallace berhasil menemukan ratusan spesies baru, ketakjuban saat menemukan kupu-kupu yang indah, kekecewaan saat berada di daerah yang sangat miskin serangga dan burung, Ketakjuban saat menemukan Bird of Paradise dsb , semua tersampaikan dengan sempurna

Selain belajar banyak tentang kekayaan spesies di nusantara, kita juga disuguhkan berbagai potret budaya. Ada potret lucu dan lucu seperti kisah orang pedalaman borneo yang minta diperlihatkan kulit Wallace dan mereka sangat senang. Ada kisah tentang betapa penasarannya orang Buru tentang kenapa orang kulit putih mongkoleksi sampai serangga jelek dan sangat yakin bahwa ada kekuatan mistis disana (hal. 295). Potret kemalasan di halaman 342 dan juga ada potret kejujuran dan penghargaan terhadap milik orang lain di kisah Borneo : Journey in the Interior dan The Dayaks. serta kejujuran orang di Waigeo. Tak pelak membuat rasa bangga di hati.

Buku ini membuat saya banyak merenung kembali menganalisa potret-potret tersebut. Walau beberapa ada yang terkesan underestimate, tapi tetap ada banyak pelajaran yang bisa diambil.

And, in general I love this book!!!

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## **BDC says**

A monumental work documenting Russel's 8 years of travel throughout the Malaysian archipelago. Having spent much time in this area of the world I found it fascinating. He includes many descriptions of geography, tribal interaction, animal and plant life, as well as some history. The amount of detail he includes is staggering. His conclusions about whether or not the European has reached an advanced state over the tribal peoples he lived with were fascinating. I really enjoyed much of the book. However 5-10 pages describing the hundreds of different genus of beetle he discovered was a little too much for me.

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## **Emile Poelman says**

One of my favourites. A real classic of natural history and travel. Wallace, a contemporary of Charles Darwin, is my idea of real hero: wandering alone through treacherous rainforests of the Indonesian Archipelago, looking for rare species to send home... Leeches and malaria around every corner... Wow. And extremely well written.

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## **Paulfozz says**

With eight years of travel around the islands of Indonesia to condense into one volume there was bound to be some repetition, and at points I did feel a certain ennui when a pattern established itself of "travel to island,

meet head man, arrange house, go collecting, prepare collections, fight predations of insects upon collection, become dissatisfied with range of wildlife, leave island'. But though it did have aspects of this it is a book of such broad scope and I can see how Wallace wanted to cover every aspect of the region that he could, that you can forgive these small difficulties upon the reader. This was the period when evolution, geology and other sciences were being worked out and it is fascinating to see these new ideas taking shape in the pages of Wallace's book. He also demonstrates the oddities of the Victorian mindset; both regarding the indigenous people as 'savages' and primitive, yet at the same time feeling that they are somehow presenting a far more enlightened civilisation than that of the western world.

A fascinating book, for certain.

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### **Zanna says**

gifted... looks quite interesting and has good pictures. Surely I would learn much of use, but can't be doing with all this 'higher races' business, tedious travel details etc in laborious C19th style for 700 pages. Life is too short!

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### **Michael says**

Took me 5 months to actually finish it, but actually only read on 61 occasions; an average of ~13 pages per session. What's surprising about this is that I read so little AND that I could've finished it so much quicker!

A mammoth journey. Definitely worth reading. Just my type of thing; historical science and voyage. Such an epic tale.

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### **Nancy says**

Alfred Russel Wallace is the man who simultaneously to Darwin came up with the theory of evolution by natural selection. Wallace had no college degree and came from a poor English family, unlike Darwin, and he deferred to Darwin and gave Darwin credit for the theory throughout his life. The Malay Archipelago chronicles Wallace's eight years exploring and documenting the natural history of southeast Asia from Singapore through Indonesia and to Papua New Guinea. Of strong constitution, unlike Darwin, he withstands malaria, dengue fever, being stuck at sea for weeks at a time, and near attacks by vipers and other creatures. Everywhere he went, he quickly won over indigenous people with his quiet and friendly demeanor, while he amassed tremendous collections of species new to science for museums in England. Read this book if you are interested in natural selection, biogeography, natural history, southeast Asian culture, and adventure.

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### **Pras says**

Better than The origin of species.

poor Wallace, scientific world should pay more attention to his tribute on theory of evolution.



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## **Mike Panton says**

It drags a bit at times when he explains insects in great detail but that's to be expected given to that was one of his main purposes.

I loved the bits of culture that I picked up from it.

Overall it's a great book about the wildlife and people of the archipelago as long as you know what you're getting yourself into. It's not a light travel guide.

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## **Willy Akhdes says**

Buku hasil penelitian ilmiah yang dilakukan Wallace selama beberapa tahun ia melakukan eksplorasi keragaman species di Hindia Belanda yang melahirkan Wallace's Line. Disampaikan dengan bahasa yang ringan dan runut, serupa catatan harian, membuat kita dapat merasakan petualangan yang dijalani Wallace selama melakukan penelitian. Wallace tidak hanya membahas temuan ilmiahnya, namun juga menceritakan keadaan budaya daerah setempat yang ia kunjungi.

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## **Tracy Duvall says**

Wallace spent several years in the 1850s and 1860s killing and collecting specimens in what is now Indonesia and Malaysia for natural-history collections in Europe. He describes and discusses the plants and animals that he finds, how he came upon them, and aspects of their context, and he relates distribution of the species to his musings on geology and to the theory of natural selection, which he developed simultaneously to Charles Darwin. In addition, Wallace expresses his fascination with the local "races," which he categorizes in a high-handed fashion, and with their technologies, which he describes in appreciative detail. Finally, he relates his own adventures, which are numerous, and procedures, which are interesting. Drawings illustrate much of the text. In present-day terms, this long, detailed classic reads much like a magnificent blog.

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## **Andrew says**

Oh, to be a 19th Century man of science and discovery! To drink bitters and claret upon a ship with a name like the "HMS Gallant" and smoke a pipe of finest Virginia 'pon the sands as your Balinese boys fetch you a cocoa-nut for an evening repast. As someone who was raised on a steady diet of Indiana Jones and Sherlock Holmes, I need no convincing.

And Wallace is rapturous about everything he comes into contact with. Whether he's writing about the virtues of breadfruit, the plumage of a tropical bird, or how he beat an orangutan too severely this time, he's a compassionate and witty observer, and also faintly ridiculous.

Of course, a lot of Goodreads reviewers are going to comment on Wallace's racism. To be fair, while he

comes off as a haughty Victorian imperialist nowadays (yeah, those Malays need to be in perennial debt to coffee planters so they can develop a work ethic!), his views in the context of the time were almost radical:

"We shall never, as regards the whole community, attain to any real or important superiority over the better class of savages."

"As regards true social science, we are still in a state of barbarism."

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, defense rests.

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## **Bramble says**

Do not read the Stanfords Travel Classics edition. One of the few books I've ever read where the typographical errors detract from the sense and the enjoyment of the narrative. Natives in brass huts! Canoes on the peaches! I'd say the error rate is higher than 1/page.

In fact, the publisher's negligence suggests ethical and intellectual failings bordering on criminal. The only book I've ever read where ONE LETTER WORDS were spelled wrong. Obviously this series is a scam which attempts to use automated character recognition and a spell-checker to make an easy buck from unsuspecting readers.

Otherwise a fascinating artifact of one of Victorian England's most important field naturalists. You may cringe as he slaughters orangutans (for Science!), and his views of nature and society are certainly affected by his culture, but come on: this is a first hand narrative of the birth of biogeography, evolutionary theory, and our understanding of plate tectonics. Not to mention the ultimate 3-page rant on the moral inferiority of "civilized" vs. "primitive" man.

I'd give Wallace's material -- to the extent I could judge -- 4-5 stars. The nocturnal sailboat expedition in comet-light is worth the effort by itself. And I'll be looking for a facsimile edition.

I recommend this book. Find an edition with the original figures. Find an edition that's been proofread.

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