EDITOR'S NOTE

The idea behind this volume is to introduce the work of O. W. Wolters to new generations of scholars entering the field of Southeast Asian history, whether it be of the modern, premodern, or early periods. Given the linguistic skills required for primary research in early Southeast Asian history, it is understandable that few historians take up its study. It occurred to me that one way to encourage new work in the field would be to assemble a volume of essays by Wolters, whose knowledge of Chinese enabled him to reach across the region and write about early Indonesia, early Siam and Cambodia, and early Vietnam.

Before Wolters became a university professor he served in the Malayan Civil Service, and his research into the cultural make-up of precolonial ruling elites thus takes on a particular interest. As someone not born and bred exclusively in academia, he brought to bear on his study of the ancient past his practical experience as a colonial official. For this reason, the nexus between his knowledge of colonial government, the Malayan sultanates, and the histories he wrote of early Southeast Asia after retiring from the colonial service invites questions.

In the course of conceiving of the volume, selecting and editing the essays, and researching the introduction, I corresponded with many colleagues who generously gave of their time and expertise. Barbara Watson Andaya, Leonard Andaya, Haydon Cherry, Tamara Loos, John Miksic, Tony Milner, Michael Montesano, John Seidel, and Eric Tagliacozzo offered enthusiastic support for the feasibility of the project. The advice of Stanley O'Connor and Keith Taylor was particularly helpful in my decision to proceed with the idea. I thank Jacob Ramsay for his views on how the volume should be assembled and for helping to prepare it for publication, as did Nicholas Farrelly. Li Tana kindly helped with Chinese characters, and both she and Thien Do helped with the transliteration of Vietnamese.

Benedict Anderson, John Butcher, David Chandler, Virginia Hooker, John Legge, Bill O'Malley, and Maurizio Peleggi read drafts of the introduction and made valuable comments, as did Mary Kilcline Cody, Mark Emmanuel, Barry Hooker, Ian Proudfoot, and Eric Tagliacozzo. I am particularly grateful to Peter Zinoman, an astute critic of several drafts who pointed out lines of inquiry that had not occurred to me. Virginia Hooker and John Legge shared with me their personal correspondence with Oliver Wolters, and I thank Tim Harper, Hong Lysa, Alastair MacLaughlan, Michael Montesano, Leon Comber, and Carl Trocki for answering research questions. In a long letter, John Gullick, who had also served in the Malayan Civil Service, put in perspective his own memories of British rule in Malaya. Throughout the project Tony Milner offered insights into the connections between Wolters's careers as a colonial official and as a scholar.

Mrs. Euteen Wolters graciously put up with my numerous inquiries about her life with Oliver Wolters, particularly during the early years in Malaya. I appreciate her forbearance, hospitality, and good nature in answering my questions.

Deborah Homsher, Fred Conner, and the editorial team for the Southeast Asia Program's publications provided timely advice and guided the project to fruition.

My family—Sue Rider, Simon, and Oliver—tolerated the demands on my time of yet another mysterious academic project that seemed to go on forever.

Craig J. Reynolds
June 2007, Canberra