

Bali: Living in Two Worlds

Review >
Southeast Asia

How enduring can paradise be? Although it was published in 2001, the socio-cultural problems discussed in *Bali: Living in Two Worlds*, seem all the more poignant and burdened with implications since the devastating bombing in Kuta-Legian on 12 October 2002. The immediate impact of the attack far surpasses these problems, but this (still) timely compilation of essays, compositions, poetry, and photographs nonetheless offers a very contemporary 'critical self-portrait in order to bring up questions about present-day and future cultural, social and ecological developments of Bali' (p.10). The 'two worlds' of the title refers, on this level, to the negotiating point between Bali's often romanticized past and its possible futures.

By Laura Noszlopy

This book can best be appreciated as a response to the issues raised in two earlier publications: Michel Picard's *Bali: Cultural tourism and touristic culture* (1996) and Adrian Vickers' *Bali: A paradise created* (1990). Most of the essays in the new book simultaneously celebrate and commiserate the results of that creation and seek to further challenge the residue of 'paradise' mythology while proffering diverse views on Bali's possible futures. With its multiple voices, (there are fourteen contributors, including several of Bali's most prominent intellectuals and social commentators), there emerges a selective, but interdisciplinary, account of the debates and discourses that are

of current concern on the island and which are relevant to both academics and the more general reader. The contributions and, in particular, Rama Surya's photographs, portray an exceptionally 'traditional', though thoroughly 'globalized' society, undergoing rapid transformation; this is proposed as the meeting or collision of 'two worlds'. The articles display a tough realism borne of intimate knowledge combined with academic distance, thus acknowledging the bittersweet contradictions that are so apparent and disturbing in contemporary Bali. The main premise that runs throughout the collection is that Bali is no longer the paradise it was once perceived and represented to be and that various forces, especially tourism development, are threatening

the Balinese quality of life. All maintain, in their own ways, that there is 'a shocking discrepancy between the exotic Bali image of glossy tourist brochures and a more than unpleasant reality of the present-day life in Bali' (p.10).

This 'unpleasant reality' is highlighted in a series of essays on little-discussed, and occasionally taboo, topics such as prostitution and drug abuse (Sugi B. Lanus) and the widespread misappropriation of land for 'development' (Putu Suasta). Degung Santikarma discusses the way that an inflated and obscured sense of 'Balinese culture' can be used as an excuse for xenophobic violence and as 'a system of control and exclusion' (p.35). IGR Panji Tisna comments upon the increasing havoc wrought by environmental pollution and the tourist industry, while I Ketut Sumarta discusses the Balinese language as a central, but seriously threatened, aspect of local culture. I Gde Pitana provides an incisive analysis of the increasing tensions between competing factions of the PHDI, the Indonesian Hindu Council (Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia), while Cok Sawitri discusses changing gender roles in the performing arts, to mention but a few. The anthology also includes poems by Cok Sawitri, Oka Rusmini, and Alit S. Rini, which offer alternative perspectives on being 'a woman of Bali' (p.139).

Rama Surya's photographs complement the text and portray a similarly ambivalent view of urban Balinese adaptations to Indonesian, transnational, and cosmopolitan modernity. In particular, the portrait of a young Balinese couple in full garb, 'The dream of



the golden age. Balinese couple' (p.71), both 'traditional' (*pakaian adat*) and global fashion MTV-style (sunglasses and nose-stud) effectively captures that tension and just avoids the dichotomizing that is typical of overt 'tradition' versus 'modernity' imagery. Similarly, Coca-Cola and holy water are juxtaposed in what appears to be a fairly functional and comfortable coupling, despite the implicit critique of consumerism and globalization in what, perhaps, 'should be' a more 'spiritual' place (see photo). For me, one of the most powerful images is of the provincial capital's busiest crossroad junction, on the way to Kuta, where a signpost, funded by the *Bali Post* newspaper and perched between advertisements and Hindu shrines, impotently reads 'Jaga Bali' ('Protect/guard Bali') as the traffic hurtles past 'Between Coca-Cola, religion and neurology, Denpasar' (pp.92-93).

While the anthology explicitly seeks to challenge the enduring, but stale, stereotype of Bali as paradise, many of the contributions, perhaps understandably, still read like a lament to paradise lost, despite their claim that paradise was never really there to begin with. It is, in the words of Urs Ramseyer, 'an admonishing book' (p.13). This critical rewriting of the tourist mirage is not, however, without precedent. Very little scholarship of the past two decades, at least, has unquestioningly romanticized the state of affairs in Bali. That there are contrasts and

contradictions, tensions, and repercussions, emerging from uneven commercial growth and socio-political change, is little surprise and, to an informed audience, not all that controversial.

The real quality of this book is the diversity of the contributions and, indeed, the editors' achievement in bringing them together in this fresh format. Although, in recent years, Indonesian writers have been more widely published in translation, this book will be of real benefit to international scholars and students, as well as to the lay-reader, because it offers unique perspectives that can only derive from an everyday, personal engagement with the subjects discussed, both as familiar relatives and anthropological 'others'. It is a pity that some minor English translation errors occasionally distract from the otherwise excellent overall quality of the contents and presentation. It might also be appropriate to consider translating and publishing it in Indonesian, thus making it more accessible to local readers. Such comments aside, this particular venture towards 'living in two worlds' has, I think, been a success. <

- Ramseyer, Urs and I Gusti Raka Panji Tisna (eds.), *Bali: Living in Two Worlds*, Basel: Museum der Kulturen (2001), pp.194, ISBN 3-7965-1873-7, ill.

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- Vickers, A. *Bali: A paradise created*, Hong Kong: Periplus Editions (1990).

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Coke bottle as holy water receptacle. Sanur. (p.68)

The Politics of Multiculturalism

Review >
Southeast Asia

Pluralism means a belief in more than one entity or a tendency to be, hold, or do more than one thing. This literal meaning is common to all the political and social applications of the concept of pluralism but has been applied in contexts so varied that, in practice, pluralism can be seen as having a multitude of separate meanings. Nonetheless, each of these ways of interpreting pluralism has had at least some influence on its primary contemporary meaning: that the pluralist model of society is one in which the presence of groups is of the political essence.

By Marie-Aimée Tourres

There are perhaps no better examples than Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore to illustrate this concept of pluralism and open the debate. However, despite this, most writers take Western industrialized societies as the exclusive point of departure for their discussion. Thus by compiling the work of fourteen specialists, all Asian and based in Asia, Robert Hefner has attempted to challenge this approach in his book, entitled *The politics of multiculturalism. Pluralism and citizenship in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia*,

which results from study conducted in the region between 1998 and 2000. The book aims to answer the question of how to achieve civility and inclusive citizenship in deeply plural societies. In examining the discourse and practice of pluralism across different spheres, and by trying to understand the conditions that facilitate its resolution, Hefner (both editor and contributor) hopes to address the serious shortcomings in current literature on citizenship and civic participation. The issue tackled is not an easy one and the concepts discussed far from static. Using a comparative knowledge approach, the new faces of pluralism

are examined from the point of view of politics, gender, markets, and religion. Most of the contributors base their analysis on J.S. Furnivall's general approach and works. This British administrator and political writer introduced Western readers to the idea of plural society, which he describes as a society that comprises 'two or more elements or social orders which live side by side, yet without mingling, in one political unit'. Certain distinctive characteristics in the political and economic spheres of life in plural societies distinguish them from more homogeneous societies. The most fundamental difference is 'the lack of common social

will', which has two far-reaching consequences: it leads to an emphasis on economic production, and to a fragmentation of social demand (the rationale for organizing consumption). According to Furnivall, the ethnic and religious 'sections' making up society are so different from one another that they have little in common apart from their market exchange. Consequently, he could not envisage a political structure capable of ensuring stability within a plural society because he regarded the constituent societies as being, by their very nature, unable to cope with the problem of piecing their societal puzzle into a unified whole.

Against this background, the various contributors help to demonstrate why today's Indonesia, Malaysia, and even more Singapore would, unquestionably, have stunned Furnivall. Analysed from a historical-structural perspective, and theory led, the book has a predominantly academic approach, which may

discourage some readers. Nevertheless, the fact that the contextualized approach is complemented by longitudinal perspective works in the book's favour. As an ancient Asian proverb says, 'to understand the present, one should scrutinize the past; without the past, the present would not be what it is'.

Indeed, the impact of European colonialism on Southeast Asian heritage was the exacerbation and consolidation of ethno-religious differences. With influx of Chinese and Indian migrants into the Malay peninsula, during the nineteenth century, at a time when Britain was consolidating its colonial rule, administrative apparatus was introduced to facilitate socio-political rationalization and segregation of what was, and still is, a highly heterogeneous and polyglot population. Different groups were formally categorized according to ethnicity; a classification that post-colonial Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore have retained. The con-

Preservation of Archives in Tropical Climates

Both bibliography and manual, *Preservation of Archives in Tropical Climates* deserves a wide readership among all who recognize the importance of preserving the cultural heritage in the tropics. This first-class reference work treats the reality of Asian electricity bills and why Quito is the place to be for a piece of paper...

Review >
General

By Roger Tol

What makes life difficult in the tropics is first and foremost the hot and humid climate, with its destructive effects on humans and archives alike. But apart from and due to the heat and moisture high quantities of gases, pollutants, sunlight, dust, sand, fungi, bacteria, insects, and rodents also pose threats. It has been argued that every 10-degree Celsius rise in temperature cuts the life of a book in half. However, these are not the only problems encountered in tropical areas, which are situated mostly in so-called developing countries. In most cases there is also political instability, unrest, or even war; preservation and conservation of the cultural heritage are not placed high on the government's priority list; technical facilities are limited; and the necessary training opportunities are not always available. Problems in the tropics abound and are varied. Indeed, it is necessary to set apart the issue of preservation in the tropics by devoting a specific study to it.

Usually reading a bibliography is not a very exciting undertaking. There are, however, some pleasant exceptions, and the bibliography compiled by René Teygeler certainly falls into this category. It was a very astute choice of the compiler to present the work in two parts.

Part two consists of a 'traditional' bibliography and contains lists of relevant titles arranged according to seven main topics, each constituting a chapter: 'basic concepts', 'preservation and conservation', 'books and writing materials', 'building', 'storage', 'disaster preparedness', and 'integrated pest management'. Part one, annotating and discussing the publications listed in part two, makes excellent and informative reading. It has the same division into chapters as the second part with the notion that each chapter is subdivided into several sections. For example, the chapter on storage is subdivided into eight sections (introduction, internal climate control, sunlight, dust, shelving, handling, packaging, and good housekeeping), while some sections are again subdivided into smaller sections, for example in this case 'internal climate control' is subdivided into air-conditioning, simple mechanical provisions, and air pollution. In this way each topic – large or minute – is dealt with in a narrative fashion, with summaries and quotes from the listed texts and with comments and remarks by René Teygeler.

Personally, I really appreciate this approach, which is of immediate use to librarians working in the tropics. There is

a wealth of practical tips, thoughts, guidelines, projects and initiatives, and just plain facts. Who knew that Quito in Ecuador seems to have the well-nigh perfect climate for preservation purposes? Although located near the equator, its high altitude provides the city with a dry and cool climate and low atmospheric pressure. As is mentioned in the book (p.98), this is the place where masses of documents collected by religious orders and the Spanish colonial administration remained for a long time in good condition. More importantly, some sections of the book can almost be read and used as a manual with immediate benefit in the field. Librarians in the tropics will undoubtedly find much to their advantage among all kinds of subjects raised in the chapters. Generally, the book has a sympathetic flavour in that it does not try to impose solutions that are suitable for Western countries upon non-Western countries. This pragmatic attitude becomes evident in, for example, the chapter on building and the section on air-conditioning. Regarding the latter, the compiler states realistically that 'air-conditioning is very often not an option for archives in developing countries. That's why passive climate control becomes a more attractive way to control the physical environment. Air-conditioning could be an answer to control excessive heat and relative humidity, but not one that many can afford. It is not just the cost of installation; there is the need to maintain the system and the running costs, i.e. the electricity bill. [...] Often archivists hold the mistaken belief that if a comprehensive air-conditioning system is installed all would be well. It is now understood that this view is entirely erroneous' (pp.89–90). The appendix, mentioning around a hundred addresses of contacts and institutes involved in preservation activities in the tropics, comes in very handy.

Evidently the compiler has opted for a discussion of preservation of traditional media such as palm-leaf, bark, and of course paper, paying no attention to other media such as microfilm (already in use for more than half a century), tape, disk, CD-ROM, or other electronic media. Because of the rapid expansion of these media in the libraries and archives in developing countries, the preservation of microfilm, for example, is currently becoming an extremely urgent matter in the tropics. Microfilm and probably other modern media as well are in far more immediate danger of destruction as a result of the fatal combination of high temperature and high humidity than are the traditional media. Indeed, destruction of films is taking place at a much higher pace than that of

paper. Thus the very results of huge microfilming projects, set up in order to save the contents of deteriorating manuscripts, are endangered. Ironically, the films have in some cases become unusable whereas the manuscripts are still readable.

Some other relevant 'digital' issues are not dealt with in the book. For example, there is the encouraging initiative from Southeast Asian professionals to set up a Southeast Asian Consortium for Access and Preservation (SEACAP). This consortium, which was set up in 2000, has already succeeded in publishing a collection of conference papers and maintains a website. To my mind real omissions in the bibliography are the two authoritative, free online databases for conservation professionals. These are AATA Online, a comprehensive database of more than 100,000 abstracts of literature related to the preservation and conservation of material cultural heritage, and the BCIN database, which is managed by the Canadian Heritage Information Network and brings together bibliographic holdings and abstracts produced by several of the world's major conservation centres. Both databases are accessible through the Getty Conservation Institute. It is to be hoped that a future edition of this bibliography will take these matters into account. <

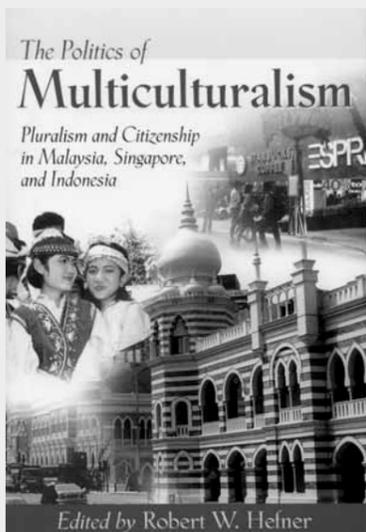
– Teygeler, René, et al., *Preservation of Archives in Tropical Climates: An Annotated Bibliography*, Paris: International Council on Archives; The Hague: National Archives of the Netherlands; Jakarta: National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia (2001), pp. 328, ISBN 90-74920-14-4.

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Info >

Southeast Asian Consortium for Access and Preservation (SEACAP)
www.seacap.chiangmai.ac.th

Getty Conservation Institute
www.getty.edu/conservation



centration of ethnic labour in varying niches in the economy and/or politics served to fragment the national labour force along ethnic lines. Although ethnocentrism may have existed before colonialism, the ethnic division of the economic sphere by the British encouraged further friction between ethnic groups. Following Furnivall's argu-

mentation on the issue, the underlying reason is that the rigidly oppositional identities along ethnic lines, characteristic of plural societies and, in this particular case, created by the Europeans were left intact. As the lack of common ground and will among the different groups served the political and economic interests of the European colonizers, nothing was done to encourage the abolishment of this man-made rigidity.

The notion of citizenship, which usually refers to a status conferred by law, came to be of vital importance in a context in which ethnicity differentiated citizenship. There may be an ambiguous relationship between the idea of ethnic membership and that of citizenship, but Malaysia and Singapore's history shows how membership of a community can be advanced as a qualification for citizenship.

Although religion never acts purely as a substitute for economic forces, the

upsurge of Islamic consciousness at the end of the twentieth century has acquired a momentum of its own, promoting a rise in national sentiments and forcing serious contemplation of some identity-politics, resulting in the progress achieved in the socio-economic field being compromised. Hefner mentions recent examples illustrating this phenomenon: 'At the beginning of the Asian economic crisis in 1997-1998, Mahathir appealed to Malaysian Chinese to purchase shares in Malay-owned business threatened with bankruptcy.' The contrast with Suharto of Indonesia could not be more striking. In the final months of 1997 and early 1998, Suharto and his children responded to the growing economic crisis by accusing Chinese Indonesians of having masterminded the economic crisis so as to bring Suharto down. They did so, this propaganda claimed, because Suharto is a Muslim and because "these enemies

of Islam" do not want a majority-Muslim country to become strong' (p.33).

But Hefner remains optimistic. As economies grow and societies differentiate, there follows a proliferation of new societal organizations and relationships. Rather than opposing civil forces in society, the state must work with them. It is on this last point that Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore have the most to teach us.

Does the book have shortcomings? The excellent editor's introduction is the longest essay in the book, running to no less than fifty-seven pages. The reader would have benefited from an introduction simply explaining the organization of the book and the logic of its presentation. As it is now, it is not easy for the reader to see what links individual chapters, despite the umbrella-theme of multiculturalism. Essentially this volume offers a compilation of good academic contributions, but one which lacks a coherent voice. <

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