Bali: Living in Two Worlds

How does paradise die? 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 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 Vickery's 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 presenting 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 photographic portrait of a situation 'traditionally' traditional, though thoroughly 'globalized' society, undergoing rapid transformation; this is the 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 bitter-sweet 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 main, in their own ways, that there is a 'shocking discrepancy between the exotic image of glossy tourist brochures and the modern, representational 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 Suastya D.]BA). Sukarno discusses the way that an inflated and obscured sense of 'Balinese culture' can be used as an excuse for xenophobia and official control and exclusion (p.35). IGR Panji Tisma comments upon the increasing havoc wrought by environmental pollution and sustainable development, while I Ketut Sumarta discusses the Balinese language as a central, but seriously threatened, aspect of local culture. I Cde Patina provides an incisive analysis of the increasing tensions between competing factions of the PHDI, the Indonesian Hindu Council (Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia), and Cok Sawitri discusses changing gender roles in the performing arts, to mention but a few. The anthology also includes poems by Cok Sawitri, Oka Rusmin, and Adit S. Rini, which offer alternative perspectives on being 'a woman of Bali' (p.159).

Rama Surya's photographs complement the text and portray a similarly photographic ambivalence 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' (pakuhas adat) and global fashion MTV-style (sunglasses and nose-stud) effectively captures that tension and just avoids the dichotomy that is typical of overt 'tradition' versus 'modernity' imagery. Similarly, Coca-Cola and holy water receptacle. 'Protect/guard 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 contributors, 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 contradictions and

References


Dr Laura Noszlopy has recently completed her PhD thesis, The Bali Arts Festival – Pesta Kesenian Bali: Culture, Politics and the Arts in Contemporary Indonesia, at the University of East Anglia. She teaches comparative literature and media studies at the University of East Anglia and started a new British Academy-funded research project in Bali in February 2003. noszlopy@hotmail.com

The Politics of Multiculturalism

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 pluralism. 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 pluralism and its possible futures.

By Marie-Aimée Toureux

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 Heffer 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 at taking beyond the notion of how to achieve civility and inclusive citizenship in deep plural societies. In examining the discourse and practice of diversity across different spheres, and by trying to understand the conditions that facilitate its resolution, Heffer (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 write on the analysis on J.S. Furnivall’s general approach and works. This British administrator and political writer introduced the concept of plural society, which he describes as a society that comprises ‘two or more elements or social orders which live side by side under the same political unit’. Certain distinctive characteristics in the political and economic spheres of life in plural societies challenge the formulation of different, but plural 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 culture (the rationalization of 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 what today’s Indonesia, Malaysia, and even more Singapore would, unquestionably, have demanded Furnivall. Analysed from a historical-structural perspective, and theory led, the book has a predominately 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 is well documented in the literature. This book is a valuable addition to this literature and one that will be of interest to students and researchers. The book is also a valuable resource for those interested in the challenges facing post-colonial Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore.