

directions. First, he would have us look at class tensions, especially whether peasant farmers were mobilized and aggressively challenging the status quo distribution of land. Presumably, this does not always overlap perfectly with where the PKI was strongest. Second, he would have us look at the nature of local state institutions. Where the local state is relatively coherent and independent from the center on Java, we should expect less volatility because the local state apparatus can still maintain order even when the power of the center is disrupted.

These lines of analysis, combining a keen sensitivity to class conflict and institutional strength over broad historical periods, provide an excellent starting point for scholars to undertake comparative work on the scale and timing of the killing undertaken in other parts of Indonesia in the mid-1960s.

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IMAGES OF POWER: Balinese Paintings Made for Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead. *By Hildred Geertz. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press. 1994. x, 135 pp. (Photos, pictures.) US\$29.95, paper. ISBN 0-8248-1679-X.*

THIS BOOK tells one of the most fascinating tales of cultural fusion in the twentieth century. It discusses the establishment of European painting techniques in Bali in the 1930s, the use of "tourist art" to describe cultural change, and the subsequent impact of Balinese culture on the theories of one-time spouses, Mead and Bateson. Hildred Geertz examines 1,288 pictures, 845 being from the poorly documented village of Batuan. These images were completed or commissioned on visits by Bateson and Mead in 1936-38 and in 1939. The paintings are a curious blend of deceptively naïve-looking depictions, based more in Western naturalism à la Henri Rousseau, and a melange of Balinese pictorial traditions. The contents of these paintings often portrayed blends of old Balinese archetypes, Dutch colonialism, and culture conflict. "Made expressly for Westerners, the new paintings are like briefly overheard fragments from ongoing conversations between the Balinese and the foreigners in an intercultural situation in which each side only partially understood the expectations of the other" (p. 6).

At the heart of the stories in the paintings so beautifully reproduced in *Images of Power* was the dialogue established between the Batuan painter I Ketut Ngéndon, Mead, and Bateson. Ngéndon went on to become a major local figure in the anticolonial movement and was brutally executed by the Dutch military in 1948. However, the cross-cultural "conversations" in these paintings were constrained by the tourist-based taboo of depicting any kinds of modern influences such as the automobiles, western clothing, and cigarettes that were so ubiquitous on Bali in the 1930s.

The paintings illustrate the modern shift away from the traditional Balinese preoccupation with the dialect of the visible and the invisible, *sakala* and *niskala*. The sources of the story material were remarkably eclectic including Balinese Hinduism, more secular folk tales from across the Indonesian archipelago, and some themes borrowed from Islamic and Chinese cultures. The most fascinating discussion is in chapter 5 — on the use of these drawings, as a hybrid cultural mechanism, to enhance personal power, *sakti*, in an increasingly unstable social environment. There was a materialist aspect as well. As the market economy hit Bali with a vengeance, bridging the cultural chasm of colonial Bali was one of the few ways to survive as an artist.

The West, through the ideas of Mead and Bateson, was being just as transformed by Balinese culture as Bali was adapting to the West. This beautifully designed and produced book is a statement to the power of art to bridge cultures no matter how stark are the disparities in power.

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GORDON BRENT INGRAM

CAPITALISM AND CONFRONTATION IN SUMATRA'S PLANTATION BELT, 1870–1979. By Ann Laura Stoler. Ann Arbor (Michigan): The University of Michigan Press. 1995. xl. 244 pp. (Graphs, maps, photos, tables.) US\$19.95, paper ISBN 0-472-08219-1.

BECAUSE of rapid paradigm shifts since the 1970s scholars are faced with a dilemma. What do you do with a very good study when its theoretical framework has been superseded? Such a dilemma must have faced Ann Laura Stoler when preparing a second edition of her well-received book on plantation communities in North Sumatra. The result is a book containing a long introductory [p]reface [*sic*], which discusses how the original was written and how her ideas have changed, followed by an unaltered reprint of the original text, which the author refers to as “a period piece.”

The original study upon which *Capitalism and Confrontation* was based was carried out in the rich tobacco and rubber plantation region of North Sumatra in the late 1970s. It explored, through a political economy approach, the lives of the communities which surrounded the plantations, taking a broad historical sweep from the 1870s through to 1979. The research drew on both archival sources and interviews, and centered on the transition from a peasantry to a proletariat. Labour protest and peasant resistance to control were central to the story. The original title of the book was *In the Company's Shadow: The Politics of Labor Control in Sumatra's Plantation Belt*, but the Yale Press' editors did not like it. The book was, and remains, very well written and the story beautifully crafted, making it eminently readable.