

are suitable and reasonable may be incorporated into the national culture; and 3) Islam is an important aspect of the national culture (KEMENTERIAAN KEBUDAYAAN, BELIA DAN SUKAN 1973, vii).

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## INDONESIA

SEVIN, OLIVIER. *L'Indonésie*. Que sais-je? 801. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1993. 127 pages. Maps, bibliography. Paper, n.p.; ISBN 2 13 045537 9. (In French)

Travel stories, diaries of travel, guidebooks, and books describing other lands have gained a permanent place on the bookshelves of the so-called rich countries over the past few decades. Until recently the genre was the domain of novelists, journalists, and adventurers; now more and more scholars have entered the field. Lovers of travel and readers interested in other cultures are no longer content with stories, impressions, itineraries, and travel advice—increasingly, they want to go into the history and culture of other societies. It is thus not surprising that historians, anthropologists and social geographers have leapt into this market. They are the ones with the data and ideas that the general public desires.

The French anthropologist Olivier Sevin's *L'Indonésie* fits this development well. Having authored and co-authored two scholarly studies on, respectively, the Dayak in central Kalimantan (1983) and transmigration in South Sumatra, he has now produced a brief, general study of Indonesia. The book contains no new data or insights for specialists on Indonesia; for them its only importance is the indirect but interesting picture it provides of the state of affairs of Indonesian studies in France. For the general reader, however, the book gives in a nutshell a quite gripping survey of the nature and development of Indonesian society as well as of the aspirations and frustrations of the populace.

The book is part of the encyclopedic series *Que sais-je?* [What do I know?]. Its size is so small that it might better be called a *livre de pochette* than a *livre de poche* (pocket-book). The size is, however, not representative of its content. The author deserves praise for having been able to discuss so many relevant matters within the restrictions that such a series imposes.

The study consists of three parts, each of which is thematically organized (i.e., historical data is subordinate to larger themes). The first part, "The Land and the People," deals with the enormous geological, geographical, climatological, vegetal, demographic, ethnic, and cultural variety found in this immense archipelago, as well as with the consequences this diversity has for national unity. The treatment consists predominantly of a summing up of characteristics, although it becomes more interesting when the author dwells at length on the consequences (such as political fragility) of the extreme demographic differences between different islands and regions. Unfortunately, discussion of the influence of cultural and ethnic differences on power relations—something we might have expected from an anthropologist—is quite limited.

The second part, "Foundations of Economic Life," considers agriculture (on which the greater part of the population is dependent for its livelihood), the natural riches of the country, and the long urban tradition. The ways land is used and the distribution of natural resources are treated perfunctorily. No attention at all is paid to labor relations (sharecropping, tenancy, wage-labour) and rural commercialization. One gets an overall impression of the economic life, but does not learn how the different economic sectors operate and are attuned to each other. The chapter on urbanization is much more interesting. It shows that even in precolonial times cities had an important place in the archipelago: first, as centers in the predominantly agrarian-oriented Hindu empires, and, later, as ports in the Islamic trade enclaves. The colonial city and the present-day metropolis, though different from the previous types of cities, appear to fit into this long-term tradition.

The third part, "Indonesian Challenges," is without doubt the most interesting section of the book. It deals with three of the most important challenges the country faces: migration to cope with overpopulation, industrialization and agricultural renovation to raise standards of living, and national integration. Sevin gives clear expositions of all these topics, although he is in my opinion too positive about the results to date. Generally and quantitatively speaking, unquestionable progress has been made in several of these fields. But how and at what price? Sevin does not mention the opportunities that were missed and the negative effects that the government's policies have had for the population. It is generally known that in many regions of Java the green revolution has led to greater social inequality, that migration has sometimes worsened the economic situation of the peasants involved, and that integration is often furthered through intimidation and violence. The author should have mentioned these shady sides, in particular with regard to migration, of which he seems to know a great deal. This section should also have taken up such matters as human rights, democracy, corruption, and environmental degradation.

In addition to this lack of a critical attitude, one might also criticize the location in the book where certain topics are raised. The 1965 coup d'état and the occupation of East Timor, for example, are dealt with briefly in the first part; they deserve a prominent place in the last chapter. More attention should also have been paid to such topics as the role of the Chinese in economic life and the organization of birth control. It is also regrettable that Sevin leans too much on the French literature on Indonesia and neglects the recent findings of scholars from other countries.

Despite these shortcomings, Sevin succeeds in giving a clear and concise picture of Indonesia. His book deserves a place in the jacket or handbag of every French-speaking tourist to Indonesia.

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TSING, ANNA LOWENHAUPT. *In the Realm of the Diamond Queen: Marginality in an Out-of-the-Way Place*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993. xvi+350 pages. Maps, illustrations, bibliography, index. Cloth US\$49.50/£35.00; ISBN 0-691-03335-8. Paper US\$14.95/£10.95; ISBN 0-691-00051-4.

Writing an ethnography is never an easy matter, since it forces the author to select from the mounds of information collected in the field just those data that will reflect the understandings he or she gained of the people the book discusses. An ethnography, then, is not so much a true picture of the culture of "a people," but rather an approach to such an understanding; it is a construction that as faithfully as possible reflects what the author learned. The effort is further complicated by the foci chosen for special attention and the theoretical orientations brought to bear on the data.

Within these parameters, *In the Realm of the Diamond Queen* is an interesting effort. This volume on the life of the Meratus Dayak of Kalimantan within the context of the larger nation state of Indonesia brings to the fore issues that do not usually become the focus of more traditional ethnographies. Rather than give the reader an abstract, essentialist anthropological picture of a strange culture, Tsing focuses on the Meratus's marginality, both in their relation with the neighboring coastal Banjar and with the policies of the Indonesian government as these are formulated in faraway Jakarta and carried out more or less diligently by its local agents.

Tsing writes that she did not set out to specifically study these things, but became aware of them early in her fieldwork. Her theoretical orientation, however, discussed at length in the first part of the book, made her receptive at least to the possibility of marginality as a research problem. Her theoretical introduction draws upon nearly every postmodernist current flowing through the social sciences and humanities today: "deconstructed" anthropology, feminism, ecology, and the like. This densely written section is definitely not for the tyro, although it does give a good bibliography for those who would like to explore matters further. Among all the various currents present in this complex exposition, however, I did not get a clear feeling of Tsing's own voice. A concise statement of her own position would have been a help.

One thing that is clear is her constructionist position on culture. Although, because of her attention to marginality and the Meratus's interaction with the outside world, Tsing does not always give as sharp a focus as might have been hoped for to the activities of daily life (commonly described in essentialist ethnographies), she