

Ricklefs's book is both easily accessible for non-specialists and thoroughly engaging for those already well-versed in modern Indonesian Islam.

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*Potent landscapes: Place and mobility in eastern Indonesia*

By CATHERINE ALLERTON

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*Potent landscapes* is bookended by a greeting often heard by visitors to a southern Manggarai village: 'This is the shape of our land here'. A 'humorous apology with modest pride' (p. 1) but also a glint of defiance, it encapsulates the complex, fluid entanglements between people, things, spirits, places and the land around which Allerton's highly readable monograph revolves. Its ethnographic focus is the 'two-placed, partly resettled village' (p. 5) of Wae Rebo-Kombo, where Allerton has conducted ethnographic fieldwork since 1997. Consisting of two sites between which residents shuttle regularly — the older, more 'traditional' Wae Rebo in the highlands, and Kombo, its lowland offshoot which was constructed in the 1960s as part of a wider governmental resettlement drive — the village serves as a very particular lens on the processes by which Manggarai persons and places are created and given value.

The chapters expand outwards in ever-widening 'concentric circles' (p. 15), beginning with the smallest and most intimate of spaces, the sleeping room, and ending with much larger 'landscapes of movement' (p. 175) — simultaneously physical, political, historical, and spiritual spaces in which both ordinary and extraordinary journeys are undertaken. Running through them is a concerted desire to take 'everyday life' seriously (p. 16): to understand the small-scale, deeply personal and embodied ways in which Manggarai people engage with each other, spirits, places, and the landscape. In this respect, Allerton positions her ethnography — possibly a little too forcefully at times — as a critical rejoinder to the extant anthropological literature on eastern Indonesian societies (hitherto dominated by the influential Leiden School), which she charges with 'ignor[ing] or trivializ[ing] the messy and contradictory aspects' of life in its (neo)structuralist quest to describe cosmological coherence, symbolism, rules and classifications (p. 7). However, rather than eliding any mention of 'the extraordinary, the ritual, or the ancestral' (p. 9) — all prime Leiden fodder — she teases out their complex, shifting relation to everyday practices and experiences in her fieldsite, particularly in and through the landscape. As she explains, if '[i]t is through the repetition of numerous everyday practices that the landscape gains potency', it is also 'through ritual performance that people explicitly create the presence, or utilise the power, of the landscape's agency' (p. 16).

The close entwining of ritual and everyday life is fluently and often movingly borne out by the book's chapters. Influenced in part by recent phenomenological

approaches to animism and the environment — notably Tim Ingold's writings on 'dwelling' in the world — Allerton combines close ethnographic description with individual stories and historical and political contextualisation to evoke landscapes and places that are alive with both collective and personal significance. Crucially, their 'liveliness' (as Manggarai people describe ideal homes) is not only symbolic but also profoundly material, visceral, and emotional. To this end, rooms and houses are depicted in Chapters 1 and 2 as agentic material and spiritual presences in themselves: as permeable, protective but also potentially hazardous entities that act on persons as much as persons act on them. Chapter 3 extends this theme by looking at how marriage is not simply a set of rules and classifications but a 'sequence of place-based, practical actions' (p. 74) that creates metaphorical, relational *and* literal 'paths' in the landscape.

Chapter 4 bridges the first and second parts of the book by relating distinctly Manggarai conceptions of 'the animate landscape', in which spirits and spirit-places are immanent, to one of several major 'external' influences on life in Wae Rebo-Kombo: Christianity. Although Catholicism is followed by the majority of Manggarai, Allerton argues that it has only had a marginal impact on the land, which her informants see as possessing its own distinctive energies, history and identity. As such, the landscape serves as a tangible, anti-syncretistic boundary between what they conceive of as 'religion' (*agama*) as opposed to local 'custom' (*adat*). Chapter 5 introduces a second important outside player to the ethnography: the Indonesian state. In it, Allerton highlights the vital role played by official development policies in shaping contemporary patterns of settlement, mobility and cultural consciousness. Yet such entanglements are themselves circumscribed by 'concepts of the powerful agency of ancestral land' (p. 141), as is revealed in the construction of a new ritual drum-house in Wae-Rebo and debates over whether to build one in Kombo. Finally, Chapter 6 explores the journeys that constitute and reproduce Manggarai places and link them with larger spiritual, temporal and (inter)national landscapes. For Allerton, movement is not tangential to place, but actually constitutive of it; indeed, when 'mobility in its many forms' is taken as 'a *given*', '[t]he issue then becomes one of how to create moments of stillness in the midst of flow' (p. 176).

Cumulatively, these chapters build up a dense, nuanced portrait of a lived landscape — one that bears its own agency and temporality but is also embedded in wider processes and relations. Rather than trying to lay out some ground-breaking new theory of landscape or potency, Allerton concentrates on illuminating the complexities, contradictions and quandaries that make up 'everyday life' — thereby giving it the same concerted analytical attention as anthropologists of eastern Indonesia have hitherto accorded ritual, cosmology and symbolism. While largely effective, this strategy may prove frustrating for readers with broader interests in the historical, religious and political dynamics of the region; the later chapters in particular raise a tantalising gamut of questions about Christianity, the state, cultural politics and transnational migration that would probably require several books to address. But its relatively modest scope, I would argue, is precisely the strength of Allerton's work. Like other classic anthropological portraits of everyday lives and intimate relations in the region, such as Janet Carsten's *The heat of the hearth* (1997) and Janet Hoskins' *Biographical objects* (1998), *Potent landscapes* is succinct proof of the

powerful contribution that solid, unpretentious ethnography can make to scholarly understandings of 'ordinary' Southeast Asian lives. And at a time when anthropology — and much of academe — is increasingly characterised by theoretical posturing, this can only be a good thing.

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*Violence and vengeance: Religious conflict and its aftermath in eastern Indonesia*

By CHRISTOPHER R. DUNCAN

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*Violence and vengeance* joins a large literature on the violent communal conflicts which exploded in Indonesia fifteen years ago. Christopher R. Duncan aims to bring to the fore the voices and understandings of the ordinary people involved. He asserts that for most, the defining feature of the violence was religious difference. Having written a book on the same conflict, this is a difficult review for me to write. I will therefore focus on the analytical approach taken by Duncan, only referring to specifics on which we disagree when necessary to illustrate my concerns.

Some aspects of Duncan's book make it a welcome addition to the scholarship on North Maluku and conflict in Indonesia. Not only is his study based on extensive fieldwork, something too often missing in studies of conflict, but this occurred before, during and after the fighting, giving him an almost unique perspective. Scholars will find his discussion of the post-conflict era useful as this period has largely been missing from the literature. The book is well written despite regular jarring spelling errors ('casual' factor, p. 172; 'affect' of religious framing, p. 173; 'tenants' of Islam, p. 166) although some were amusing ('marital' prowess, p. 34). More vexingly, large sections discuss information that has already been published but are unreferenced.

Duncan begins by claiming that most existing studies of the conflicts in North Maluku and elsewhere in that era are undermined by their quest for 'causation and chronology'. They are preoccupied with 'grand narratives that discuss timelines, causal mechanisms, and the roles of political elites and their parties' (p. 7). These studies are 'based on media reports and interviews with regional and national elites' (p. 8) and 'omit the stories and voices of those individuals most affected' (p. 7). He eschews 'causal analysis' of why things happened and who was to blame, and is more concerned with 'understanding people's conceptions and experiences of what they "know" happened' (p. 10).

This is the first of at least two serious straw men erected in the book. In the studies he critiques, causal analysis is based upon how people perceived their surroundings, evaluated their interests and weighed their options. The scholarship of Jamie Davidson (*From rebellion to riots: Collective violence on Indonesian Borneo*, 2008), Dave McRae (*A few poorly organized men: Interreligious violence in Poso*,