

## REFERENCE

Tyson, Adam. "Being Special, Becoming Indigenous: Dilemmas of Special *Adat* Rights in Indonesia". *Asian Journal of Social Science* 39, no. 5 (2011): 652–73.

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*Radical Traditions: Reimagining Culture in Balinese Contemporary Music*. By Andrew McGraw. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. xxxi+270 pp.

This book addresses the advent of contemporary music in Bali — music that may deviate from the typical gong cycles, stratified polyphony, and gamelan instrumentation — which is both an extremely complicated and a truly original subject. In the process, the volume problematizes the general understandings and scholarship on Balinese culture and music and traces a counter-trajectory — a trajectory that many contemporary composers have traversed. McGraw illuminates the art, lives and voices of these artists, interweaving the various strands of *musik kontemporer* (contemporary music) — from “intercultural” music (p. 16) to musicians drilling down gongs on stage as performance art (pp. 104–05). He argues for the emergence of *musik kontemporer*

as a form to express new ideas that could not be articulated through pre-existing genres and ... to reconcile for its creators and audiences the discursive paradox between contemporary Balinese culture as lived and Balinese culture as represented. (p. 1)

He does a great service to the individuals studied and their Balinese counter-narrative. The chapters state and problematize the narratives, and hold together to reimagine Bali via the creativity of its contemporary artists.

Although it fits with the theme of the book, McGraw perhaps devotes excessive time to debunking the “anthropological romance

of Bali” (p. 16), which saw scholars and expatriates picture Bali as an unchanging paradise that followed a static construct of time. Granted that the reason that he deconstructs this resilient image is that it misrepresents Bali, discrediting or unpacking it is warranted. And the “reimaginings” in the title invites us to do just that. But this theme is prominent in every chapter (particularly the first two), and it becomes a bit redundant. One other weakness of the book might be its sparing coverage of those individuals who moved ideas of the *kontemporer* into a popular medium.

One of the book’s clear strengths is McGraw’s coverage of the development of musical modernism in Indonesia as it compares to other parts of Asia and of the political and artistic phenomena that led to increasing and distinctive music experimentation. His coverage of American involvement — partially through the activities of the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations — in the emergence of experimental and abstract art in Chapter Two is a major new contribution to the understanding of the development of contemporary Indonesian art. His complete unpacking of *musik kontemporer* is excellent and reveals a great deal about the forces — artists, writers, and institutions — engaged in appropriating the concept.

McGraw’s work with and recollections of leading Balinese “avant-garde” composers also must be commended. I very much enjoyed reading the italicized text that highlights experiences with some of these artists. In addition to the more radical *musik kontemporer* compositions and artists, McGraw discusses “world music” (p. 100), the “othering” of Bali and Balinese music (p. 103), and intercultural productions largely managed by outsiders and organized with power imbalances. These productions generally use music that is understandably Balinese or a synthesis of traditional and contemporary elements without challenging listeners. Unfortunately, he does not address the music in these productions in any detail. He focuses primarily on the appropriations in order to position such developments historically. No one else has so penetrated such productions. Although this section of the book fits into the book’s

theme of the control of Balinese image, it dilutes the coverage of *musik kontemporer*.

The book unfolds in a logical manner, reflecting also the author's growing understanding of the contemporary music scene on Bali and its artists. McGraw covers his bases in the book, not only citing pertinent and extensive literature throughout, but also interviewing artists and scholars. The book draws on some fifteen years of ethnographic research. This background legitimizes many of the claims of the book and McGraw's grasp of the issues is apparent. His diverse and sometimes contradictory conclusions are supported by the data, socio-political developments, and the words and reimaginings of contemporary artists themselves.

While most scholars examining contemporary music in light of modern or postmodern developments in Bali have identified such artists as Dewa Berata, Wayan Yudane, Nyoman Windha, Wayan Beratha, and Dewa Ketut Alit, previous scholarship has focused on "tradition" rather than changing aesthetics and possibilities. This problem is part of McGraw's critique. This book has no peer in the marketplace and probably no one other than McGraw could write it.

I recommend this book to scholars, students and travellers who seek this counter-aesthetic and cultural account of the contemporary Balinese musical scene which undermines extant understandings of "Bali". These counter-imaginings are essential to understanding contemporary Bali and are related to developments in other postcolonial sites. The book problematizes many of the exoticizing imaginings of foreign scholars, often appropriated by artists and institutions on Bali for their own benefit. It provides a real sense of the tensions of day-to-day life, modernization, globalization, Indonesianization, policies governing and control of the arts, and religious and political strife as these affect lives and music in contemporary Bali.

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