Managing Turbulent Hearts: A Balinese Formula for Living. By Unni Wikan. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990. Pp. x, 343. Illustrations, glossary, references, notes, index.

What do anthropologists study? Simply stated, this is the fundamental question guiding Unni Wikan's *Managing Turbulent Hearts: A Balinese Formula for Living*, a captivating work based on twenty months of field-work in the northern Balinese town of Singaraja. For Wikan, the primary task of the anthropologist should to be to explore the ways individuals interpret and manipulate cultural meanings to cope with daily struggles and predicaments. This seemingly common-sense approach not only supports the ongoing development of an "anthropology of experience" — an anthropology emphasizing the lived significance of cultural conceptions — it also offers profound insights which contradict prevalent views of the Balinese put forth by Gregory Bateson, Margaret Mead, and Clifford Geertz.

Wikan argues that anthropological representations, which depict culture as a symbolic system with an all-encompassing effect on peoples' thoughts and actions, are misguided. Here Wikan criticizes the theoretical work of Geertz, who has argued that culture, as a system of symbols which both represents and shapes reality, is most apparent in public ritual events. Wikan agrees that culture is embodied in symbols, but that the meanings of those symbols can best be grasped in relation to the lives of particular individuals. She argues that individuals — occupying various social positions based on such factors as age, rank, gender, and life experience — hold profoundly different conceptions of culture and that these conceptions are apt to change through the course of life. Wikan also criticizes the Geertzian method of analysis because there is often no evidence of how the anthropologist creates his or her interpretations of other cultures. Moreover, the contradictory voices of many are moulded into a homogeneous cultural system.

Wikan's focus on the lived significance of Balinese cultural conceptions, as opposed to those conceptions expressed in public rituals, offers an alternative to the so-called theatre state view of Bali,

which suggests a pervasive impact of public ritual performance on self and society in Bali. The case of Suriati, Wikan's most significant informant, supports this critique of the theatre state model. Suriati suffered a great loss when her prospective husband in Lombok suddenly died. Suriati's response to this loss confused Wikan and led her to rethink Balinese notions of personhood. Suriati did not merely respond to this death in a calm, smooth manner, a disposition, which according to Geertz, characterizes the Balinese. Suriati instead appeared jubilant, like a young bride. Her face was bright and cheery as she told others about the death of her friend. Wikan soon discovered, through her close association with Suriati, that this was not the Balinese response to death. Suriati's outward behaviour was a willed response constructed to cope with social pressures as well as the over-whelming sadness she felt in her heart. Suriati thought it necessary to put on a bright face so that she would not be teased by others, or worse yet, be branded as a widow, a label that would shame a young woman of her age and social status. Suriati also wore a bright face to avoid being perceived as arrogant, which could offend some people and lead to the employment of black magic against her. The significance of this case is that it shows that the "Balinese character" is not simply an ingrained disposition, or an outgrowth of public ritual, but instead a willed — albeit culturally patterned — response to lived predica-ments. Suriati's case also demonstrates that intense concern with black magic is extremely significant in shaping the presentation of self in Bali. Geertz, however, did not consider black magic in his influential study of Balinese personhood.

Wikan, moreover, suggests that Geertz was mistaken when he stated that the Balinese interpreted one another's expressions at face value and were in fact embarrassed to see anything beyond this. Wikan, on the other hand, depicts the people she studies as being always preoccupied, and sometimes almost obsessed, with trying to see the feelings and thoughts *behind* the expressions of others. Wikan also disputes the public/private dichotomy which was employed by Geertz. Geertz has argued that within the private sphere of the home, the atmosphere was warm, friendly, and relaxed. Wikan, on the other

hand, shows that the apparent relaxed atmosphere of back rooms and kitchens is often a façade, covering the deeply felt fears of offending those that can harm one the most, that is, the people that know one well. It is only with one's closest friends and family that one feels safe from the threats of black magic, and it is often in public events such as large celebrations and rituals, not in the home, where one can afford to relax with these intimate relations.

Wikan's exploration of Balinese emotional expressions offers insights relevant to the anthropological studies of emotion. Wikan is critical of the developing sub-field in anthropology centring on emotions for two reasons. First, she argues that for the Balinese, feelings and thoughts are considered the same, both of which are equally rational and consciously felt. An anthropology of emotion, Wikan contends, reflects a Western assumption of the presence of emotions, distinct from ideas and thoughts. Second, Wikan argues that cognitive studies of emotion fail to grasp the complex and overlapping character of emotional life. Emotions are not experienced as distinct wholes, but are instead overlapping in complex ways. Furthermore, individual interpretations of emotional meanings are likely to change through the course of life. For example, immediately after the death of her fiance, Suriati interpreted the feelings/thoughts (*keneh*) of others as mockery and teasing, but later interpreted these same expressions as compassion and encouragement. Perhaps Wikan's most significant observation of Balinese emotional life is that, for her informants, feelings and thoughts are often expressed for strategic and pragmatic reasons. This is because expressions hold the power to shape both the body and the mind as well as the supernatural world. Expressions of sadness, for example, are thought to make one physically ill and to weaken one's life force (*bayu*). Sadness may spread to others, making them sick and vulnerable to black magic as well. Expressions, moreover, may be used for healing and Wikan shows how laughter is employed by the Balinese to cure sadness and its associated illnesses. This observation is significant for anthropological studies of health and curing. Curing, Wikan demonstrates, not only occurs in the company of religious practitioners, shamans, and doctors but also among friends and family

within the mundane activities of daily life.

The strength of *Managing Turbulent Hearts* is that it examines the expressions of feelings and thoughts by individuals engaged in life's struggles. Compelling insights into the force of Balinese cultural conceptions on peoples' lives are offered. Suriati's sadness at the loss of her fiance, Wayan Wijaya's shame and broken heartedness after being released from his job by his most trusted friend, and Wayan's wife's fear and confusion over accusations that her husband was mad, all help us begin to understand the ways Balinese think and experience their reality. However, it is still not clear whether or not we actually grasp what these feelings and thoughts mean. Sadness was a major force in Suriati's life, but it is not until Wikan tells of how a Balinese told her she misunderstood their "sadness" that we realize that Balinese sadness differs significantly from Western conceptions of sadness. Wikan explains that when she told a Balinese about how sad she was after being deceived by another foreign researcher, the friend told Wikan that she was not sad but angry. This is because, as the Balinese explained, sadness is only felt when something is lost. Here we learn that Balinese feelings and thoughts are unique. It also becomes apparent that more attention to translating cultural differences is needed in *Managing Turbulent Hearts*. Wikan, for example, does not adequately explore possible differences in the way Balinese interpret such concepts as confusion (*bigung*), anger (*marah*), and hate (*benci*).

This shortcoming perhaps stems from a methodological dilemma faced by many anthropologists, who quite admirably try to avoid simplifying, reifying, and exoticizing "other" cultures. A way to avoid this is to stick close to the particularities of individuals struggling to cope with common human predicaments and social and historical processes. When this is done, however, significant differences in the ways people conceptualize and construct reality may be overlooked. Perhaps in Wikan's case, an attempt to gain understanding of general Balinese conceptions, employing a variety of field-work techniques such as analysis of popular Balinese novels, public rituals, and even questionnaires, could have been employed to complement her analysis. I am in full agreement with Wikan that so-called abstract

analyses should not take precedence over the lived significance of cultural conceptions. However, some form of cultural translation, which also takes into account the positioned and contested nature of meanings, is necessary to avoid assumptions of cultural similarities which do not exist.

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