

Hefner, Robert W. 1990. *The Political Economy of Mountain Java: An Interpretive History*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990. xxii & 278 Pages. \$40.00 (cloth); \$15.00 (paper).

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Long before the development of roads and other communications systems that traverse or penetrate geographical boundaries, long before the European powers' invasion of the region, geography was a primary cause of variations in culture, political-economy, and social organization among highland and lowland peoples of Southeast Asia. The varied social identities of highland and lowland groups were preserved in different languages or dialects, in religion, in stories of origin, and in social structures. Where social cleavages were deepest and geographical distances most lengthy, and where imperialistic states were either late-comers or somehow less successful at penetrating regional interiors, separation was most likely to lead to distinctive ethnic identities. In the Tengger highlands of eastern Java, such a process was aborted by the interventions of the Dutch colonial state. Two successive independent Indonesian state regimes have continued and accelerated the political-economic integration of highland and lowland peoples, abetted by global economic change and revolutions in communications. However, although Java's Tengger highlanders did not develop a separate ethnicity from their lowland neighbors, many aspects of culture and political economy have differed in the two places. Java's mountain people have experienced a radically different social history from the well-documented patterns of agrarian life in Java's lowlands. Both the material and the moral bases of everyday life in the highlands, though increasingly similar to those in lowland Java, derived from very different historical conditions.

Robert W. Hefner expertly accomplishes three major objectives in his second book, *The Political Economy of Mountain Java: An Interpretive History*. First, he pioneers the social analysis of agrarian change in the upland/mountain regions of Java. Second, he deftly analyzes the roles of politics and culture in economic development. Third, he uses ethnographic and archival research to present a detailed cultural, political, and agrarian history of East Java's Tengger highlands.

An explicit sub-text to the book is Hefner's refutation of rational choice models, structural determinism, and vulgar Marxism, in favor of more complex analyses of the causes and processes of social change. His most important tool is the insertion of agency into the study of political economy, emphasizing process as well as structure, local as well as regional and national changes which influence the definitions and experiences of class and community by upland villagers. By focusing on culture and politics (the small "c" stands also for class and community), Hefner humanizes and broadens the study of economic change and environmental transformation.

The book's first and final chapters set the Tengger mountain region in theoretical and empirical spaces of political economy, cultural studies, and upland agrarian history. In the intervening six chapters, he unravels the empirical context, demonstrating how this once-separate cultural region became integrated culturally and economically into the larger, once foreign, long-hostile region of Java. For various historical periods, including, in greatest detail, the mountain world since 1965, Hefner immerses us in his reconstruction of the Tengger mountains' landscape, showing us how the mosaic of ecology, political economy, and culture shifts in response to various social and environmental conjunctures. He skillfully fulfills his promise to contrast the familiar history of land, labor, and the politics of produc-

tion in the wet-rice growing lowlands with the diversity of historical experience in various parts of this particular upland region.

Chapter two provides an example of how Hefner links land, labor, ecology, and social relations to his story of change. This condensed "premodern" history of the Tengger region begins by describing a region which harbored both dissidents and individualists, as well as Hindu-Buddhist institutions which were at one period of history sponsored by the state and which later came to represent opposition to the Muslim lowland state. The second half of the chapter describes the critical changes of the nineteenth century brought on by the Dutch colonial state. These included significant changes in the mountains' ecosystems, settlement patterns, labor relations, and political economy. Coffee production was the engine driving these changes: coffee plantations transformed the earlier landscape dominated by montane tropical forest, it mobilized three times as much peasant labor as did cane production, and 35 percent of the Javanese families involved in compulsory cultivation planted coffee. The colonial state also maintained its monopoly on the trade in coffee longer than on any other tropical crop. Coffee was the island's most important export during the Cultivation period (pp. 41–42).

Indeed, the prospect of cultivating coffee for the state and gaining access to the forest above the coffee belt for conversion to agriculture attracted many migrants from the lowlands. This resulted in another transformation of Java's mountain landscape: the phenomenal increase in the amount of dry-field cultivation (*tegal*), both in absolute terms and in comparison to the cultivation of wet-fields (*sawah*), either irrigated or rainfed. Between 1814 and 1927, for example, the amount of *tegal* cultivated in the Tengger region increased by a factor of sixteen and amounted to twice the amount of *sawah* cultivated (p. 48). The extreme deforestation, land degradation, and erosion caused by rapid transformation of steep lands formerly under forest subsequently led to different types of protective and exclusive government policies governing land use. These Javanese policies foreshadowed not only the future in Java, but also the policy environment of Indonesia's "Outer Island" forests. The colonial state policies predated contemporary state attempts to control the people and resources within Indonesian territory: the closing of the forest to cultivation, the consolidation of scattered small settlements into nuclear villages, and government uses of "scientific" land management schemes to try to minimize the adverse impacts of development and its own earlier policies.

Hefner's story of these mountains is far more complex and complete than a single review can do justice to. One theme I have hardly touched upon here is his treatment of the origins of and changes in social identity, a theme woven through the story as regularly as the mountains' changing agricultural ecology. Only the title's claim to all of mountain Java belies the nature of the contents. While some political-economic and ecological characteristics might be similar for all of Java's mountains in contrast to the lowlands, the implication that all contain the same story seems antithetical to Hefner's otherwise focused history of a mountain complex with a unique cultural and political history.

Overall, the book is a brilliant exemplar of the intricate relations between process and structure, between culture, political economy, and ecology--indeed, of "political ecology." The volume makes a significant contribution to anthropology, rural sociology, social history, cultural geography, and environmental studies. Moreover, as one of the best books ever written on agrarian change in Java, it should be required reading for Southeast Asian studies.