

Leo Howe. *The Changing World of Bali: Religion, Society, and Tourism*. London, New York: Routledge, 2005. 161 pages, with figures, map, photographs, and references; no glossary.

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Leo Howe's *Changing World of Bali* provides an excellent introduction to Balinese history and society, with critical evaluation of existing scholarship—at its best when Howe brings it into dialogue with examples from his own fieldwork in Southern Bali. Specialists and nonspecialists alike will also find of particular interest Howe's history of the institutionalization of Bali Hinduism to ensure its recognition within the Indonesian state, and his presentation of current Balinese debates concerning tourism, new religious movements, and the ongoing salience of hierarchy. In this otherwise thorough overview of Balinese culture and society, and of scholarship on Bali, only the omission of the rich body of research on irrigated rice agriculture and water temple systems stands out.

With regard to his attention to the impact of tourism, Howe states frankly that he relies much on Picard. This has become common practice, and I agree Picard's analysis is compelling; yet I wish colleagues would engage it more critically and develop it further. The main theme is roughly that what Balinese have come to view as their identity and culture really are internalized images and concepts constructed by others—the colonial Dutch, expatriate “agents of representation,” and scholars—and perpetuated by tourists' expectations. Thus we find “Balinese living up to the images others have been partly responsible for creating” (p. 4). Howe appropriately modifies his statement with “partly,” but that thought is soon effaced, and with it anything that Balinese contributed to the process. He concludes with Picard that Balinese now have a “touristic” culture where “that by which the tourists identify them becomes that by which they identify themselves” (p. 143). Picard, Howe, and others in this vein are addressing crucial issues concerning the impact of tourism and image-making, fundamental to an anthropological understanding, but the resulting conclusions advance new simplifications. Also, the average reader likely will not realize from the portrayal here that the vast majority of Balinese rituals are performed without the slightest concern about catering to tourists.

One of the most exciting contributions of *The Changing World of Bali* is Howe's presentation of Balinese discussions surrounding ritual and hierarchy, conveying the range of extant perspectives in terms of theoretical as well as practical concerns, and how these are playing out with regard to specific issues, such as animal sacrifice or life in a modern economy. More demographic and regional contextualization of statements about “many Balinese” or “most Balinese” would have been helpful, however, as the delimitation is not always clear. Howe says that a new kind of religious experience is emerging, emphasizing “individual spiritual development and inner religious experience” (p. 104) and that it is “more widespread,” but will it be clear to readers that there are regions of Bali where one rarely encounters the new devotees or some of the trends that Howe talks about? Howe is right to point out that the issue Balinese face is not just about belief, but also about behavior in the context of community: “Individuals cannot simply cease performing rituals dedicated to their ancestors on the

basis that they might be a waste of time and money, because this would effectively sever the all-important relationship with their co-villagers" (p. 104). At the same time I would venture that the majority of Balinese really do believe in the importance of maintaining ritual connection to their ancestors. Howe also rightly argues that caste and hierarchy remain crucial institutions, and reviews the controversies surrounding the criteria for hierarchical positioning, the intricacies of status mobility, and the relationship between status and wealth. As he suggests, a new prestige system is developing now that commoners can also become affluent and begin to "construe their continued deference to impoverished and uneducated gentry as feudal" (p. 125). Meanwhile, it is worthwhile noting as well that to remain relevant and retain their status, gentry, too, are managing their positions in the context of new developments. Howe makes the important point that, generally, "What is being questioned is one's position in the hierarchy, not the hierarchy itself" (p. 120).

Specialists will recognize much in this book from Howe's previous work, but he frames his discussion here with the 2002 Kuta bombings and their impact. He finds that the economic consequences of the terrorist attack appear to have short-circuited any impetus toward change in Balinese tourism, with regard to materialism and better alignment with (non-touristified?) "Balinese values." He also finds that the new national policy of regional autonomy has exacerbated the situation because now each of Bali's eight regions can make its own decisions about economic development, such that formerly "neglected regions ... have devised ambitious development plans to rectify the imbalance, but with scant regard for the adverse environmental damage" (p. 144). "Just as important as cultural degradation," points out Howe (presumably referring to "touristified culture"), "is the distinct probability of resource destruction" (p. 145). This, of course, is neither a new concern nor associated solely with decentralized projects. Without delving deeply into the developments surrounding decentralization, Howe concludes that "The economic forces now shaping the island continue to exploit Bali for tourism and, three years after the Bali bomb, the processes propelling the international touristification of Bali seem more entrenched than ever" (p. 145).

The Changing World of Bali covers an impressive amount of information. Mostly it supposes no prior knowledge, but provides systematic introductions to aspects of Balinese society and the topics at hand. It should find use in upper division courses on Bali and Southeast Asia—or, for example, as a case study in a more global course on culture change. Howe's expert and stimulating critical review of most of the issues that continue to absorb scholars on Bali, carried into his treatment of current concerns of Balinese, make this a valuable resource indeed.