Perjalanan Kesenian Indonesia Sejak Kemerdekaan: Perubahan dalam Pelaksanaan, Isi, dan Profesi, Philip Yampolsky (ed.)

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plus stupéfiantes encore, témoignant des conditions de retour dans l'Indonésie indépendante, où certains furent installés comme « pionniers » à Sumatra (aux alentours de la nouvelle ville de Metro, dans la région de Lampung Central, comme le furent, au siècle précédent, les petits colons néo-calédoniens.

L'ouvrage s'achève sur la description détaillée de la situation politique néo-calédonienne dans les années 1980-1990 et des contradictions aiguës dans lesquelles se trouve une communauté javanaise longtemps silencieuse, repliée sur ses souffrances anciennes, et qui ne peut avoir sa place dans le conflit entre Kanaks et Caldoches. De très loin moins engagé politiquement que les Wallisiens, à l'époque, qui servent de force de frappe au RPCR (Rassemblement pour la Calédonie dans la République), les Javanais, dans leur grande majorité, rallient une position pro-française et légaliste en dépit de l'expérience coloniale qu'ils ont subie. Le projet d'indépendance kanak et socialiste, pourtant, prenait en compte les victimes de l'histoire. A la lumière de cette histoire que relate Jean-Luc Maurer, on mesure, aujourd'hui, les enjeux de la mémoire pour une communauté javanaise qui parvient enfin à faire entendre sa voix.

MUSIQUE / MUSIC


By Dana RAPPOPORT

This book is a substantial contribution, in Indonesian, to our knowledge of change in culture and the arts in Indonesia. It gathers various points of view, coming from many different Indonesian artists and scholars. Indeed, a hundred of them were asked, by mail, to comment on the question of change in the arts since 1945: How did change occur? They were expected to reflect on changes in contents, performance contexts, and technology; in the audience’s demands and responses; in the economy of the arts; in official and unofficial constraints (government regulations, censorship, ...). The book gathers 58 testimonies, drawn from either written papers (38) or interviews (20).

The idea for this book was Philip Yampolsky’s. A Ford Foundation program officer from 2000 to 2006, and an ethnomusicologist in Indonesia since the 1970s, Yampolsky is the author, with Indonesian colleagues, of the excellent series Traditional Music of Indonesia.¹ The Ford Foundation in Jakarta, since 1953, has had a program for Indonesian arts, awarding grants or loans to build up knowledge and support organizations and networks, seeking to promote the arts and the media as important elements in the development of the communities and societies in which they function and, ultimately, aiming to strengthen democratic values, prop up international cooperation, and advance human achievement. The present book is one of the many contributions, over the years, of the Ford Foundation to Indonesian arts.

Divided into five sections – theater and film, visual arts, music and dance, literature, and artistic and literary criticism (pemerhati dan budayawan, lit., “observers and actors of culture”) – the book gives room to the artists’ various responses in each of these fields.

The historical backdrop is set up in the introduction. Since 1945, the political context has changed radically. Indonesia became a republic, free from Dutch rule. Its first president, Sukarno, tried to develop the arts with a social mission. Unfortunately, in 1965, his attempts were thwarted by the new political order (Orde Baru) imposed by President Suharto. Many artists were simply sent to jail, some altogether murdered. Moreover, many forms of art were forbidden. First and foremost, art in the New Order was entertainment; secondarily, it served as an adjunct to ceremonials; and it was also

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sometimes said to build the national character by exemplifying the beautiful. Neither social analysis and commentary nor intellectual stimulation was considered, in public discourse, as a valuable function of art. In remote places of Indonesia, villagers now have become used to performing their dances for tourists, with no reference to their original functions. The media (radio, television) progressively reached the most remote rural places, and the audience for traditional arts dwindled. And the monotheistic religions imposed everywhere were also responsible, since 1945, for changes in the arts.

Then, there is a foreword, a remarkable and indispensable summary of all artists’ papers, by Melani Budianta, a professor at Universitas Indonesia, describing the recent dynamics of change that pervade the archipelago. She stresses the complaint by many artists regarding the new economic importance of the money factor (perputaran duit) in the performing arts: Traditional Indonesian art has to be marketable; artists want to sell their production; so, art has become a market. Many practitioners feel pessimistic about this, and also about the future; they complain about the disappearance of the true traditional artists, about individualism in art, about the influence of television on children, about the loss of creativity in the villages (see I Dewa Putu Berata’s paper). The more optimistic artists hope that traditional arts can survive in new contexts.

Progressing through the chapters, the reader gets a grasp of Indonesia’s recent history (see the papers by Arief Budiman, Halilintar Lathief, Garin Nugroho, ...). For example, the first two decades after independence (1945-1965) were quite unstable for South Sulawesi: Local forms of music and dance came under direct discrimination by the supporters of Moslem organizations (Darul Islam and Muhammadiyah), owing to their evocation of local spirits and magic, or to the occurrence of erotic or sensual choreographies – placing them at odds with the teachings of orthodox Islam (Halilintar Lathief). The period right after 1965 was even more dreadful: Some of the artists who experienced jail from 1965 to 1979 testify in this book (Pramoedya Ananta Toer, dhalang Ki Tristuti Rachmadi). Many of the papers show how some forms of arts (film, literature, dance, and theater) became increasingly professional since the 1970s (e.g., Nurul Arifin, Christine Hakim, Faruk H.T., Edi Sedyawati). On the contrary, the period of the mid-1980s to the 1990s is viewed as a time of crisis and economic weakness.

Some of the contributors view the problem of change in a rather general way, describing how local culture can be totally destroyed by an outside agency (e.g., John Bamba), while others tell in a more personal way their life histories. Some artists explain how they have had to adjust to demand, for instance, to entertain their audience with dangdut. Although in its content this book is not unusual in the field of anthropology, what is striking here is the way it is put, the way artists respond in their own personal style to the question.

While contributions do not expand over four pages each, they strongly contrast, as they come from many different voices, old and young: dhalang puppeteers, actors, filmmakers, script writers, musicians, composers, singers, dancers, painters, writers; moreover, a place is given also to scholars. The level of speech depends on the texts, originating from interviews or written papers. I like the spontaneity of the former.

The selection of the contributors, however, is too much Java-Bali centered, as very few of them hail from the outer islands (most of whom from Sumatra). Why is it so? We would have liked to listen to rural people from villages in Timor, Kalimantan, or anywhere else, far from Java. Where are they? Many of the contributors to the book are already in the trend, in the move, whereas old singers from far-away regions could have addressed differently the question of change. But how to reach these people when even cars cannot reach their villages, when performers do not even speak fluent Indonesian until this day? It is much easier, certainly, to make contact with people in Java than in Flores.

As I recently did a one-year ethno-musicological fieldwork (2006-2007) in Eastern Indonesia, I would like to put in here another point of view, that of one of the singers with whom I have worked, who live in remote places in East Flores, without electricity, with their unchanging slash-and-burn agriculture. Bapa’ Lego told me about the year 1965, how frightened he was, when he was compelled to move from his original village in the mountain. At that time, PKI (communist party) activists were hunted down, to be killed. Villagers
were asked to burn their old adat clothes. Moreover, Catholic priests often forced them to discard their traditional sacred stones. Now, forty years later, most singers no longer want to perform for the harvest or any other kind of farming work, and duet songs are dying out. The young people, going to school and speaking Indonesian, are seeking modernity, focusing on “urban” culture, and emphasizing everything coming from outside. Actually, this focus on the outside is quite ancient. For centuries, wealth and prestige goods in Flores did come from abroad, and gold, metals, Indian textiles, and elephant tusks originating from the West are still the main goods exchanged as matrimonial gifts. Villagers are not aware of the importance of their songs, meant to keep the peace among the clans. They do not even think of them as art.

The book ends with a very stimulating essay by Yampolsky. A straightforward one, for sure. Who else than Yampolsky could actually have answered the initial question? He is the key expert, who traveled all over Indonesia for ten years, spoke with hundreds of artists in many different settings, to get a personal experience of the loss of tradition. Having listened to all those voices, Yampolsky finally speaks his piece, in clear and optimistic pages. Throughout the book, one of the pervasive themes is the precarious position of most traditional arts. In Indonesia, the traditional arts are often urged to “modernize,” to become seiring zaman, “in step with the times,” with the outcome that many societies have lost faith in the value of their traditional arts. Today, urban styles or repertoires dominate, influence, or threaten rural forms, sometimes to the point that these simply disappear. Many forms of art, too weak to resist, already have died out. Local in language, reference, and performance idiom, these arts may still be practiced, but the local societies are ashamed of or apologetic about them, believing that they must be “improved,” in one way or another, before they can become fit to be performed for outsiders or be a source of local pride. Two positions occur: to worry or to react. A number of art activists in Indonesia are working now to reverse the trend, trying to restore local pride in traditional and local arts and to reaffirm the aesthetics of the local audience. A touching example of an unconventional dhalang (puppeteer) is given in the book, as a token of the hope that things can be changed in a good way.

The multiplicity of voices displays for the reader the various facets of a same reality: How politics, history, and economy influence the arts. Answers are multiple, optimistic, pessimistic or neutral. Listening to personal experiences, in any case, is the best way to understand what is going on in Indonesia right now.

**Note**


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**EXPOSITIONS / EXHIBITIONS**

**● Borneo 2007.**

**Three European Exhibitions**

*By Bernard Sellato*

The year 2007 appears to have been an exceptionally good one for Borneo in Europe. Two exhibitions were held in France, and one in Switzerland, which prominently featured the big island, its forests, its peoples, its cultures, and its arts. Here a brief review of these three events.


The beautiful city of Laon, only a short distance by train or by car from Paris, offers a large variety of first-class monuments, among which its famous early-Gothic cathedral, which served as a model to the builders of the cathedrals of Reims and Chartres. The old city is perched on a narrow plateau and surrounded with fortifications and medieval gates. The Musée d’Art et d’Archéologie is