Ana Dragojlovic

Beyond Bali. Subaltern Citizens and Post-Colonial Intimacy. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016, 204 pp. ISBN 9789462980648. Price: EUR 79.00.

'Balinees zijn opent vele deuren' (Being Balinese opens many doors) is how one of Ana Dragojlovic's interlocutors summarized his situation as immigrant in an otherwise increasingly immigration-hostile Dutch society. Statements like this highlight the pride and dignity with which the small Balinese community in the Netherlands often refer to themselves. The notion of *kebalian*, Balinese-ness, which has evolved in Bali itself in the course of the long-standing entanglements between the local people and Western visitors, is highly relevant in the discourses of Balinese men and women who have made their way to the land of their one-time colonizers. Some of them arrived more than half a century ago and, having leftist sympathies, were not welcomed back during the long Soeharto years, while others have arrived in later years, often as the result of marriages with Dutch people. All the same they have developed networks and cultural activities, balancing diverse cultural demands and loyalties. Ana Dragojlovic's study is based on a decade of fieldwork, consisting of both participant observation and life-stories. The five chapters of the book cover a range of activities and situations where the vulnerable yet partly privileged position of the Balinese immigrants is visible: the Banjar Suka Duka network, Indies festivals, cultural performances, expat art, films, and so on.

The self-esteem of the Balinese expats is heightened by the comparison to other immigrant groups. While, for example, Moroccans and Turks are often perceived as problematic and troublesome, the image of the Balinese among the Dutch majority population is one of a peaceful, well-ordered and law-abiding community. Even among other residents of Indonesian origins they stand out favorably. Balinese culture is almost without exception spoken of in romanticizing and idealizing terms among the Dutch encountered by Dragojlovic. Among the Balinese themselves this leads to a self-image of being 'the best of the rest', the most commendable of the immigrant communities in the Netherlands. Not least the sense of being threatened by radical Islam evokes a sense of common interests between the Dutch majority society and the small Balinese minority. Such perceptions serve to reinforce ideas of Balinese cultural uniqueness, but also hint at the rather ambivalent Balinese relations to the Dutch. In spite of the blood-drenched colonial past and the Dutch conquest of Bali in 1906–1908, many present-day Dutch have been baffled by the unwillingness of the Balinese expats to speak about the past in an anti-colonial way. In fact the Dutch effort on Bali is deemed advantageous to the extent that the Dutch understood the uniqueness and splendor of the Balinese culture, and

transmitted it to the wider world. As Dragojlovic has it, 'Balinese claims to commonality, proximity, and intimacy with the Dutch are based on *what the Dutch were able to recognize* (i.e. Balinese culture as better than others) and *what they did for the Balinese*, both of which are crucial for the production of *kebalian* (Balineseness) and Balinese diasporic formations in Dutch post-coloniality' (p. 17; author's emphasis). A musical performance in Nijmegen called 'Puputan, Val van Bali' (Puputan, The Fall of Bali) which entailed critique against colonialism, was dismissed by some of Dragojlovic's interlocutors as an attempt by Moluccans and Indos to hijack Balinese history in order to attack the Dutch. Possibly, Dragojlovic makes the Balinese more singular than warranted. She makes few comparative outlooks, and looking carefully one will probably find many internally conceived 'best of the rest' in Western societies—ostensibly hard-working Chinese, highly-educated secular Iranians, and so on.

The position of the Balinese expats in Dutch society is far from unproblematic, however. Much of the problem lies in the increasingly assimilationist policy of the Netherlands since the early 2000s. Immigration is severely restricted with demands that foreign spouses of Dutch citizens learn Dutch, and the demand on persons of foreign origins ('allochtonen') to follow courses to promote integration. Several Balinese interlocutors expressed their displeasure with these policies. Similar sentiments are, of course, found in many places in the West and are not specifically Dutch, something that might have been highlighted more in Dragojlovic's book.

Ana Dragojlovic's work charts unknown territory, being the first publication to extensively discuss Balinese diasporic formations, and is a welcome addition to the field of migration and cultural adaptation. It is a rich and many-faceted text which draws inspiration from a broad range of cultural and social science theories, from Anthony Giddens to Marshal Sahlins to Bruno Latour. The theoretical aims may sometimes promise slightly more than they deliver, however: a single comment from an interlocutor is occasionally followed by an extensive analytic discussion where the reader begins to wonder how much basis this has in the material gathered by the author. A little more transparency in terms of her sources would have been helpful, especially since they have been gathered over a long period of ten years. While the bulk of the text makes a well-informed impression, a few minor errors have crept in, such as the *puputan* in Badung taking place in '1904'. In sum this is a complex work which puts demands on its reader, providing several interesting aspects of post-colonial processes of diaspora and home-making.

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