

Eine Chronik des Lebens dieser eindrucksvollen, außergewöhnlichen Persönlichkeit ist längst überfällig. Heinz Schütte nimmt sich ihrer detailgetreu an. Fast 1000 Briefe an seine Eltern hat Magnis-Suseno ihm zur Auswertung überlassen. Unzählige Interviews mit Weggefährten sowie die Auseinandersetzung mit seinen umfangreichen Veröffentlichungen machen es möglich, dass hier ein umfassendes Bild dieses großen Mannes gezeichnet wird. Die Lebensgeschichte seiner Eltern, die Flucht aus Schlesien nach Baden-Württemberg, die Studienzeit in Pullach, Promotion in München sowie die indonesischen Stationen seiner Mission, bis hin zum angesehenen Philosophieprofessor und Regierungsberater. Schütte setzt sich kenntnisreich mit den philosophischen Standpunkten und Theorien auseinander, kann aber gleichzeitig auch die Lebensbejahung und den Humor Magnis-Susenos immer wieder gut einfangen.

Einziger Kritikpunkt ist der Umfang des Buches. Über 400 Seiten Lesestoff sind zu bewältigen. Doch wahrscheinlich ließen sich problemlos weitere 400 Seiten mit diesem spannenden Leben füllen. Schütte schildert den Missionar Franz Magnis-Suseno als einen Berufenen in Indonesien und für Indonesien.

*Jutta Berninghausen*

JUTTA BERNINGHAUSEN / BIRGIT KERSTAN / NENA SOEPRAPTO-JANSEN, *The Many Faces of Indonesian Women. Reflections on Cultural Change in a Multi-Ethnic Society*. Bremen/Boston: Kellner, 2012. 244 pages, € 19.90. ISBN 978-3-939928-77-5

*The Many Faces of Indonesian Women – Reflections on Cultural Change in a Multi-Ethnic Society* is an authoritative and comprehensive study on the role of women in Indonesian society over the last thirty years.

Intense, compassionate and, at times, humorous, the book benefits from the wide knowledge and experience of three authors who have lived and worked extensively in Indonesia, an archipelago of over 300 ethnic groups. As witnesses to far reaching social, economic and political changes – the fall of Soeharto, moves towards greater democratisation, the 2004 tsunami and the effects of globalisation – the authors' different perspectives, as Indonesian and Western women, provide important insights into how these changes have been perceived, and lived, by the women of Indonesia.

Part One focuses on some of the country's regions – Java, Bali, Lombok, Aceh. Punctuated by anecdotes and gritty recollections, it considers how issues, such as love and marriage, poverty and economic hardship affect women from these areas, whilst exploring the opportunities afforded to those who have formed part of the new middle class. Part Two explores how political, economic and social changes have impacted more generally upon women's roles in the family and on wider society.

Through in-depth interviews with a wide range of women such as housewives, academics, political leaders, students and community workers, the book explores their responses to the different pressures and challenges they face. Ratu Hermas, the wife of the Sultan of Yogyakarta, promotes older Javanese traditions, whilst encouraging radical changes, such as reform of the school curricula. Her belief that the West has exaggerated fundamentalist Islam is in direct contrast to Bu Nursyahbani, a prominent political activist who voices her fears around the impact this is having on women in public life. Government Minister Mari Elka Pangestu, who is ethnic Chinese, provides an illustration of a woman who, despite all odds, has earned the respect of her political opponents in a patriarchal, Muslim hierarchical society, through sheer force of personality, compromise and tact, along with a pragmatic understanding of what can be achieved within certain parameters.

The overall impression is a country beset by contradictions and contrasts, not least the tension which exists between individual freedoms and self-realisation in a deeply collectivist society, which values the need for harmony over self-individualisation and which is increasingly putting pressure on women to conform to strict codes of morality. It paints the picture of a people who can simultaneously incorporate and assimilate new ideas, but are often intransigent and resistant to change. This is a country which ratified the Convention Eliminating all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1984, in which gender equality is enshrined by an Indonesian Bill of Rights and discussed openly at national level, but where *sharia* by-laws are strictly enforced and female genital circumcision (FGM) is practised in some regions (notwithstanding the fact that religious policy is reserved to the national government and enshrined in decentralisation laws). This apparent contradiction is not lost by the authors. Whilst contradictions abound, and appear to co-exist, the overall impression is that of a fragile tinder box. Yet, there are hopeful signs as the interview with journalist Julia Suryakusuma illustrates. Proud of being a Muslim and the personal freedom it offers, she sees increasing Islamic fundamentalism as but a cycle, and views women as the most important social movement in Indonesia today, performing a dual function as the carriers of social values and the agents of change.

Nor do the authors avoid difficult issues and note that the consequences of Soeharto repressing political Islam in favour of religious Islam are still being felt today, with limited political action being taken against fundamental terrorist groups and those who provide their religious inspiration. The Social Justice Party, responsible for re-drafting the Anti Pornography Bill (1999), is singled out as being particularly repressive.

The increased use of the veil is also viewed by the authors as disturbing. Whilst appreciating the many and varied reasons why women choose to veil, they suggest that activists fighting for gender equality yet who insist on covering their heads in public, are signalling an acceptance of mandatory veiling

which will ultimately lead to it being the standard of women's appearance. The authors cannot grasp the motives of women who are openly against the compulsory wearing of the veil, yet continue to wear a *jilbab*. They see the veil as going beyond a religious statement – a social and political symbol which oppresses women.

The book ends with a personal account by one of the authors. Nena talks of her attempts to find an identity as she travelled back and forth between Indonesia and Germany, straddling two cultures, but never feeling as if she belonged in either. She does not hide from the struggles encountered along the way, but appears to have found some sort of equilibrium, hinting that this has been in no small part down to the strong women who have been part of her heritage and a father who provided her with a strong sense of autonomy and sense of worth. This has led to a professional interest in the situation of women in both countries and an engagingly honest and frank perspective. Her parting comment on the women of both countries is telling: she notes that there is more in common between them than not.

I also lived in Indonesia for four years in the late eighties and read this book when I recently returned for a short break. It was an indulgence to ponder over the questions posed and reflect on the lived experiences of a varied group of women whilst considering them from my own perspective. Notwithstanding the cultural systems which influence us and of which we are part, there are glaring similarities as relevant to a woman living in Scotland as to any of the Indonesian women portrayed so vividly in the book: issues around love, family, religion, community, the participation of women in public life, domestic abuse, unemployment – in short, critical issues affecting the role of women in society, wherever that might happen to be.

The reader is invited to consider such issues and to reflect on the choices made from the perspectives of these women. Both thoughtful and challenging, this book benefits considerably from an exploratory, reflective and mostly non-judgmental approach, whilst not shying away from raising concerns and posing difficult questions. One is left with a strong feeling that the authors have also been on their own journeys of discovery and change over the last thirty years, no doubt shaped by their relationship with Indonesia and the women they have encountered along the way.

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