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CATHERINE ALLERTON. *Potent Landscapes: Place and Mobility in Eastern Indonesia*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2013. 221pp.

This book provides new insights into the anthropological study of place. It challenges the Leiden School of thought which examined Eastern Indonesia by focusing on the cosmological order, but overlooked everyday life and mobility. The book also critically contests Levi-Strauss' concept of a house-based society. Through the cases of Wae Rebo, a highland area which recently attracted world-wide attention, and Kombo, a village comprising people from Wae Rebo, this book demonstrates that landscapes, mobility, and paths are equally important as elements for analysis and yet have often been ignored by anthropologists. As such the author has attempted to open up new areas of anthropological research by acknowledging the works of Ingold (2000), Clifford (1997), and others.

Based on two years of fieldwork and subsequent visits to the research sites, the book is well-organised and written in accessible language. Allerton leads the reader on a narrative journey through individual spaces in Wae Rebo and Kombo. She shows in detail how the residents engaged spiritually with the rooms and other parts of the house. By taking a closer look at path, landscapes, and the trajectories of migration, Allerton demystifies the common view of a house-based society, which treats the house as a single unit, by focusing on the rooms of the house.

The book engages in theory that is constructed on the basis of observation. In this regard, it serves as a good model for those who are interested in grounded theory. In each chapter, the author clearly presents and discusses her findings toward reconsidering and contesting various established disciplinary positions. Allerton suggests that it is essential for anthropologists to employ a multi-faceted approach; she also utilises the phenomenological method to analyse everyday life. In Chapter 2, she critically explains the permeability of the house through the use of the audio and olfactory senses to perceive voices and smoke. In contrast, the use of the tactile sense is not explored equally well.

Allerton usefully approaches ritual from an everyday perspective. She discusses how the memory of eating together with one's father is significant, as a married daughter can no longer eat with her father. This reveals the importance

of sharing meals in the daily lives of Wae Rebo's inhabitants. Here, a daily ritual thus leads to an emotional engagement among the family members. Similarly, the separation of the members are often remembered through the experience of eating. Thus the sharing of meals appears to be a ritual in its own right. If Allerton had provided more detail on the sequence and setting of such an event, it would have uncovered a new social dimension in everyday life and enriched her research findings. As ritual still plays a significant role in the community of Wae Rebo, Allerton has affirmed the established thesis of van Genneep (1997 [1908]) on the rites of passage.

While Allerton claims to employ a phenomenological approach to animism as a way of being in the world, she criticises the overemphasis on bodily interaction as an approach because it tends to neglect broader political and economic forces. Such an insight has led to the recent understanding of animism not as a form of representation but as a reciprocal relation between people and various elements of the land. Every place has a guardian as agent, or "actor", to use Latour's term (2007). This is why a new member of the family has to undergo a ritual. Placing chicken blood on one's feet introduces new members of the family such as the bride or the new born to the community and thus obtains its acceptance and endorsement to become part of the community.

The frequency of the use of the house, field and path also connect the users' desire or sense of obligation to use or visit these places. This idea highlights the main theme of the book: the energy of the land which people experience. This is an important theme, and Allerton could have done even more to unearth further hidden concepts regarding parts of the house, paths, journeys, and fields. Her work could then have provided a better understanding of the Austronesian term *uma* (which means house in many parts of Indonesia), and its relation to *mbaru niang*, (a cone-shaped house) in the Wae Rebo and Kombo contexts.

This book discloses that land and its occupants are linked by a complex set of relations. The community that owns the land does not necessarily have the right to conduct higher order rituals in the drum house at the high land (which holds the most significant heirloom) and the house of origin. The land in Kombo was given to the inhabitants by another village, thus the right to conduct rituals belongs to the latter. Likewise, paths build relations between two communities. The frequent use of a path gradually gives rise to layers of community memory. Once built, a path is owned not only by the makers but also invites the unseen spirit of ancestors to actively use in it. This is why even the builder of a path needs to permission to use it. A path is not only a way to reach a place but is also representative of the goods and money that circulate along it. The network of paths on the land forms the landscape. The landscape results from the construction of the mind.

Although primarily an anthropological work, this book's its main concerns are place and time and it uses the room, house, field, settlement, and human occupants as units of analysis. For this reason the work also contributes to the field of vernacular and landscape architecture. It has the potential to inform political decision-makers about the values constructed through local wisdom and thereby

reinforce the idea that a top-down approach to rebuilding houses and settlements may disempower a community. Architects and planners should be more sensitive to the impact of their work in places with strong traditional values. The cultural potency of a landscape in this regard is always in flux, shaped by the endless negotiations of various actors.

GUNAWAN TIAHJONO  
*Universitas Indonesia*  
[virtueray@gmail.com](mailto:virtueray@gmail.com)

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NICHOLAS TARLING. *Britain and Sihanouk's Cambodia*. Singapore: NUS Press, 2014. 375 pp.

Emeritus Professor Nicholas Tarling has been one of the most prolific voices on Southeast Asian history for decades. His *Britain and Sihanouk's Cambodia* is the latest in a long line of works on Britain's role in Southeast Asia. With his prodigious use of the British archives he has delivered the most in-depth account of British relations with Cambodia to date. According to Tarling, from 1954 to 1970, Britain generally supported Norodom Sihanouk's goal of an independent Cambodia as it faced antagonism from its neighbours and geopolitical pressures at the height of the Cold War. As Tarling concludes, "the policy that Sihanouk had been trying to follow was the only conceivable one" (Tarling 2014: 320). British officials found themselves limited in their actions, however, both by deference to their ally, the United States, and by the strategic reorientation away from direct involvement in Southeast Asia.

As with any study of modern Cambodian history, it is nearly impossible to ignore the grandiose figure that was Norodom Sihanouk. In this respect, Tarling's monograph is no different from other seminal works such as those by David Chandler, Milton Osborne, and Kenton Clymer. Chandler, the preminent scholar on Cambodian history, presents Sihanouk as both a resourceful and skilled diplomat, but also as ruthless and politically calculating, which led to