

also discussed in detail, occasionally rectifying popular misconceptions (such as, for instance, false conjectures on the tenancy problem, p.181 ff.).

All the more irritating is the one or other remark in cases where fact and (political) fiction obviously contradict each other. This occurs when e.g. the labour market situation is severely criticized (p.228) despite contrary findings a few pages before (p.225). On similar lines is the repeated mention of "poverty" (pp.229, 230, 295-297, and elsewhere) - a grossly misleading term if rural self-sufficiency is meant. No less satisfying is the allegation that Malay farmers were "badly neglected" by rural development measures of the British administration (p.325). Likewise unacceptable are sweeping statements which claim a lack in "quality of life" for Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan and Trengganu (p.331) without any explanation of what is meant by the term. Very dubious is also the insinuation of widespread unemployment (pp.313-315) in face of substantial immigrant labour, mainly from Indonesia, to fill the rank and file of rural (and urban) occupations wherever blue-collar jobs are offered without due response, in particular on plantations and new land-development schemes. The catalogue of questions could be continued.

Nonetheless, a useful compendium for readers interested in Peninsular Malaysia's agricultural problems and their implications.

Dietrich Kühne

KEEBET VON BENDA-BECKMANN: *The Broken Stairways to Consensus; Village Justice and State Courts in Minangkabau.* (Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, Vol.106). Dordrecht: Foris Publications, 1984. XVIII, 210 pages.

The majority of the papers collected in this dissertation have been published earlier as articles. In collected form it was accepted by the University of Nijmegen / Netherlands as Ph.D. Thesis.

The book deals with dispute management in a Minangkabau village of Sumatra, Indonesia; more specifically it focuses on the relationship between village justice and the role of State Court decisions in everyday social life. It aims to find out how people manage to cope with the effects of contradictions within a pluralistic law environment between folk law (adat), statutory law, and Islamic Law. Research was confined to civil cases and fieldwork (together with her husband Franz v. Benda-Beckmann) covered a period of about 10 months in 1974-75.

Since University regulations forced this dissertation to be presented as a separate entity although research was done in close cooperation with her husband some overlapping results are hardly to be avoided, while others are in-

cluded in her husband's publications. This book should therefore be treated as part two of a trilogy. The first part by Franz v. Benda-Beckmann covers the property relations and inheritance while the third part, finally, will combine the results of the two in a broader framework as socio-political aspects of village organisation and processes of decision making.

Keebet von Benda-Beckmann does not follow the dominant method in the field of legal anthropology, whereby only public disputes, sanctions and social control are taken as the appropriate reality of law. Holeman's emphasis on the extension of law studies to the trouble-free social life is extended by special focus on dispute prevention activities. Because "stairways which lead to consensus are very shaky" social consequences of court decisions for villagers have to be studied as well within the post-trial stage. The disputes studied which had gone through institutions of village justice as well as through state courts show clearly that only rarely were settlements reached especially in land disputes. The effects of a court decision for the post trial behaviour of the individuals involved cannot be studied on the formal level since most activities in that area are incorporated in certain political activities. If studied only as a formal phenomenon, dispute management, like the political field in general, appears as the domain of men. This crippled approach to Minangkabau village organization in the socio-political field essentially contributed to a distorted image of Minangkabau society. In the process of decision-making the influence of women seems to be substantially stronger on the level of households and sublineage. Even though the detailed cases of K.v. Benda-Beckmann tend to substantiate this she is very careful, nevertheless, and refers to the already published research work of Nancy Tanner and the much awaited fieldwork results of Joanne Prindiville.

While the first chapter attempts to develop a model the following four chapters deal with the different stages through which dispute management is followed up. The sixth chapter finally analyses processes of transformation and change in Minangkabau folklaw (adat) and the effects of incorporation of folklaw into state court decisions.

The book discusses only a small number of disputes but follows up the process of developments in length from background to the post-trial stage. Remarkable as it is in its in-depth quality it can be called a rare example of case studies in the field of anthropology of law. Through its holistic approach to the phenomenon 'law' it is not confined in its value to the general student of anthropology and law but also recommended to social and political scientists. A glossary helps to understand the local terms and a good index should serve the reader who wants to take a look at special parts only.

Kurt Tauchmann