



Tourism, Culture and Development

Hopes, Dreams and Realities
in East Indonesia



Stroma Cole

TOURISM AND CULTURAL CHANGE 12

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Preface

How much does tourism change a village? What effects does tourism have on a culture? Can tourism help a poor remote community to develop? How can a village have the benefits tourism offers without the problems it can cause? These are the questions that have grown in me over the past 20 years, fed by questions from the villagers to whom I introduced tourism.

Only a handful of backpackers had ever passed through Wogo in 1989 when I began taking small groups of tourists to stay with the villagers. Village stays were not only a resounding success for the tourists but also for the villagers. They became the unique selling point of our tours and our business success was laid on the foundations of our visits to Wogo. But in the long term, what would be the impact of introducing tourism to this village? And how could the villagers benefit from the growing numbers of tourists that came to their village?

After six years of taking tours (1989–1994) and frequent short visits, I spent eight months (1998–1999) seeking to understand tourism from the perspective of the different stakeholders. I felt indebted to the villagers and answering their questions became central to my research. I wanted to understand the conflicts of tourism development and offer the villagers potential solutions. The long-term research continued with visits in 2001 and 2003; in 2005, with the assistance of a British Academy grant, I was able to evaluate the success of one of my suggestions.

This book provides the story of the lives of real people in real villages. I have not changed their names. Following discussion with the villagers, we were sure that anybody reading the text, familiar with the area, would be able to work out which villages I was writing about and therefore there was no point in keeping them anonymous. In nearly all cases, the villagers are proud to be part of the study and wanted their real names to be used. I have respected their wishes.

My fieldwork was conducted in Indonesian and Ngadha languages, mainly the former – especially in the earlier phases of my work. I have translated both into English. For ease of reading I have limited the amount of foreign words in the text. However, at times the translation is provided in italics. The translations may be from either language but most of the time I have used Indonesian. Where the Ngadha term is used I have either stated so or used Ng to indicate Ngadha language. There are, however, a

few terms that I feel are best left untranslated, as there is no equivalent term in English.

Ngadha words: *Nua* = a collection of Houses found in two parallel lines with the associated *bhaga*, *ngadhu* and megaliths. *Bhaga* = a miniature house representing the first female ancestor of a clan. *Ngadhu* = carved tree trunks, with conical thatched roofs representing the first male ancestor of a clan.

Indonesian words: *Adat* = Indonesian word of Arabic origin meaning custom, customary law and customary behaviour. In Ngadha, it is used to mean the complex of beliefs and rituals associated with the ancestors. *Malu* = Indonesian expression meaning modest and bashful, used to express feelings that lie between the English for shy, ashamed and embarrassed but also respectful and humble.

In order to differentiate between traditional named 'houses' locally referred to as *sa'o* and other homes I use House (with a capital H) for the former and house (with a lower-case h) for the latter.

Using an anthropologist's eye and a high degree of trust, this book uncovers the story of tourism development in two small villages on one remote island. However, the study has ramifications beyond the locality. Many other villages in Indonesia are experiencing similar issues. Many of the challenges are of relevance to peripheral communities across the globe. Themes in this book will resonate with studies of tourism, tourists, development, globalisation and cultural change from around the world.

Acknowledgements

The research for this book would not have been possible without the kind help and support of many villagers in Ngadha – my sincerest appreciation goes to them all – *Tima ti'i woso*. It is not possible to mention everyone individually but I would like to express special thanks to Siprianus Batesoro for his insightful comments, frequent readings and corrections of my work, emails of support and his brotherly love. Also to Pak Yohannes Wawo for his generous hours of teaching, explaining and advice; to Nene Yuli for her lessons and love; and to all those who are named in the book who gave up their time and shared their thoughts and lives with me.

I would like to thank Michael Hitchcock for suggesting I develop my initial research more fully, and for his supervision. Thanks also to David Harrison for his constructive comments as the work unfolded. I am indebted to a number of other people who have supported me through the writing of this book. My thanks to Lisa Goodson for her support and understanding; to Ruth Fryer for her tremendous moral support and her comments, suggestions and help; to Kathleen Adams for her supportive comments; to Mike Robinson for his editorial support; and to the production team at Channel View.

Some of the research for this book was carried out under the auspices of the Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia (LIPI) with sponsorship from the Universitas Nusa Cendana in Kupang. I am grateful for their permission and assistance. I would also like to express my gratitude to Buckinghamshire Chiltern University College for its financial support and sympathetic time-tabling that has made the research possible and for the Fellowship that allowed the writing of this book to become a reality. I am also grateful for the grant from the South-East Asia Committee of the British Academy that enabled the most recent phase of the research.

During the journey to produce this book I have published widely about tourism in Ngadha (Cole, 1997a, 1997b, 1998, 1999, 2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2005, 2006, 2007) and I have presented material at numerous conferences worldwide. My thanks to all those who have commented on my work, pointed out its flaws and contributed to its progress.

I would like to express my thanks to Brian for the continual support and belief that I would eventually finish. Last but not least, I would like to express a very special thank you to Mira, my daughter, who has supported me with her love, humour and patience both in the field and back home.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Arriving

After eight hours of hairpin bends, knife-edge ridges, spectacular views, dry riverbeds, dust and bumps we branched off the Trans-Flores highway. After a mile or so down a seemingly unpassable track my co-tour leader, Hilman, asked the driver of the local bus we had chartered to halt. Immediately we were surrounded, half-dressed children appeared, pushing their faces against the windows while others began climbing on the bus. Drums and gongs could be heard. Hilman and Pak Ben (a representative from the Department of Education and Culture) alighted through the back door, informing me simply '*Sudah tiba*' we had arrived.

The 13 tourists were clearly nervous as I translated our arrival and told them to follow me off the bus. Getting down from the bus past masses of children, I could see through the village entrance. Men were waving swords as they stamped the ground. With anxiety and trepidation I persuaded the tourists not to worry about their belongings on the roof and join me at the entrance. Behind the sword waving men, women, also in full ceremonial costume, danced.

The 'welcome dance' appeared more like a threatening war dance. The villagers didn't seem to be smiling. The swords looked menacing and the repetitive rhythms on the drums and gongs compounded our sense of fear. Although I was leading my first tour, I knew that containing my own fear was necessary for the well being of my clients. My outward expression of excitement masked my inner turmoil of combined surprise and apprehension.

Following instructions from Pak Ben we followed the villagers around the village of Wogo passing in front of the 32 majestic wooden houses with high thatched roofs, to a house where we crowded on the terrace. In the centre of the village we could see stone structures or megaliths, clan posts (*ngadhu*) and miniature clan houses (*bhaga*) (see Plates 1 and 2). We were presented with drinks: very sweet coffee and sugared water (as tea). The children began by keeping a safe distance and staring. As they gradually inched forward, an adult would chastise them and they would retreat a few metres.



Plate 1 The *lenggi* and some *ngadhu* in Wogo

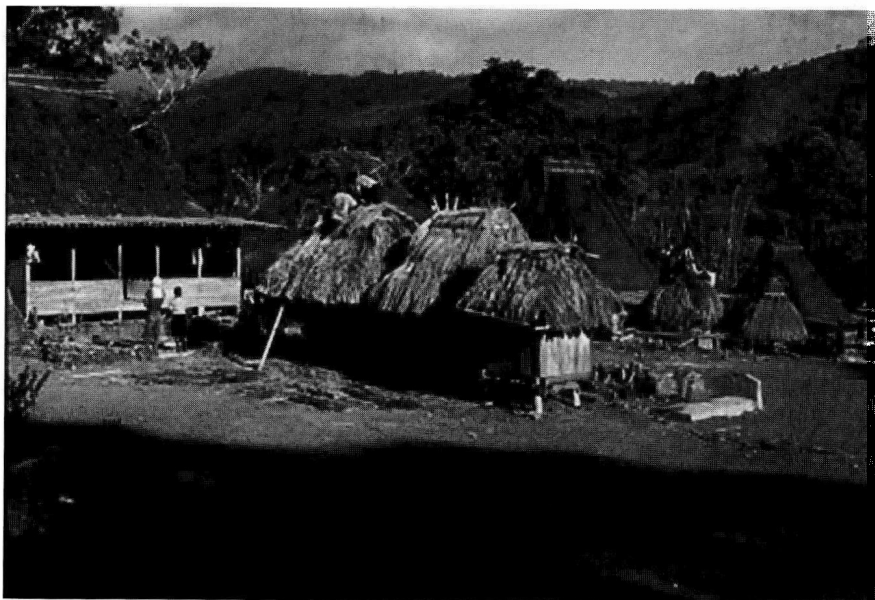


Plate 2 Re-thatching a *bhaga* in Bena

The 13 tourists were split between four houses to get to know their host families. Hilman and I shared our time between houses to help translate and settling. We ate our main meals in a fifth house but host families kept up a constant supply of snacks: roast sweet potatoes, boiled bananas and baked cassava.

The next 42 hours were partly negotiated on our reconnaissance trip¹ but the villagers had put the main activities together. Briefly it involved: a cultural description of the village centre; a walk to observe local agriculture and palm toddy tapping; visiting villagers' garden homes; walking to the local volcano to observe volcanic activity; bathing in a pool that had hot and cold water sources; a walk to the old village site and megaliths, where we had a picnic lunch of rice, pork and vegetables cooked in bamboo tubes over a fire, washed down with palm toddy; and a cultural show of songs and dances by adults and children.

As I had refused to allow individual tourists to tip individual villagers or households, the tourists had made a collection for the village. This raised a significant amount of cash which, following a discussion the villagers, was put towards a project to bring water to the village. After we had visited the village with three groups, the water project was up and running, and some of the villagers had had the opportunity to take part in a festival of international bamboo music in Bali. When we met again they asked me 'How can we have tourism and not end up like Bali?' The disturbing aspects of Bali that they described were the volumes of scantily clad tourists; the traffic jams; the wealth disparities, mansions and beggars; shops, hotels, and restaurants everywhere; and no peace at all.

On our fourth visit the villagers were faced with decisions of what to do with future finance raised from tourism. No consensus was reached during our visit. Unlike in any previous visit we felt unhappy about leaving money in the village. There were disagreements about who should look after it.

It was also on the fourth visit that our tourists encountered other tourists in 'their' village. In the afternoon a few independent tourists, arrived, looked around and departed. Later that evening, a guide arrived with a group of tourists just as our cultural show was about to start. I approached the guide and told him that we had sponsored the show and therefore found it unacceptable for his tourists to 'watch for free'. The presence of other tourists detracted from my clients' special event. The guide claimed to have permission from a villager, whom he had paid. I was powerless.

Visiting remote, untouched villages with anthropologists had become the unique selling point of our tours. When I heard my clients' comments that the village was 'obviously getting touristy', I knew the competitive

advantage of my company relied on finding a remoter village. However I have continued personal visits to Wogo for shorter (days) and longer (months) periods ever since.

On my visits we would always discuss tourism, its development and how things were changing, or not. As my visits continued and my role changed from tour operator to academic researcher it became clear that tourism was developing, but that the process was outside and beyond the villagers' control. Their village was visited, and they became passive recipients of visitors without any signs of development. The village was not becoming 'like Bali', but the villagers were deriving no benefits from tourism, yet at the same time I felt sure that tourism was changing the village. Was the passivity confined to this village and if so why? From the early days of excitement and enthusiasm for tourism, why had their attitudes changed? With my changed role I ventured further afield to other villages in the Ngadha area to learn from them of their experiences and see for myself how they coped with tourism.

The Ngadha villagers have been incorporated into the cash economy requiring cash for taxes, schooling, health care and basic commodities. The opportunities for economic development in the area are minimal. Steep slopes and a harsh climate limit agricultural development. The area has no known mineral resources but does have thermal power. Industrial development is unlikely due to the region's peripheral position, far from markets and lacking entry ports either by sea or air. Cultural tourism development could potentially provide the villagers with opportunities to obtain cash. The villages have the raw cultural resources to provide the context for tourism although development requires their refinement for tourism consumption. Too little refinement and there is minimal economic benefit from tourism, too much and the resource is spoilt. Understanding the intricacies of the culture and the value systems of the actors is crucial to ensuring the sustainability of their tourism. This book details the first 20 years of tourism development, examines the values of key actors to identify real and potential conflicts, and discusses the ways tourism is incorporated into two of the villages: Wogo and Bena.

Themes: What This Book Is About

This book provides a holistic picture of the first 20 years of tourism development in two remote marginal villages. It provides the tourism story from multiple perspectives. It contrasts the values, attitudes and priorities of the different actors in tourism. It discusses how tradition, ethnicity and culture are strategically articulated, moulded, manipulated and

used, to serve the different actors' purposes. In doing so, the book reveals the 'conflicts of tourism' both between actors and because of tourism processes.

Based on 16 years of visits from 1989–2005 this book provides a rare longitudinal study revealing not only socio-cultural change and development but also changes in tourists', villagers' and the mediators' attitudes and priorities. The book focuses on two villages and makes comparisons between them; this micro-level analysis shows the importance of very local detail and thus challenges some of the assumptions in the tourism development literature.

While this book is about tourism and socio-cultural change, it also highlights how globalisation can be about powerlessness and a lack of change. The ethnography provides a rich description of life in a non-western marginal community in a contemporary global context and how they face the challenge of balancing socio-economic integration and cultural distinction. It tells the story of how tourism has entered social processes in the villages, has brought dreams and hopes, and has affected the balance of power but has done little to change the economic situation of the villagers.

This book is not an exhaustive ethnographic study. It is a partial ethnographic study that deliberately focuses on some areas of the respondents' lives. While the narrative concentrates on tourism and the changes it has brought about, it should be remembered that it is not possible to disaggregate socio-cultural change brought about as a result of tourism from other influences. Using a series of stories, vignettes and quotations from all the stakeholders I will attempt to evoke what life is like for the villagers in Ngadha. Their experience is only one part of the complex story; by examining the views of the other actors I hope to present a holistic picture, to reveal the connections and contrasts, and how these change.

Location

The Ngadha live in the rugged mountainous region between two active volcanoes: Inerie and Ebolobo² in the south-east quarter of the Ngada regency. The regency (*Kabupaten Ngada*) is located in central Flores in Eastern Indonesia (see Figures 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3). Formerly part of the Dutch East Indies, the regency is known after its colonial name, Ngada, which is a misrepresentation of local pronunciation of the name. (The Dutch appear to have difficulty rendering the local 'dh' sound and wrote it as 'd'.) The people in this study, however, call themselves – and are referred to by neighbouring groups when speaking Indonesian – as *orang Ngadha*.

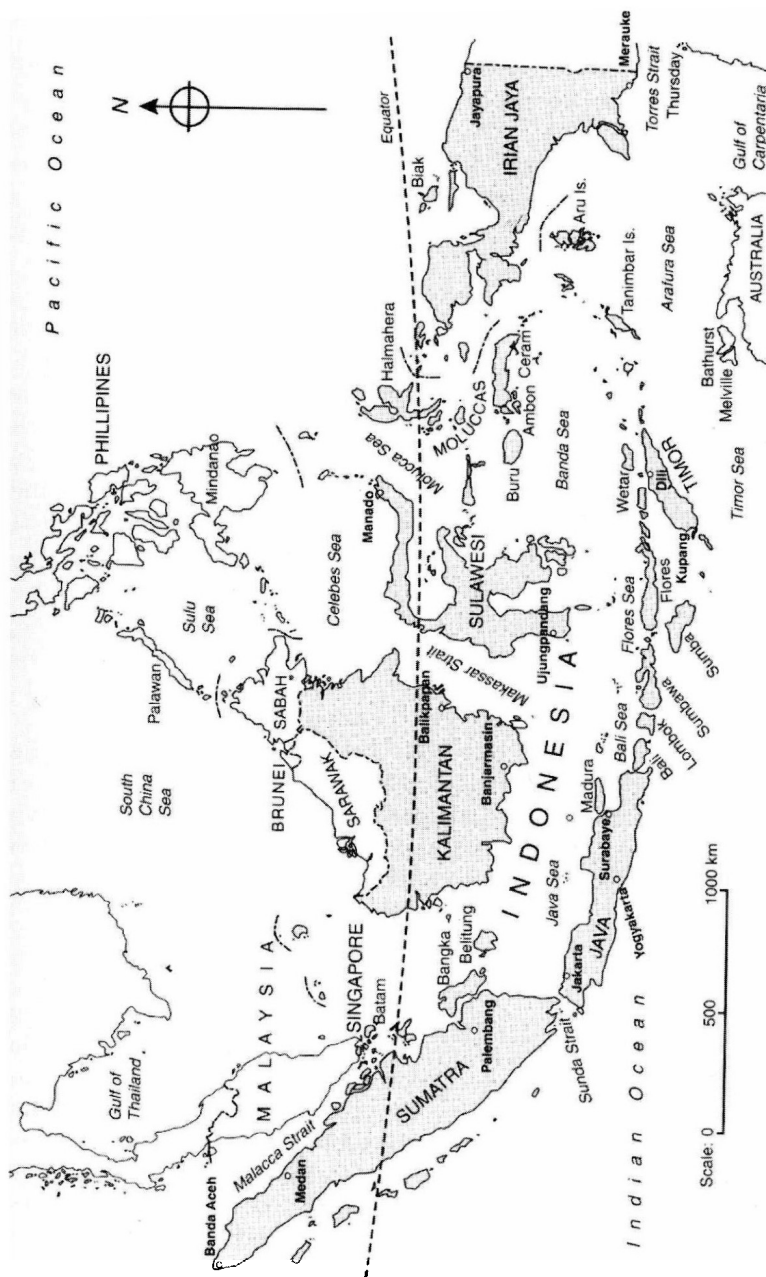


Figure 1.1 Map of Indonesia

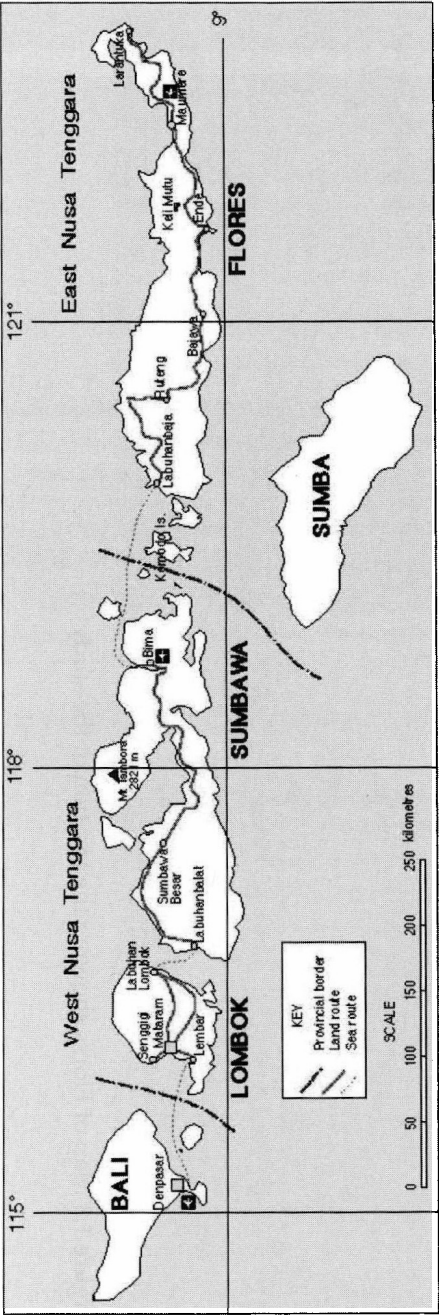


Figure 1.2 Map of the Eastern Isles