



BOOK REVIEW

Bauman, Whitney A., Samsul Maarif, and Jonathan Davis Smith, eds. *Religion, Decolonization, and the Planetary Community: Voices from the Indonesian Archipelago*. Routledge, 2026; viii + 300

In the capitalist world, where capital accumulation is highly regarded over the survival of vulnerable subjects, the dominant groups tend to control the material world to indulge their greed. Particularly in Indonesia, major issues are, among others, the expansion of palm oil, mining, and waste management. Adding to this is the struggle of Indigenous communities to stand for their environmental rights and recognition of their knowledge in the midst of ecological devastation, economic inequality, and social fragmentation, all amid the tiring battle to navigate national identity. The Routledge editorial volume, *Religion, Decolonization, and the Planetary Community: Voices from the Indonesian Archipelago*, not only maps out this calamitous situation—by describing core environmental problems and throwing accusations to the dominant parties that have affected the lives of vulnerable groups—but also insists that environmental issues could be tackled with the voices from the Indigenous communities to provide knowledge for decolonial and planetary thinking.

The book brings together more than a dozen contributors (14 Indonesians and 3 Global North scholars who are interested in the environmental movements in Indonesia) who contend that planetary thinking could echo from the indigenous system of knowledge and practices, which champion the kinship between the human and natural world. The contributors range from religious studies scholars, theologians, sociologists, law, gender studies, to social activists who face the problem in their everyday lives. The volume is divided into four group chapters of different scopes. Part 1, Thinking about Decolonization and the Planetary, shows that exclusion comes from the prejudice of Western environmentalists who have seen the Indigenous and local peoples as incapable of protecting the non-human world (p. 33). With discussions on the religious methodology, this section stresses the Indigenous Religious Paradigm (IRP) to decolonize the structures of Religion that

alienated the knowledge and voices of Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs) in Indonesia (p. 39). This notion, in chapter 4, affords the concept of relationality, opacity, and resistance to universalizing knowledge systems once imposed by colonial modernity (p. 84). This chapter challenges the Western rigid structure to define the IPLCs as having agency and diverse modes of existence.

In Part 2, *Decolonizing Human–Nature Relations*, the authors focus on topics in a wide context and voices, which are presented in diverse ethnographic and case studies that discuss human relations with the river, animal, and land through the indigenous economic system, as well as the attempt to rethink the education curriculum on indigenous religions. For instance, Chapter 6 brings three case studies about human-animal relations that challenge Western paradigms about animal rights (p. 117). It highlights how Western knowledge system regards nature based on utility. This chapter decolonizes the relationship between animals and humans to be interconnected in many ways, also embracing religious senses (p. 106). More importantly, Part 2 emphasizes the interconnectedness of humans with the surrounding environment, in which the living context could bring story and agency to provide knowledge by which reconciliation could exist in planetary awareness.

Part 3, *Decolonizing Religion, Nature, and Gender Studies*, explores ritual and shows grassroots mobilization as attempts of resistance to gender discrimination, which is intertwined with environmental issues. Presented case is the “Daur Resik,” which is a waste collection and recycling initiative led by women. This initiative emerged because the burden of disposing of household waste is usually imposed on women (p. 188). This initiative reveals the ecofeminist efforts to promote human-nature relations through activism (p. 194). In another case, such as chapter 10, how environmental degradation directly exacerbates the lives of *Waria*, an Indonesian term for transgender, is highlighted. As the natural devastation affects the tidal floods that result in the loss of residential areas, the Waria, those already marginalized, find it nearly impossible to regain their jobs and afford rent housing (p. 180).

Finally, Part 4, *Decolonizing Legal and Rights Frameworks for Indigenous Peoples*, covers issues such as criminology and law, to show how the local resistance wrestled with the state policies that harm the IPLCs but benefit the state and foreign investors, which clearly depicts the Indigenous communities’ struggle to face the state’s greed of land extraction and neglect of Indigenous customary practices and histories. For instance, chapter 16 notes that the strain of the relationship

between IPLCs and the government is related to economic development, in which the power relation is strongly embedded in the process (p. 279). Another example is the case shown in chapter 13, which is the struggle of IPLCs over the state's capital district relocation project. Massive deforestation due to this project caused floods that affected the IPLCs (p. 220). This problem is followed by criminalization of the community by the authorities or companies who want to grab their lands (p. 223).

I found that the discussion of decolonizing planetary thinking is strongly visible. Yet, there are some topics that could be more highlighted, such as capitalism and feudalism. Some sections in the book addressed the logic of neoliberalism and capitalism that caused the natural devastation in Indonesia, but I think the authors could ground more in an analysis of the capitalist mode of production. Environmental devastation cannot be explained without analyzing extensively the material flow that preceded it; in this particular context, the demand for global needs causes the extraction of resources such as palm oil, coal, nickel, and others. Indonesia, as the internal "factory," has been made to produce these commodities. In other words, the capitalist logic could explain how the state creates regulations that injure the interests of vulnerable groups, like Indigenous communities, gender minorities, and the unspeaking living beings. How resistance to coloniality of power would take shape if we take into account rethinking a new economic system is something worth further discussion. This is to say, to decolonize planetary thinking, the economic-political perspectives must be brought to the conversation.

Nevertheless, I perceive the book itself as a kind of advocacy. Through this volume, the IPLCs could speak and give their perspective on how the communities' knowledge systems are visible and matter. Besides, the models of activism recorded in this book clearly show that communities in peril are never silent to ecological devastation. We are reminded that resistance comes neither from the center of power nor those in the "middle" position as postcolonial theorists overtly highlight; instead, it emerges from the "bottom," where the local peoples embody the living community in unity. The book is suitable for religious studies scholars, undergraduate and graduate students, as well as IPLCs who struggle against capitalism and environmental degradation in Indonesia. But I also recommend this for IJT readers who grapple with the ecological turn, precisely due to theologians' often neglect of Indigenous knowledge in their Western-centered doctrinal discourses.

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