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## INDONESIA

# SUMATRA is the future

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"INDONESIA is a paradise," says Amir. "Here in Sumatra I work from 7:30 in the morning until 2:30 in the afternoon."

"In Europe and America you get home from work at five or six o'clock. Only your evenings are free."

He is sitting on the verandah enjoying a cigarette while I finish off a piece of delicious Ambonese cake.

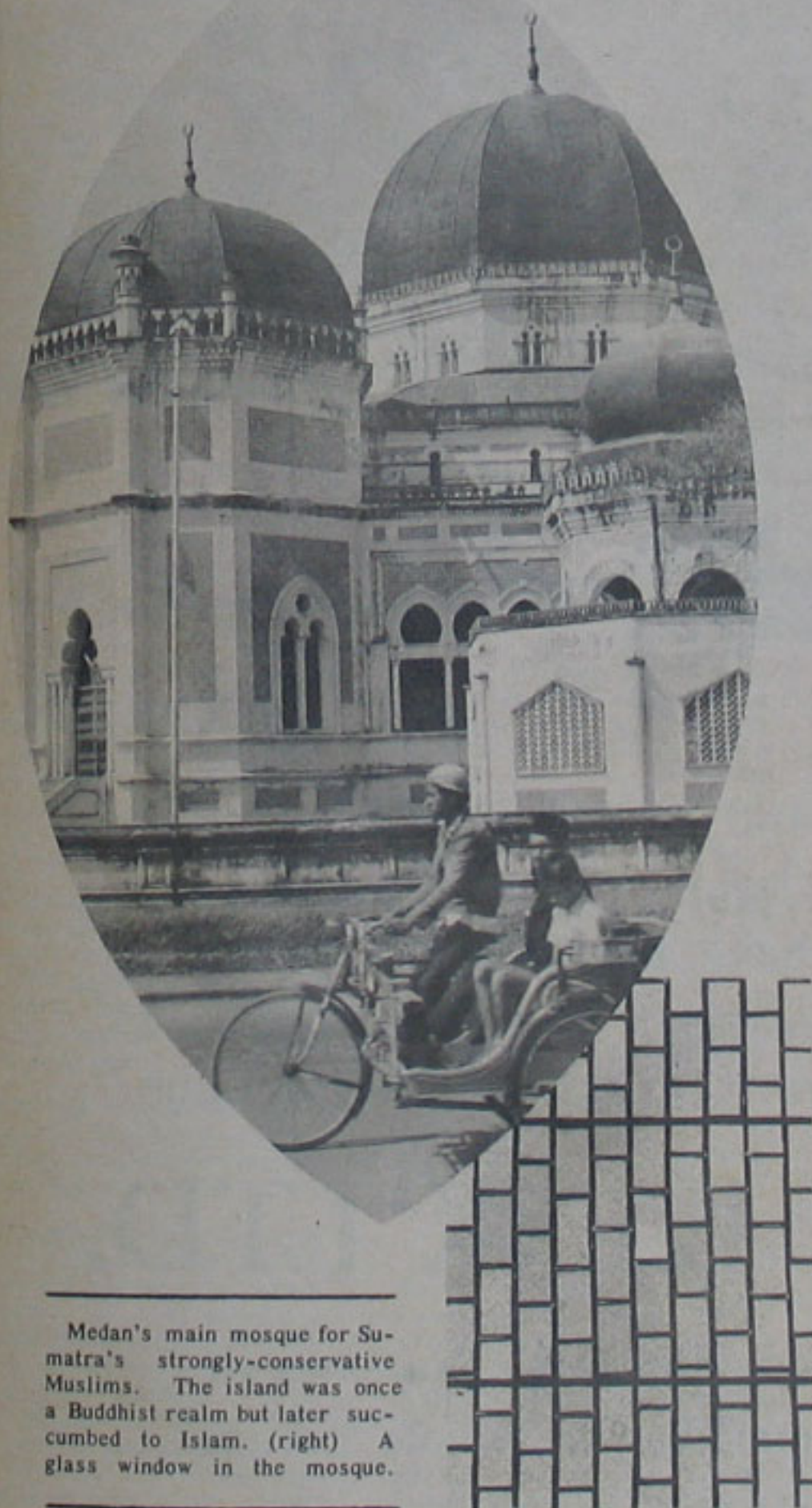
It is warm, lazy Sunday morning in Medan, capital of North Sumatra, a city with a population approaching 1,000,000 people.

He is wearing a blue knit sport shirt, Western style trousers, and a pair of sandals.

"I was in Amsterdam last year. Europeans think you're impolite or lazy if you don't wear a tie," he continues, "but here there's no

# SUMATRA is the future

Continued



Medan's main mosque for Sumatra's strongly-conservative Muslims. The island was once a Buddhist realm but later succumbed to Islam. (right) A glass window in the mosque.

reason to wear a tie. The weather is too warm for such things."

His house is located in the new section of the city, Medan Baru, a pleasant suburb west of the old city that grew up after World War II. The neighborhood is dotted with neat, modern, faintly Dutch Colonial style houses with stucco walls and sloping red tile roofs. Tall shade trees sit on well-kept lawns bordered by hedges.

The Apins are part of Indonesia's growing middle class -- well-educated, well-traveled white-collar technocrats--though most of the country is still made up of farmers and peasants.

He is 43 years old, a civil engineer. His wife a pediatrician. The Apins had one child.

He is working on the Asahan hydroelectric project south of Medan. After graduating from the Bandung Institute in Java in 1961 he returned to work in Sumatra.

The Asahan project is a long time coming, he explains. Studies started before WWII and since then due to the constantly changing political climate in Indonesia the Dutch, the French, the Russians and finally the Japanese have worked on the plans.

The design study is supposed to be finished this year, however, and work can finally begin -- if they get a loan from abroad.

Mrs. Apin, a wonderful woman with a crinkly smile, chose medicine because "we are in great need of doctors here." (The ratio of doctors to people in Indonesia today is about 1:40,000) She has just returned from a U.N. World Health Organization sponsored tour that took her to London, East Africa and India.

She is a native of Medan, graduating from the medical faculty of the University of Medan in 1964.

Though it is only one of several universities in North Sumatra the University of Medan has many faculties -- economics, law, letters, medicine, dentistry, agriculture among others.

Java, with the capital Djakarta, is the political and economic center of Indonesia and the Javanese tend to look on the other islands of Indonesia as the wilderness and the non-Javanese, as country cousins. Their attitude is much the same as Bangkok officials viewing an assignment to the Northeast.

Sumatrans don't share that feeling. They are a proud well-educated people with a lot of energy and drive and the Javanese recognize this.

"If you tell people in Djakarta that you are from Medan," says Amir with a grin, "they don't laugh at you and call you a country bumpkin like they do to people from Kalimantan and Timor."

Both Amir and Helen speak Indonesian, Dutch, and English and their well-stocked bookshelves have everything from "Das Kapital" to "Reader's Digest."

The flight from Singapore to Medan's Polonia International Airport aboard a new Garuda DC-9 jet takes less than an hour, approaching Sumatra over the tobacco plantations of the Deli region.

The plane was booked solid. It's interesting to see who's coming to Sumatra these days. Among the passengers were a dozen European businessmen and a number of Americans.

There were two or three middle-aged American AID types -- bermudas, white socks, tennis shoes, tanned, paunchy, receding hairline -- and even a "hippie" -- a young kid with Mick Jagger hair down to the shoulders, tie-dye shirt, bell-bottom trousers. His girlfriend hid behind a pair of pink octagonal sunglasses.

They didn't even get a cold eye from the immigration authorities, and I decided they must be the children of a Goodyear Rubber executive.

Sumatra is the second biggest island in Indonesia, divided neatly in two by the equator. The island is 1,110 miles long, about the distance from Chiang Mai to Yala.

There is a popular saying in Indonesia that goes, "The Moluccas (Spice Islands) are the past, Java is the present, and Sumatra is the future."

The Dutch developed big tobacco plantations on Sumatra and the Deli leaf, used to wrap fine Dutch cigars, is world-famous.

Sumatra also produces a curious "kretek sigaret," a blend of tobacco and cloves, that snaps, crackles and pops as you smoke it. It must be the only cigarette in the world you can hear yourself smoke.

Rubber and petroleum are two of Indonesia's most important exports and Sumatra is rich in both. The major American and European oil companies are exploring the rich oil fields lying off-shore near the southern Sumatran city of Palembang.

The Sumatrans are proud, conservative, strongly Moslem people, especially around Atjeh in the extreme north.

Sumatra was originally Buddhist. From the 7th to the 13th century the island was the seat of the great maritime empire of Shri-vijaya, a Mahayana Buddhist kingdom renowned for its navigation, commerce, arts and learning.

Palembang, the capital city, became a Buddhist center that attracted pilgrims from as far away as China.

But in the 13th century Islam began its conquest of Indonesia and Sumatra was the first to convert to the new religion.

Medan has grown up rapidly since W.W. II. and its quick growth has produced the usual problems caused by "urbanization," including traffic jams and the "modernization of morals."

# SUMATRA is the future

- Continued



Betjak drivers take a break under the trees in the city square (above). The Dutch have gone but their architecture remains, (right) A tree-lined street in central Medan.



The city streets are narrow and choked with traffic that is as bad as Djakarta. Like Djakarta, the car still hasn't wrested the roads from the pedestrian, the bicycle and the "betjak."

Many of the "betjaks" have been motorized.

With an engine the size of a sewing machine, pouring blue smoke out of valves and exhausts, they can't quite get up to the speeds of an automobile but they're not about to move over when the irate motorist leans on his horn.

Each betjak is decorated in gaudy colors like Thai ten-wheel trucks and sports names like "Nirvana" and "I Shall Return."

The betjak is the taxi of Sumatra. If the driver doesn't know the street you want to go to it doesn't stop him. He starts pedaling and cruises around Medan asking other betjak drivers who usually haven't the faintest clue either.

Pretty soon the customer begins to suffer a great feeling of "deja vu." After the third or fourth time around the Bank Negara the rider,

who has missed his appointment anyway, has gotten a good look at the city and usually tells the driver to stop in front of a bar where he can walk in and drown his troubles in a few cold glasses of Anker beer.

There are several expensive first-class hotels in Medan, complete with nightclubs, such as the Danau Toba and the Wisma Deli but Medan itself is not a tourist center.

"Our goal for 1971 is 10,000 tourists," says Ahmal Hanzah, N-tour office manager in Medan, with a sigh, but in Medan there is no attraction for tourists. Then he brightens up. "But outside Medan there is Lake Toba, Brastaggi, the mountains..."

The mountainous western part of Sumatra is indeed breathtakingly beautiful. The "Bukit Barisan" mountain chain runs the length of the island with volcanic peaks reaching 12,000 feet. One of the lakes nestling between the mountains is Danau Toba, twice the size of Lake Geneva; already a resort area for the Indonesians, Lake Toba is fast becoming

an international playground as well.

The people of Medan aren't especially happy about the arrival of nightclubs, discotheques, mini-dresses and other signs of modernization but they are resigned to the necessity of such things for the growing foreign business and diplomatic community living in Medan.

"Our culture can defend itself against the nightclubs -- the 'nightclub culture'" declares Anwar Effendi, head of the local Medan chapter of the Journalists Association of Indonesia.

"We aren't afraid of it. These nightclubs are necessary for people who come from other countries -- as a service. I'm sure the people are not afraid. We already have our culture. We can defend ourselves."

A housewife dismissed the threat of rising hemlines with a confident wave of the hand. "No problem for us. We are sure that the mini-skirt can stand only for the time being. It's just a fashion. It won't last."

As for nightclubs, most of the others agreed with the lady who said with a laugh, "Nightclubs? I'm not worried about my children. They can't afford it!"

Sumatra, with its strong, conservative Moslem religious tradition, is strongly anti-Communist and after the attempted 1965 coup the local PKI (Communist Party of Indonesia)

was wiped out with a vengeance.

"We are a religious people," says Helen Apin proudly. "You must understand that Indonesia is an agricultural country. It is an agricultural way of life. We still believe in religion."

"We are not like the people of Europe and America. We are not factory workers and city dwellers. We are farmers religious people. And the Communists are against religion. They are against us."

Medan has a new T.V. station now, on the air between 7-10 p.m. in the evenings and the night before we left for Djakarta we spent a typical middle-class American or English evening watching T.V.

Reducing modern culture to its lowest common denominator around the world, you always end up with the same two things -- a bottle of Coke and a T.V. set.

The station opened with a documentary film on "The City of Tyne," supplied by the British consulate, then several minutes of local news.

Next came an educational cartoon on modern hygiene practices and finally -- the evening's highlight -- a local Indonesian rock group featuring a long-haired, mini-skirted girl doing "You Keep Me Hanging On" by the Supremes.

No doubt about it. Medan has arrived.



# BALI

Bali was one of the greatest disappointments of my life.

Really. Save your money. It's a hole. If I had the chance again I'd go to Singapore. Have you been to Singapore yet? It's really fantastic! Boy, Singapore is the place. If I were you, I'd go to Singapore because Bali is...

You don't believe me, do you? I don't blame you. I'm lying. But I've just come back from Bali and I feel like a prospector who's just found a mountain of gold. I'd like to keep Bali for myself.

Actually, Bali has been "discovered" for a long time now but relatively few Western tourists from Europe and the United States

have actually visited it. It's too far away.

But during the '70's Bali, like the rest of Southeast Asia, is in for a big tourist boom. In August 1969 the Indonesian government opened up an international airport on Bali and the jets have arrived.

There's already one big American style tourist hotel at Sanur Beach and several smaller ones in Denpasar, the capital of Bali.

It's nowhere near as commercialized as Oahu; there's no expressways or shopping centers and the road out to Tanahlot temple is still a sea of mud in the rainy season.

But the government in Jakarta

It's sad but true. Bali, 1971, is an ugly place. Twenty years ago it might have been "paradise" but today it's a sleazy tourist trap. Prices are incredibly high and the people rude and unfriendly.

We had planned to spend a week touring the island but after two days

of being cheated by taxi drivers, paying \$15 for a dirty hotel room with cockroaches and no hot water, trying to find a beach that wasn't littered with garbage and Coke bottles, and being hounded by obnoxious hawkers peddling fake kris', we were happy to leave.

A Balinese girl makes up for the tooth-filing ceremony indicating she has reached puberty:



The finishing touches

Stylized Balinese dance gesture

The Garuda screams

The final wail



## Who says it's Paradise?



wants those tourist dollars and, having a miracle, in five years Bali will be another Paradise Lost. So in the immortal words of Janis Joplin -- "that's white you can."

The world of tourism is filled with Paradise Lost -- that's what makes Bali so special. The tourist in the West today is a pitiful creature. Consider his plight for a moment: after saving his pennies for 10 years he leaves Des Moines, Iowa for the Continent loaded with cameras and suitcases, humming "How you gonna keep them down on the farm after they've seen Paris?"

Ab, Europe! So different! So far away and strange! He's got it all planned out. First, a wild, risqué night in Paris, then on to the Swiss Alps where he can be alone with nature and contemplate the works of God. Then an evening in Venice, floating down the romantic canals in a gondola and finally a once in a lifetime look at Michelangelo's St. Peter's Basilica.

But what happens? He gets to Paris and can't even afford a glass of water at a sidewalk cafe, much less escargots at Maxim's. The Follies turn out to be as sexy as a padded bra.

Frustrated, his money disappearing at a fantastic rate, he flies to Switzerland. The cows in the alpine meadows are supplied by the Swiss mountain tops and gets trapped in a cable car with a pimply faced teenager from London carrying a 50 watt transistor radio.

The canals in Venice turn out to be polluted, the gondolier insists on singing "When the moon hits your eye like a big pizza pie, that's amore," and there's a Coca-Cola stand on the roof of St. Peter's. He goes nuts.

"I traveled 7,000 miles and spent \$800 to see a Pepsi sign?" he screams at his wife.

"Listen, dear," she says, "let's just rent a car and drive out into the country side, away from all this."

So they speed out of Rome and head for the hills, down dirt roads, over bumps, through the dust, till the cows outnumber the people and roar into a teeny-tiny village.

Ab, he Coke signs, no other "far-rangs" within miles, nothing! Just the Italians and them. He spies a dirty, peasant restaurant, walks over and sits down at a rustic wooden stool.

Great. No Formica table tops, no juke box. Nothing. The real thing. The place reeks of Italy -- garlic, olives.

A grizzled old lady emerges from the back of the smoky kitchen and stands there looking at him. He whips out his Berlitz phrase book. Yes, that's it. The Italian word for "Good day." He turns to her and smiles.

"Buon Giorno!"

She looks at him for a second, wiping her hands on her apron.

"Hey, Luigi, a couple of tourists!" That's hardly "paradise."

No, paradise has to be an island; it has to be far away and strange; an untouched ancient civilization locked away in some "twilight zone" of the twentieth century, filled with art, music, beauty; a place of trees and temples, not cities and expressways; where you can live for almost nothing, surrounded by beautiful bare-breasted women smiling and laughing in the sun. That's paradise.

What's really amazing is that it actually exists. Right now. If that's your definition of "paradise" then Bali is your cup of tea.

### ISLAND

The word "island" has always been symbolic of security. It's hard to blame the English for getting a bit upset about the idea of a tunnel between England and the Continent. Somehow you always feel safer on an island. Life is more cozy, less vulnerable to threats and invasions from hostile forces, cut off from the worries of a bigger, more complex world.

That's why islands make great paradises.

Between the 13th and the 15th century Islam spread through the Indonesian archipelago like fire through dry grass, devouring 800 years of Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms.

Samatra was the first to fall to the new religion, its kings either converted or conquered. By the 15th century Java was under attack.

In 1478, the last king of the great Hindu-Javanese empire of Med-

ajapahit--rather than surrender to the Islamic tide -- committed suicide.

His son, along with a retinue of artists, poets, musicians, dancers and craftsmen, fled east to the safety of an island called Bali.

The last remaining Hindu principalities on Java were wiped out in the 16th century. Nothing remained except Bali.

The Bali Strait, less than a mile wide, was to the Balinese what the English Channel was to the English during World War II. Safe on the island of Bali, the Hindu culture, continued to flourish and develop.

Even the Dutch colonialists who soon conquered Indonesia left Bali relatively untouched. Bali today is much the same as it was 400 years ago.

The Balinese consider the island as the property of the gods, handed



The beach at Kusumba (above) a fishing town on the southeast coast of Bali with Balinese "prahu" boats high and dry until high tide. The roads on Bali belong to the ducks and dogs (right).



## "The Two Brothers"

**"E**VEN from the outside the inn looked a pleasant house to familiar eyes.

The door was open and light streamed out of it. Above the arch there was a lamp and beneath it swung a large signboard: A fat white pony reared up on its hind legs. Over the door was painted in white letters: The "Prancing Pony" by Barliman Butterbur.

As they hesitated outside in the gloom someone began singing a merry song inside and many cheerful voices joined loudly in the chorus. They listened to this encouraging sound for a moment and then got off their ponies. The song ended with a burst of laughter and clapping.

"Prodo went forward and nearly bumped into Barliman Butterbur himself, a short fat man with a bald head and a red face. He had a white apron on and was bustling out one door and in through another, carrying a tray laden with full mugs. "Half minute, if you please!" shouted the man over his shoulder and vanished into a babel of voices and a cloud of smoke."

J.R.R. Tolkien, "Lord of the Rings"

The difference between an old English inn, like the one described by Tolkien, and a modern sterile concrete and chrome tourist hotel is the difference between friendship and business.

Hotels are for strangers. Inns are for friends.

As you would expect among a people as warm and friendly as the Balinese, there are a growing number of private homes serving as inns on the island where a stranger to Bali can quickly feel at home.

They don't advertise like the big tourist hotels but their atmosphere is warm and friendly.

The "Two Brothers" on Djalan Imam Bondjol 7-5 in Denpasar is the Balinese equivalent of Tolkien's "Prancing Pony."

The Barliman Butterbur of the "Two Brothers" is a jovial, rotund young man named I.B. Ambara who opened the inn just four months ago.

The "Two Brothers" is a small six-room inn within the Ambara family compound. In it, a traveler can find a fresh bed, a hook to hang his hat on, and a cup of tea waiting for him when he returns in the evening.

There's a clean shower down the porch a bit and a room for two is less than 20 baht a night.

(The "Two Brothers" is not a "hippy" hostel. Most hippies arriving in Bali stay at the "Adiyasi," a dirtier but even less expensive "lozman.")

Living at the "Two Brothers" is like living in a family. Besides Ambara and all his relatives and pets, there are travelers from all over the world at the supper table with you.

Breakfast (eggs, toast, jam, coffee - 4 Baht) and dinner (Indonesian food - 3 Baht a plate) are served in the Ambara family dining room and the company is delightful.

We spent the evening talking with Ambara, his wife, a young couple from New Zealand, a Japanese university student, two cute girls from Australia, and a 60 year-old man from Czechoslovakia on his way to India.

Ambara is a superb innkeeper, answering questions, explaining Balinese legends, rounding up motorcycles (you can rent a Honda 90 for around 50 Baht a day), and watching out for the comfort of his guests.

We were free to wander all through the compound, looking at the family shrines, the wood and stone carvings, and watching the Ambara family paying respects to their ancestors.

It was like being a member of a Balinese family.

There are less than a dozen inns in Denpasar like the "Two Brothers" but the Indonesian government would be very wise to encourage more of them.

Big tourist hotel-complexes cost millions of dollars, scar the landscape, upset the local economy, and weaken the social fabric of the society by demanding an army of doormen, chambermaids, clerks, tour directors, taxi drivers, cooks, waiters and bartenders.

But Balinese society cannot absorb large, successive doses of western culture and technology without being badly disfigured.

Inns like the "Two Brothers" which blend into the society and landscape of Bali and offer clean rooms, showers and electricity are a perfect solution to the "tourist boom."

One Honolulu is enough. Bali doesn't need more hotels--she needs more inns like the "Two Brothers."



The Ambara family priest

# The Balinese earth



Water flows down the mountain, step by step, by step. (above). The village of Mas is famous for wood carvings such as the one at right.

The Balinese "meru" (above) symbolizes the Sacred Mountain where the highest Hindu gods dwell. A group of "merus" (right) stand near hillsides, the entire sides of which (left) have been terraced to grow the staple crop, rice.



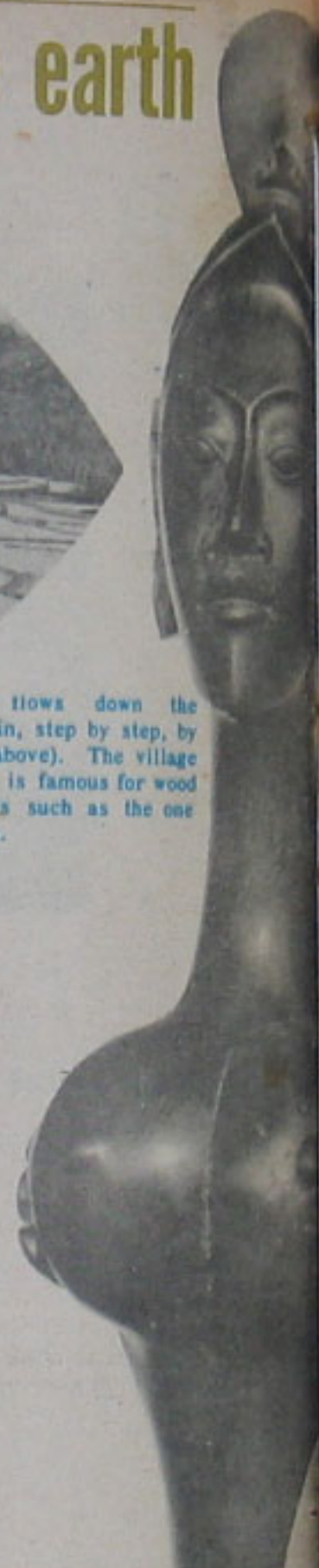
Sickle in hand, a Balinese farmer trims grass along the walls of the rich paddy fields which give him his daily food.



Rice fields climb like a giant set of steps to the sky up the side of the mountain.



A yoke of oxen plow a rice field preparatory to annual planting.



Men carry the huge bamboo cremation tower to the cremation site.



The body of the sacred cow is hollow to accommodate the corpse.



The tower is carried to the sea, revered as the soul's final resting place (above). Anti-chewing masses (the right of the tower, right).

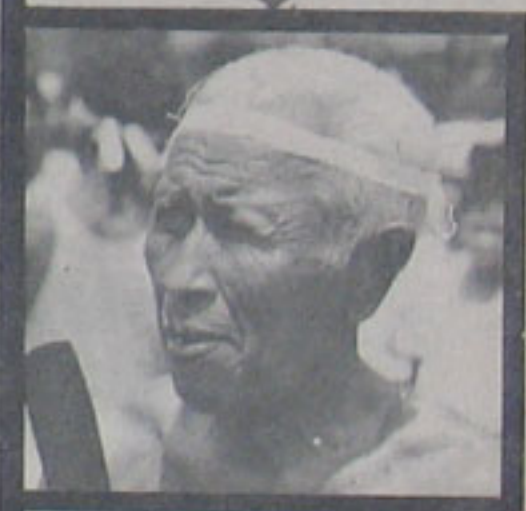


## Balinese cremation ceremony

In order to confuse the spirits, the "bade" is moved violently as the crowd adds to the general clamor with its enthusiastic shouting.



Forty-two days after a Katri (warrior) caste member dies and is cremated his bones are placed in an elaborate tower and thrown into the sea.



Armed with a small hatchet, a coconut seller pleads his trade at the cremation.



The sacred cow, with faggots in mouth, ready for burning.

## The Generation of '45

# The Poet Anwar

**D**URING the Japanese occupation of Indonesia from 1942 to 1945, literature went underground but the ferment that had been relatively private and limited, before the war, became almost a universal phenomenon.

People met in small groups; poems and other writings were circulated in manuscript; and a whole new generation swept into being, the Generation of '45.

The key figure in this "completely new" literary movement was unquestionably Chairil Anwar, a savagely brilliant, hard-living, hard drinking, cynical, romantic, fiercely Indonesian poet who in a brief lifetime and with a total output of fewer than 75 original poems transformed the poetic scene.

He was dead at 27.

The breaking down of prewar colonial society broke down, for Chairil, all conventions: when he addressed President Sukarno, the George Washington of Indonesia, his tone is irreverently familiar.

Hey, Friend Sukarno, give me your hand and let's set everything ship-shape...

You and me, we're made out of the same stuff, we've got the same veins... (from "Agreement with Friend Sukarno")

Anwar is perhaps Indonesia's only unqualifiedly great poet, to date.

**ME**  
When my time comes  
I want to hear no one's cries,  
Not yours either

Away with all who cry!

Here I am, a wild beast,  
Cut off from his companions

Bullets may pierce my skin  
But I'll keep on,  
Carrying forward my wounds and my pain,  
Attacking,  
Attacking,  
Until suffering disappears

And I won't care anymore

I want to live another thousand years.

**AT THE MOSQUE**  
I shouted at Him  
Until He came.  
We met face to face.  
Afterwards He burned in my breast.  
All my strength struggles to extinguish Him.  
My body, which won't be driven, is soaked with sweat.  
This room is the arena where we fight,  
Destroying each other,  
One hurling insults, the other gone mad.

## The Poet Rendra

Willibrordus Rendra, born in 1935 in Solo, Java, is one of Indonesia's finest young poets.

Educated at Gadjah Mada University in Jogjakarta, in the Faculty of Western Arts, he also has a great love affair going with the theater. As a member of Jogja's Artis Teater drama group he has written, translated, directed and acted in numerous plays.

He decided against going to Djakarta to study because, "In Djakar-

ta people write poetry because they've been discussing and debating, and out of intellectual excitement. I write poetry because of my own feelings and experiences.

"You can do that only by yourself and not according to some intellectual's opinions. For those reasons I didn't feel like traveling far off, getting myself involved in big city life; I made up my mind, once and for all, to rely on leaves, mountains and river water. So I'm happier in Jogja."

### LOVE LETTER

I'm writing this letter  
While the rain drizzles like a toy  
Drum played by magic children  
In some magic world.  
And the wind sighs,  
Puffs and sighs.  
Hey, little sister Narti,  
I love you!

I'm writing this letter  
While the sky drips down  
And two small wild ducks  
Are making love in the pond  
Like two naughty children  
Funny and nice.  
Two flapping ducks  
Making their feathers shake.  
Hey, little sister Narti,  
I want you for my wife!  
The rain's quick step  
Patters along the ground.  
Like gleaming, heavy metal  
Love walks steadily  
Forward,  
Never turns back.

Twelve angels  
Have descended  
In this time of drizzling rain:  
In front of the window-mirror  
They stare and wash their hair  
For the celebration.  
Hey, little sister Narti,  
In my fancy bridegroom clothes,  
Covered with flowers and wearing  
a sacred sword  
I ache to lead you to the altar  
And marry you.

I asked for you.  
You knew I would, long ago:  
No one else is worse  
Or better....  
I'm a poet of small, ordinary things,  
I began with words,  
And words begin  
With life, and thought, and feeling.

The sweet strong pleasure of life  
Like a million tiny needles  
Prickling through the sky:  
A blessing of gold at the end of the rainbow.  
Then the rain poured down.  
Love and the wind  
Sigh helplessly in the drizzle.

The sweet strong pleasure of my love,  
Like a thousand invisible hands  
Spreading a thousand nets,  
Pounces on your heart  
That smiles so steadily at me.

You're a mermaid princess  
And my captive.  
Mermaid, with your voice as gentle  
As a sea breeze,  
Sigh for me!  
The wind sighs  
And sighs  
A clear sweet lament.

You're a mermaid princess,  
Turning softly,  
Blinking your beautiful eyes  
In my net.  
Oh mermaid princess,  
I've caught you,  
I've asked for you.

I'm writing this letter  
While the rain drips  
From the sky:  
A sweet, spoiled child  
Cries for her toys;  
Two mischievous little boys  
Are having fun in the ditch  
And the jealous sky is watching.  
Hey, little sister Narti  
I want you  
To be the mother of my children!

# The "Young Artists" of Penestanen

**D**URING the 15th to the 19th century Balinese painting developed very little. Stagnant and stereotyped, it was almost exclusively devoted to the portrayal of Hindu religious scenes and epics.

But now, in the 20th century, it has exploded into a wide variety of exciting styles.

In 1934 two Balinese artists, Ida Bagus Kembang and Ida Bagus Geger, exhibited in Paris and came back with silver medals.

In the early '30's European painters Walter Spies and Rudolph Bonnet were influential in creating the "new wave" of Balinese painting. More artists from the United States and Europe came to Bali to live in the '40's, '50's, and '60's and they introduced a variety of Western brush techniques, perspective and the use of colors.

One of these men was the Dutch painter Arie Smit who came to Ubud in 1957.

Smit spent a lot of his time in the little village of Penestanen, just outside Ubud, working with a group of village boys who are known today as the "young artists."

Their work represents some of the most fascinating and brilliant examples of primitive peasant art found in the world today.

According to art critic Lim Chong Keat, "The influence of Arie Smit was perhaps more like a catalyst which unlocked the innate talent of these peasant boys who quickly developed a highly observant pictorial stylization of their life and environment."

Compared with the other artists of Ubud who have become famous for their graphic skill, the "young artists" appear clumsy and untutored -- and yet vividly spontaneous and child-like. The originality and freshness of their primitive approach to art appears to have been retained after these years, and we are perhaps now seeing them at their peak -- for there is always the danger that with increasing commercial demand, their art form will become merely another tourist industry for the villagers, and suffer the fate of the previous "revolution" in painting in the early thirties.



An old "young artist" puts the finishing touches on a leaf (above) before pausing to pour a cup of rice wine for a guest at Penestanen.

In January of this year a group of 14 of these "young artists" exhibited their paintings in Singapore at the National Museum.

It was in Ubud, a beautiful, quiet town north of Denpasar, where we met Mudru, 18, and Renos, 20, two painters in the "young artists" style.

Like many other Balinese painters, they divided their time between the rice field and the canvas.

They painted from six to eight o'clock in the morning, spent eight a.m. to two p.m. working in the paddies, then returned home in the evening to paint some more.

As the organizers of the Singa-

pore exhibit discovered, choosing artists to represent the "young artists" style is very difficult. Miguel Covarrubias, in his book "The Island of Bali," explains why: "The artist in Bali is essentially a craftsman and at the same time an amateur, casual and anonymous, who uses his talent knowing that no one will care to record his name for posterity."

"Artistic property cannot exist in the communal Balinese culture; if an artist invents or copies something that is an interesting novelty, soon all the others are reproducing the new find."

"Unlike the individualistic art of the West in which the main concern

of the artist is to develop his personality in order to create an easily recognizable style as the means to attain his ultimate goal -- recognition and fame -- the anonymous artistic production of the Balinese, like their entire life, is the expression of collective thought."

Over a cup of coffee Renos explained why he painted in the "young artist" style.

"I like the style for two reasons: First, I love the bright, vivid colors; and second, because I can complete a painting in this style in seven to ten days and I need the money. It takes two or three months to complete a painting in the old style."

Continued

# The "Young Artists" of Penestanen

Spanish painter Antonio Blanco has lived on Bali for more than 20 years pursuing

his art. Married to a Balinese girl and having a 17-year-old daughter (who appeared on

last week's cover), he now devotes most of his time to writing poetry.

(Right) A wooden kris, something for the tourists to take home.



Raka Soedira, a friend of the two painters, explained that the tourist boom was helping the painters of Ubud.

"They have families to feed," he said, "and paints are expensive. One full box of colors costs about 10,000 rupiah." (almost \$30 U.S.)

Soedira went on to point out the dilemma facing painters like Mudru and Renos.

(The "young artists" style, with its use of bright reds, greens, oranges, etc., contrasts sharply with the traditional monochrome or muted color paintings that preceded it.)

But what if money were no problem; would he still choose the "young artists" style?

He smiled, "Even if I had the time and money I would continue to paint in this style. I love it."



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# The "Young Artists" of Penestanen

Continued



A black and white drawing done by Gusti Mode Sumung, a 103-year-old Balinese artist (left). An ornate wooden Garuda graces a tourist shop in Denpasar (below right). The "young artists" style employs bold, vivid colors to portray Balinese daily life (below left).

Young boys gather at the house of a painter in Penestanen. (bottom).



They need more time to think and experiment, more paints to practice with, if they want to avoid the repetitious painting of stereotyped scenes. But they are in a hurry because their families need food and their paints and canvas cost money.

The quicker they finish, the quicker they can make a sale. So the quality suffers.

They must also keep an eye on what the tourists like. No matter how much they may like a picture, if the tourists don't like it they cannot sell it and buy more paints and canvas.

"I've sold about 25 paintings in five years," says Mudru, "painting part time. The most expensive one I ever sold was for \$75 U.S. It was two meters long."

Keat summed up the work of the "young artists" this way, "The gregarious hustle and bustle of village life is captured -- with all the variety of happenings: people, gait and postures, animals, trees, buildings -- all interwoven and unified in a rich and colorful composition. The characters are all moving, doing things, never at rest."

"In the best of these paintings there is an organized sense -- it is practically impossible to crop or edit a part of the whole picture; and they have an impact both monumental and decorative that stand out over and above the exciting and exotic colors that are of course the very first basis of attraction."

"The peasant painters clearly have the power to capture the spirit of their daily lives and also the festive pagentry and the exotic living culture of Bali."

"They speak of an artistic wealth that is integral to an indigenous way of life that we in the cities would be so much poorer not to have known."





By Suravalli Bunnag

Indeed, an article from America some years back claimed that an independent survey of 9,000 match



In Thailand, matchmakers face many problems. The local wood is not as good as that from say, Italy, Germany or Sweden where Singapore gets her raw wood, but importing is not an economic proposition, so

So next time you casually dip into your pocket for the 25 or 50 satang for a box of matches, or pocket a match-folder from some restaurant, think of the time and money that has gone into the investment. It's so easy to strike a match and so complicated to produce one.

[illegible]