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## **REVIEW OF THE BATTLE FOR BALI: THE STORY OF RODGER AND LELIA LEWIS**

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### ***Abstract***

*Many people think of Bali as a beautiful vacation spot. It has warm weather, sunshine, and wonderful views, it is a place that many tourists would like to go to. However, few probably think about the spirituality of Bali. There is plenty of religion there, but it is not the religion of light. In this book A. Rodger Lewis shares their story of trying to bring the people of Bali out of darkness and into the light of Christ.*

**Keywords:** *The Battle For Bali*

### **Abstrak**

Banyak orang menganggap Bali sebagai tempat liburan yang indah. Memiliki cuaca yang hangat, sinar matahari, dan pemandangan yang indah, ini adalah tempat yang ingin dikunjungi banyak turis. Namun, mungkin sedikit yang berpikir tentang spiritualitas Bali. Ada banyak agama di sana, tetapi itu bukan agama cahaya. Dalam buku ini A. Rodger Lewis membagikan kisah mereka tentang mencoba membawa orang Bali keluar dari kegelapan dan masuk ke dalam terang Kristus.

**Kata kunci :** *Peperangan untuk Bali*

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### **Review**

Many This book was first published in 1999 but I learned about it just a few weeks ago. My wife shared an entry with me from a women's devotional called Sisterhood of Faith (Shirley Brosius, Howard Books, 2006). On page 202 of that book there was an entry about a woman named Lelia Lewis who, along with her husband, served as a missionary in Bali, Indonesia. This information piqued my interest, I wondered if there was more that was

written about their work. I searched the name of Lelia Lewis on the Amazon website in the United States. When I did, the book *The Battle for Bali* came up. The cover of the original edition of the book identifies it as part of “The Jaffray Collection of Missionary Portraits.” I also discovered that this book has been rereleased in more recent years. It was published by Lulu ([www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com)) in 2016. This review is based on the 1999 edition of the book.

In the introduction the author offers some general information about Indonesia at the time when the book was written. Indonesia has the fourth largest population in the world (page 1). Though it is difficult to get accurate numbers the author says that officially the population is eighty-five percent Muslim and 10-12 percent Christian (page 3). So clearly, Christianity is a minority religion in Indonesia. Religiously Bali is influenced by Hinduism and Buddhism as well as the worship of ancestors, and animism (pages 28-29). Lewis says that the people of Bali are very aware of the spiritual world (page 29).

The book mentions some of the earlier missionaries to Bali. Lewis writes about Rev. Jacob de Vroom who was sent by a missions society in the Netherlands, he was the first missionary to Bali (page 31), he also mentions a couple of Pentecostal missionaries from America, C. Groesbeek and D. Van Klaveren (page 32). In addition, he writes about Robert Jaffray, a Christian & Missionary Alliance missionary, who served in China but was also involved in Bali (pages 32-37, 39-40).

Speaking of their own lives the author, A. Rodger Lewis, tells readers that he was a rebellious child when he was young (pages 7-8). His wife, Lelia, was the daughter of missionaries who served in Western China (pages 12-13). Both of them were part of the Christian & Missionary Alliance denomination (page 11). One interesting family note is that missionary, Rev. William Christie, who married Lelia’s parents also officiated at A. Rodger and Lelia’s wedding (page 20).

The Lewises had a desire to go into missions but they could not do so immediately, Christian & Missionary Alliance policy required that they prove their ministry at home, in the United States, before going to the mission field (page 20). They fulfilled this requirement by pastoring a church in the “skid row” section of a city in the state of Massachusetts (page 20). After this they were permitted to go overseas. They went to Bali in 1953 (page xiv).

The majority of the book is devoted to recounting their experiences in Bali, and they have a lot to share. The caption for one of the pictures included in the book says that they served in Bali for 45 years! Lewis provides some insight into why it is so difficult to bring the people of Bali to Jesus, one reason is that the Balinese believe that changing to another religion can greatly disturb life on the island impacting both humans and nature (page 45).

This deters some from embracing faith in Jesus. However, in spite of resistance to the gospel, A. Rodger and Lelia Lewis engaged in various ministries including: evangelism (page 173), holding Christina gatherings (pages 50), teaching (page 151-153), and translation and publishing of Christian booklets (page 150). *The Battle For Bali* is very balanced. In the course of telling their story the author shares both their challenges and their victories on the mission field.

One theme that is very obvious in the book is the subject of spiritual warfare. The Bible affirms that this is very real. Paul's words in Ephesians 6:10-18 and Peter's words in 1 Peter 5:8-9 speak of its reality in no uncertain terms. Bible-believing Christians must affirm that the conflict is real. The conflict was very real for the Lewises, what happens in Bali is much more severe than what most believers in the West experience. Some examples will be helpful at this point.

Lewis tells a story involving his wife, Lelia. She was traveling in an area of mountain villages. There she rested under a banyan tree. Spirits are believed to gather at these trees which have altars near them for offerings. The one she rested under was considered particularly powerful. There she experienced a number of things including heaviness and difficulty breathing, as though someone was trying to strangle her. She recognized that the source of what she was experiencing was demonic and she appealed to the authority of Jesus' name and His blood. Lelia survived but the demonic opposition continued, so she and her coworkers had to leave the area (all the information in this paragraph is drawn from page 76).

Demonic spiritual manifestations are also found on Bali. The author mentions some things that an Indonesian woman who was living with them saw, she saw "white monkeys, a lion," and "moving lights" (page 79). Lewis says that he and his wife did not see these things at the time. But he goes on to say that they did see occult things like these at a later time (page 79).

At this point I will mention what I think are the two scariest evidences of spiritual warfare in Bali. The first concerns sorcerers who battle one another, they stay in their homes but their spirits leave their bodies and fight the spirit of their opponent, observers can see evidence of the conflict by lights in the sky, the loser of the contest succumbs to a mysterious death, but he can ask for a period of grace from the winner (pages 79-80). The second concerns what happens during exorcisms. When evil spirits are cast out of people they may cough up items such as: bolts, needles, nails, safety pins, and thread (page 82). This happens when delivering a person who has received treatment from a sorcerer (page 82).

The power of darkness is real in Bali, but the power of God is also real. This is evident in the fact that people are delivered from demons. God's power can also be seen in healing. Lewis tells the story of a boy who had an ulcer on his leg that no one could heal, but Jesus did after the boy was prayed for (page 62).

This book makes for interesting reading. It presents the joys and challenges of ministry. The text demonstrates the faithfulness of God and is a wonderful testimony of the faithfulness of missionaries who served for decades in a foreign land. The Lord blessed them and they were fruitful. This book preserves an important part of Asian church history. I think this volume could be very helpful to those who are considering missionary service or those who may be struggling in missionary service right now.

### **Reference**

Lewis, A. Rodger. *The Battle For Bali: The Story of Rodger and Lelia Lewis*. Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1999