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Indonesia in the 1950s. Nation, modernity, and the post-colonial state

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HENK SCHULTE NORDHOLT

Indonesia in the 1950s

Nation, modernity, and the post-colonial state

My dream was about a clean and tidy country with beautiful trains.
A country where everybody would be happy.¹

Perspective, mobility, rootedness

Since Soeharto's New Order, the 1950s have been represented in Indonesian historiography as 'the road to disaster', when the country was torn apart by regional rebellions and rising political tensions between right and left, which were mainly attributed to the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI, Indonesian Communist Party).² This image is now being challenged and much more work needs to be done to investigate the relatively unknown 1950s in more detail.

Usually, the 1950s have been viewed in comparison with other eras – in a negative sense as a time of stagnation and a prelude to chaos and in contrast to order and development during the New Order, or, alternatively, in a positive sense as a period of democracy, as opposed to New Order authoritarianism, and as the aborted pre-history of post-1998 decentralization. However, instead of using the 1950s as a kind of background to other periods, it is more interesting to assess this decade on its own terms and explore its particular dynamics and complexities.³ In this essay I want to focus on discussions

¹ Suwarno, a former freedom fighter, who was 20 years old in 1949, in an interview with *de Volkskrant*, 21-12-2009.

² I would like to thank the participants of the conference *Kemerdekaan dan Perubahan Jati Diri/Post-colonial Indonesian Identity*, Yogyakarta, 14-15 January 2010, and Gerry van Klinken, Jennifer Lindsay, Remco Raben, Heather Sutherland and Jean Gelman Taylor for helpful remarks and stimulating questions.

³ For a similar approach to the years immediately preceding World War I in Europe, see Blom 2008.

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about Indonesian national identity, which were primarily framed in cultural terms, and tentatively explore some historical trajectories.⁴

In his recent manifesto on cultural mobility, Stephen Greenblatt (2010) drew attention to an interesting paradox. On the one hand we see practices of cultural mobility. Traders, priests, soldiers, migrant labourers, newspapers, novels, schools, objects, ideas, images, and sounds were all vehicles of mobility, and Southeast Asian history is to a large extent characterized by cultural mobility. Gradually, colonial regimes, and later on nation-states, accompanied by academic institutions, handbooks and encyclopedias, produced temporary illusions of sedentary, closed cultures, turning dynamic processes into static things. Both mobility and institutionalization reveal a paradox: culture consists on the one hand of mobility, interaction, adaptation and change, but on the other hand it represents a deeply felt longing for rootedness and stability in order to create a sense of 'at-homeness' because of the threat posed by mobility. Although culture is mobile, it is often appreciated because it offers refuge from the outside world.

Taking these ideas about mobility and rootedness into consideration, how should we evaluate the optimistic efforts to shape a new nation driven by modernity during the first half of the 1950s? And to what extent were these efforts gradually aborted by the encroachment of a neo-patrimonial state, which was dominated by a post-colonial middle class?

An optimistic desire for the future

In his recent history of the Indonesian nation, Taufik Abdullah (2009:183) describes Soekarno's homecoming in Jakarta on 28 December 1949. While Jakarta was, in Soekarno's words flooded by 'millions and millions of people', the new president went to the former palace of the Dutch Governor-General, and by doing so the new nation took possession of the former colonial state. This was according to Taufik perhaps the greatest moment in his life as a national leader.⁵ But was it perhaps also the climax of the nation itself?

⁴ Two inspiring workshops, sponsored by the Australian Netherlands Research Collaboration and hosted by KITLV, focused on cultural politics in Indonesia between 1950-1965: Indonesia's Cultural Traffic Abroad 1950-65, Leiden, 7-9 April 2009; Culture and the Nation, Arts in Indonesia 1950-1965, Jakarta, 5-7 October 2009. For the rich results of these meetings, see Lindsay and Liem 2011.

⁵ Taufik Abdullah 2009:200. Soekarno's complex ideas about the nation and a national culture deserve a separate study which goes beyond the scope of this essay. He was a modern architect who literally designed the signs and symbols of the new nation, and mobilized the population to become Indonesians, but in doing so – and in propagating an ongoing revolution – he also exploited nativist ideas while his democratic credentials were minimal.

In 1950 nationalism was triumphant. According to Herbert Feith (1962:74), 'its power as a cohesive force binding the archipelago together was at its zenith'. That year had witnessed a remarkably easy transition from a federation of 16 states into a unitary republic. This process was not primarily forced from above because, according to Taufik Abdullah (2009:194), the real forces of unitarism were the local informal leaders whose political orientations had been largely shaped by the sense of being part of the national revolution.

The year 1950 also witnessed the launch of a new outward-looking national identity, expressing optimism and self-confidence, as echoed by the opening quotation of this article. Jennifer Lindsay (2011a:15) rightly remarks that in the early 1950s the Indonesian nation was primarily a cultural project. Moreover, she observes that 'to be an Indonesian was to be modern'. National identity and modernity were therefore inextricably intertwined.

On 18 February 1950 a young poet, Asrul Sani (1928-2004), published with his friends a cultural manifesto entitled 'Surat kepercayaan' (Testimonial of beliefs) in 'Gelanggang', the literary section of the weekly magazine *Siasat*. On behalf of his literary colleagues, later known as Angkatan 45, or Generation of 1945, Sani wrote: 'We are the legitimate inheritors of the culture of the whole world, [...] and we shall transmit this culture in our own way. We come from the ordinary people and for us the people are a mixture of everything from where a new and healthy world would be born.' (Quoted in Taufik Abdullah 2009:200.) According to Taufik Abdullah, this manifesto made the boundaries and rootedness of culture irrelevant. Indonesian culture was no longer localized and materialized in ancient objects, because 'Indonesianess (*ke-Indonesia-an*) does not rest in our brown skins and cheek bones but rather in the expression of our hearts and minds'.⁶ Indonesian culture should therefore be seen as a process of continuous creation. 'Surat kepercayaan' was not a clear-cut definition but a declaration about the future, a statement that the modern world is a source of inspiration, and that a new national culture is not passively inherited but actively created. Culture was seen as the process of creativity itself. But the authors of the manifesto considered politics to be other people's business.

The making of a new national culture was very much seen in terms of mobility seeking inspiration from various parts of the world and moving to a better future, and in so doing emphasizing discontinuity with the past. Building a new future implied that the past had to be abandoned. However, the search for a national identity and efforts to define what a national culture should be, would remain an unfinished project in which mobility, open-mindedness and an orientation towards the future collided with a desire for rootedness, essentialized identities and a focus on the past. The debate about

⁶ As quoted by Taufik Abdullah 2009:202; see also Lindsay 2011a:10-1.

Indonesia's national culture therefore oscillated between an outwardly oriented modernity and an inward-looking nativism.

New organizations such as Lekra (Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakjat, Institute of People's Culture) and journals such as *Mimbar Indonesia* addressed questions about how to give cultural content to sovereignty and how to reconcile a deeply felt desire for progress and modernity with cultural artefacts and practices inherited from the colonial past. To some extent the pre-war discussion in *Poedjangga Baroe* about the indigenous roots of Indonesian culture and the search for a rooted authenticity versus a radical new internationally oriented culture was continued. In *Mimbar Indonesia* debates concentrated on questions about whether a culture should be rooted in the past or based on a forward-looking belief in modernity, expressed in terms such as newness (*kabaharuan*), progress (*kemajuan*), and *dansa* (dance) in contrast to *tari* (traditional dance) (Bogaerts 2011).

Questions were raised about the extent to which Indonesian culture was part of the Eastern world, how to connect cultural heritage with modern technology, and whether culture should be defined in terms of art or *beschaving/peradaban* (civilization). A discussion about the distinction between culture in terms of *kebudayaan batin* versus *beschaving/perabadan* perceived as *kebudayaan lahir* reflected a European distinction between the German idea of *Kultur* and the French concept of *civilisation*.

Questions were raised and concepts were launched, but there was little consensus about answers and solutions. Instead of trying to define what national cultural identity was exactly, it is more helpful to identify briefly several elements that structured the debates on these issues.⁷

It is important to realize that the new nation-state was still in search of a centre. With the benefit of hindsight it seems as if Jakarta had always been the centre of the nation, but this was actually the outcome of a process. Only gradually did Jakarta become the main platform where ideas about an Indonesian identity were expressed. For that reason old provincial Batavia had to be redesigned into a new future-oriented capital.⁸

In this emerging centre, ideas about an Indonesian identity had to be expressed in the new national language, which in 1950 was only spoken by a minority of the population, while Dutch was still dominant in intellectual circles.⁹ Mediated through primary and secondary education and new media such as radio, film, short stories and new forms of theatre, *Bahasa Indonesia*

⁷ I refer here primarily to some of the themes discussed at the workshop in Jakarta in October 2009 mentioned in note 4.

⁸ For an illuminating sketch of how Jakarta was redesigned into a modern capital, see Fakhri 2005.

⁹ According to Thee Kian Wie (personal communication, May 2009), until 1957 introductory courses in economics were taught in Dutch at the Universitas Indonesia in Jakarta.

rapidly penetrated deeper into Indonesian society. The lively role played by a host of new organizations in civil society was also a new development.

An important aspect of what it meant to be Indonesian involved the display of a particular attitude reflecting ideas derived from the Indonesian Revolution and solidarity with the poor. The new nation was, to put it simply, *pro rakyat*. This attitude was for instance expressed in literature and paintings from the Akademi Seni Rupa in Yogyakarta (Knol, Raben and Zijlmans 2009). It was also expressed in a particular lifestyle that was urban-based and one that advocated modernity, and found its expression in dress, habits, and tastes. Research on this topic has hardly begun.

The search for a new national culture was characterized by a fair degree of open-mindedness. New possibilities were explored and creativity was stimulated, while a plurality of opinions was tolerated. New media also widened the international horizon as people were interested in developments abroad, based on the awareness that Indonesia was part of a larger world of new nations. Modernity had in this respect several sources of inspiration. Western Europe was replaced by the United States, but China displayed an alternative socialist model of modernity, while Egypt offered Islamic-oriented ideas of modernity (Lindsay 2011a; Liu 2006). Indonesia also gained international respect by organizing the Bandung Conference of Non-aligned Countries in 1955.

Dutch efforts to play a role in defining Indonesia's cultural agenda failed. Exchange programmes financed by Sticusa (Stichting voor Culturele Samenwerking, Foundation for Cultural Cooperation) proved not very successful (Dolk 2011). In Indonesia the magazine *Oriëntatie* (1947-1954) under the editorial leadership of Rob Nieuwenhuys was inspired by the mestizo trajectory of Latin America to realize a blend of Western (Dutch) and indigenous elements in the search for a new national culture. However, Indonesian intellectuals showed little interest in bridging the gap between East and West under Dutch editorial guidance (Veenkamp 1997).

Indonesia reaffirmed its newly won self-confidence by performing its cultural identity abroad. Large delegations consisting of dance groups – mainly from Central Java and Bali, but also from Bandung, Padang, Medan and Makassar – performed traditional regional dances and new national songs. National export culture was dominated by a mix of post-colonial high culture from Central Java and Bali – but the background of the performers was less aristocratic – and efforts to present the new nation through national revolutionary songs. In 1954 the first mission was sent to China, after which many other countries, especially in the communist/socialist sphere were visited (Lindsay 2011b). Meanwhile separate connections were established within the Muslim world with Pakistan and Egypt (Salim 2011), while Balinese intellectuals visited India for the first time.

An Indonesian cultural identity was by definition an unfinished project because ideas and ideals were projected into the future. Therefore nationalism in the early 1950s was to a large extent an ongoing discourse about the future. Asked how the future looked like in 1956, when he was 18 years old, Ajip Rosidi answered: 'Bright and shining (*cemerlang*)! And the future was overwhelming.'¹⁰ This optimism, not yet contaminated by mass murder, was also reflected in a particular genre of photos. Examples may be found in an article on Indonesia in *National Geographic Magazine* of September 1955. The text is a rather superficial travelogue, but photos do express the cheerful future-oriented optimism typical of the 1950s (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Optimism in the 1950s (Bowie 1956:360)

Although much of the talk about national cultural identity took place in Jakarta, it is fallacious to assume that discussions about the fate of the nation were restricted to the national level in Java, while regions were backward repositories of conservatism. Nationalism and regionalism did not exclude

¹⁰ At the workshop in Leiden, April 2009.

each other (Asnan et al. 2006; Velthoen 2003; Liddle 1970). Ruth McVey (1994) has argued that politicians at the national level showed a consciousness that they belonged together to a single nation. The same applied to politicians at the regional level. There was also no one-way traffic from the centre to the regions because regions stimulated the centre, and within regions the nation was given shape as well, alongside notions of the local.

The quest for progress and modernity was very much alive in the regions. Medan is an interesting example of cultural dynamics at the regional level. The city became the capital of pulp fiction in the 1950s and from where American comic book heroes such as Flash Gordon, Rib Kirby and Tarzan reached an Indonesian audience. Medan maintained, moreover, connections with the Malay film industry in Penang and Singapore. At the same time, Medan-based writers such as Agam Wispi and Bakri Siregar contributed to literary debates in Jakarta. Seen from this perspective, Medan looked more cosmopolitan than Jakarta (Plomp 2011).

The willingness of regional leaders to participate in the nation was, however, conditional, because they were very much against the prospect of being dominated by Java/Jakarta (Asnan et al. 2006:117-9). And as much as regional rebellions were manifestations of local chauvinism, rebellions were also expressions of frustration about the course the Indonesian nation-state had taken. It was to a large extent due to the rhetoric of the army that regional rebels were depicted as separatists. Kahar Muzakkar's famous retreat into the *hutan* (jungle) was indeed a manifestation against the evils of the city, but in the *hutan* he gave shape to his own version of modernity by establishing health care, mechanized agriculture and a university (Velthoen 2003:108).

Before moving to questions concerning state and class, let us dwell a little longer on the regional level in order to obtain a better idea of the actual actors involved.

Back to Mojokuto: Nation-state and modernity

Clifford Geertz's *Religion of Java* (1960) is a wonderful ethnography and offers telling snapshots of how the new nation and modernity were intertwined in the early 1950s. The energy of the revolution in the early 1950s was the driving force of nationalism.

Supported by a new, if still weak sense of national identity, a new, but still uneasy sense of self-confidence, nationalism is thus becoming an important integrating factor in the society, most especially for the elite, for the educated youth and the urban masses. It is, in fact for some of the more engaged, a secular religion. (Geertz 1960:370.)

However, apart from Independence Day, most national celebrations such as National Anthem Day were regarded as a *priyayi* (administrative elite) affair and most people were 'ashamed' and 'embarrassed' to go to them.

On National Anthem Day, a corps of Chinese students dressed in white uniforms marched briskly in the District Officer's yard. There was an (obligatory) competition in the singing of the anthem (which, as it is in Indonesian, is not in everyone's power) by the village officials of the eighteen village-clusters, and there were speeches by several town leaders and the District Officer. But very few people came to watch the proceedings, and those who did were, most likely, merely reminded of their prejudices against the commercially prosperous Chinese. (Geertz 1960:376.)

On the first of May communists-dominated organizations paraded with banners

demanding the death of imperialism, the cessation of corruption, the cession of Western New Guinea to Indonesia, and so on. They end up at the town square, where a large rally is held under some huge pictures of Stalin, Lenin, Mao, and national Communist heroes and leaders (recently, the displaying of portraits of foreign leaders has been forbidden). Partly because [...] the Communist party was supporting the Government, partly because the Government, afraid of violence, laid down rather strict rules about what could be said and done on May 1st and enforced them by the presence of a goodly number of well-armed policemen, the rallies and celebrations tended to be rather mild. (Geertz 1960:376-7.)

On their part, orthodox Muslims (*santri*) were unsuccessful in their attempt to establish a political holiday of their own on May 1, Hari Kabungan Nasional (Day of National Mourning), to 'celebrate' the failure of the Communist revolt against the Republic in Madiun in 1948 (Geertz 1960:377).

Even 17 August was celebrated for the most part by people representing modern nationalism – the urban intelligentsia, making nationalism very much synonymous with modernity.

There is a parade of school children complete with drum corps [...] there is a flower-arrangement contest for women, for which the prize is a set of dishes; there are various sports contests – badminton, volley-ball, one-o-cat, soccer, for which trophies are awarded to the winning teams; there is a baby-show at which winners are selected for health and beauty; there is a profusion of Indonesian national flags; there is a banquet and formal reception for town leaders of all groups at the District Office; and, at the climax, there is the President of the Republic's speech broadcast from Djakarta and sent out over loudspeakers to crowds of people gathered in the public square. (Geertz 1960:377.)

According to Geertz, the degree of participation on 17 August was 'surprisingly great', displaying 'the new forms of social and cultural integration proposed for Indonesian society by an urbanized and educated elite'. It was 'an urban sponsored advertisement for a way of life which though still unclearly formulated is of increasing attractiveness to more and more Indonesians' (Geertz 1960:378).

Observing Mojokuto in the early 1950s one may wonder about the extent to which Benedict Anderson's classic distinction (1983) between 'nation' and 'state' is artificial. For, in Mojokuto we see how the nation was to a large extent propagated by the state. And both nation and state were very much associated with modernity. Revolution and modernity, mediated through an urban elite and represented by the state – that was what national culture was about.

Concerns, disillusion and a sense of crisis

Just as the experience of modernity itself was often accompanied by a sense of loss and insecurity about the future, the early years of the Indonesian nation-state were also characterized by a permanent sense of crisis, caused by political instability and institutional weakness. Java's countryside was plagued by endemic insecurity due to banditry and the state's inability to maintain 'law and order'.¹¹ Yet Remco Raben reminds us, that, alongside the euphoria of independence, in the early 1950s there were also instances of repression by the state.¹² Based on colonial regulations (the state of emergency or *Staat van Oorlog en Beleg* (SOB), and the so-called offence of the press or *persdelict*), many trade union leaders and journalists were imprisoned for political reasons. Pressured by the United States and authorized by the Sukiman cabinet, a big *razzia* in August 1951 resulted in the arrest of 15,000 leftists, and by the end of that year 21,000 individuals were in prison. In 1952 the Wilopo cabinet released 14,000 of them, but that year also witnessed the 17 October Affair, which inaugurated General Nasution's efforts to make the army an indispensable factor in the fragile nation-state.

The sense of crisis became more intense in the second half of the 1950s. An essay contest on the state of the nation organized by Soedjatmoko in 1957 reflected a deep sense of pessimism among the 355 respondents: 'The road is winding, the goal is unknown, I lose my way and drift'. 'My sun no longer shines, my feet are wounded, and so is my soul.' (Pauker 1958, cited by Liu 2006.)

¹¹ Robert Cribb (2010) argues in this context that the weak rule of law was also caused by the legal pluralism inherited from the colonial period which made the rule of national or *adat* law optional.

¹² Presentation by Remco Raben at the Workshop on Colonial Fears in Leiden on 6 November 2009. Raben is currently writing a book on Indonesia's transition from the late colonial state to the early independence years.

Initially there had been ample room for debate and disagreement within Lekra, while family relationships and social networks offered opportunities to overcome ideological differences, but gradually ideological contestation increased and groups of friends turned into opposing factions.

Whereas debates within Lekra concentrated on the nature of socialist or social realism and how to indigenize these concepts, an increasing number of leftist intellectuals turned away from Western influences as the Cold War gained ground. They were willing to give up a more open-minded brand of modernity in favour of new revolutionary models such as the one advertised by the People's Republic of China. What made the Chinese model attractive was that it was supported by a strong state.¹³

If 1950 had been the zenith of nationalism, the general elections of 1955 illustrated the success of electoral democracy because 90 per cent of the voters cast their votes in the absence of major irregularities. However, the outcome of the elections was inconclusive and the failure of the Konstituante (Constitutional Assembly) to deliver a new Constitution demonstrated how difficult it was to institutionalize democracy and citizenship (Nasution 1992).

The legitimacy of the nation-state was further undermined by corruption. In short stories and in his novel *Korupsi*, Pramoedya Ananta Toer expressed disillusion and bitterness because promises of a better future were not fulfilled. In his short story 'The mastermind', Pramoedya (2000:215-31) sketches the career of Tuan Kariumun, who started as a debt collector, then became a civil servant under the Dutch, a deputy bureau chief under the Japanese, a hero of the revolution, then again bureau chief in Jakarta, chairman of various associations, Member of Parliament and the Konstituante. He was primarily the embodiment of opportunism and corruption. We will return to him later.

The sense of frustration expressed in Pramoedya's work evolved into outright cynicism in Mochtar Lubis's novel *Sendja di Jakarta* (1957). Against a background of poverty-stricken ordinary people, a group of well-to-do friends regularly meet and engage in ideological discussions which become shallow as opportunism and large-scale corruption dominate everyday life. In *Sendja di Djakarta* urban life is no longer the breeding ground of modernity but the epicentre of greediness, moral decay, and appalling poverty. In a cynical comment on 'the atomic age' – catchwords of modernity in the 1950s featuring in the very title of Adrian Vickers's chapter (2005:113-41, especially 127-8) on that decade – one of the characters in *Sendja di Djakarta* remarks: 'Has it occurred to you that we no longer live in the atomic age, but in an age of disbelief? Disbelief that is caused by a fundamental disillusion felt by mankind, because the war has not made an end to warfare, but resulted in an all encompassing sense of crisis and loss' (Lubis 1957:54; my translation).

13 Liu 2006. See Day and Liem 2010, for an illuminating series of articles on cultural expression during the Cold War in Southeast Asia.

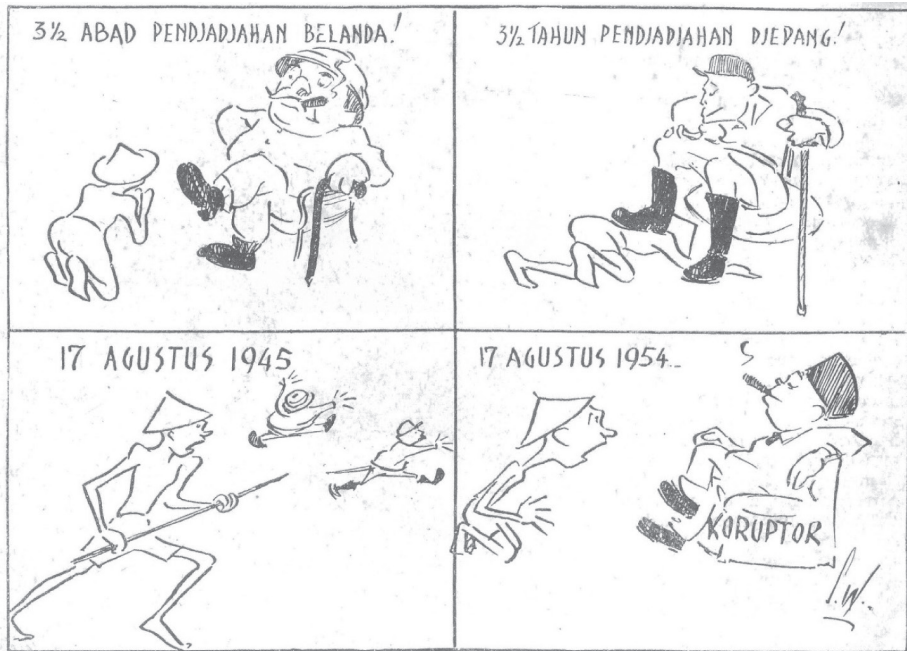


Figure 2. 3½ centuries of Dutch occupation; 3½ years of Japanese occupation; 17 August 1945; 17 August 1954 (*Pemuda*, No. 11, November 1954)

The neo-patrimonial state and the post-colonial middle class

Taufik Abdullah (2009:251-9) identifies three Indonesias in the 1950s. The first is an Indonesia that had achieved independence and sovereignty. The second is a new nation-state on a trajectory towards democracy, press freedom, a new constitution, and emerging citizenship; an Indonesia with an expanding educational system, independent courts, absence of religious conflict, a committed parliament, and vertical mobility (Feith 1994). This Indonesia was, however, overtaken by a third Indonesia, characterized by the struggle for power. In this Indonesia, the state was no longer seen as an instrument to build a nation and to safeguard citizenship, but as a resource that fuelled neo-patrimonial networks. In this context, 'politics became the commander', which implied that relationships in the public domain were increasingly politicized and the major political parties established their own cultural organizations in order to compete with Lekra, which was increasingly dominated by the Indonesian Communist Party's interests.

Despite the fact that the provisional Constitution of 1950 promised basic human rights, legal equality, freedom of movement, religion, conscience,

thought, expression, assembly and association, the right to strike and demonstrate, and provided, in short, the foundation for citizenship, and the fact that the Constitutional Assembly did draw up a charter of human rights in 1956, the constitutional process was nevertheless aborted by President Soekarno and army chief Nasution (Elson 2008:193).

We are all familiar with the debate between Harry Benda and Herbert Feith about the 'decline of constitutional democracy' in Indonesia during the 1950s. Whereas Benda maintained that political developments in Indonesia should be seen in their own cultural terms because Western democratic institutions were not compatible with indigenous culture, Feith argued that it is reasonable to assume that processes of modernization and nation building should result in democracy. Looking back at this debate McVey (1994) concludes that both Benda and Feith based their case on cultural (indigenous versus Western) arguments, and that both ignored the role of the state as a decisive factor. Due to the weakness of the state, Indonesia was not able to frame its democracy in solid institutions.¹⁴

The state was weak because it had experienced a war and a revolution. It was also a post-colonial state, which implied that it was primarily designed to control and to extract, and not to support a nation and to guarantee citizenship. As such Indonesians inherited a state with serious handicaps. There was, moreover, hardly a national economy to which the state could turn in order to increase its power.

The infrastructure had been neglected since the late 1920s and there were few means available for improvement because the Indonesian government had promised to re-pay a debt of 4.5 billion guilders to the Dutch government (Lindblad 2008:179). While vital parts of the real economy of the former colonial state were still in Dutch hands, the Indonesian government aimed to control institutions with a high symbolic profile such as the central bank and national aviation (Lindblad 2008:211-8).

One may even doubt whether Indonesia actually had a national economy. Lindblad's approach (2008) is in this respect perhaps too teleological. Howard Dick (2006) observes a split between the prosperous western part of the archipelago producing oil and rubber, and the eastern part whose main export was copra and which increasingly lagged behind. Politicians and bureaucrats tried to manage the economy by establishing a complex system of multiple exchange rates which stimulated smuggling and facilitated the emergence of shadow economies in which businessmen, military, politicians and bureaucrats colluded. So, instead of a national economy, we see a set of neo-patrimonial economies with many gateways to international business

¹⁴ See the famous phrase by Ben Anderson that Indonesia's national budget in 1950 was as big as that of Cornell University (Barker and Van Klinken 2009:19).

networks. Dick also argues that the increasingly dominant role of the army in the economy directly stimulated the successful growth of Singapore which absorbed a considerable amount of Indonesian-Chinese business capital.

After the mid-1950s the euphoria of the revolution started to wane and democracy was under threat, while citizenship was fragile as Eurasians and Chinese soon would learn. The Cold War created a new and hostile international context which left Indonesia only a few allies. In this setting the leadership of the Republic became more and more obsessed with the concept of national unity (Elson 2008:151).

This set the stage for Soekarno to advocate a return to the Constitution of 1945. The authors of the 1945 Constitution were inspired by Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan and favoured an integralist state, which boiled down to a mixture of corporatism, colonial *adat* (customary) law, and Dutch interpretations of Javanese ideas about hierarchy and harmony. It gave priority to a collective identity, instead of protecting individual rights, and saw the nation-state in terms of a family under fatherly care. It gave priority to the state as it favoured the *machtsstaat* instead of the *rechtsstaat* (Bourchier 1997). An open-minded and future-oriented attitude was replaced by a closed and inward- and even backward-looking conceptualization of the nation, which was framed in conservative corporatism.

In his history of the idea of Indonesia, Elson admits that Indonesia lacked 'a set of stable institutions, able to mediate and negotiate different interests and arguments and create the conditions for their collective collaboration', but he seems to lay the blame primarily on nationalist politicians for their failure to establish a clear and convincing idea of what Indonesia should be, which resulted in a 'lack of a clear sense of purpose' (Elson 2008:160). Instead of focusing on the moral qualities of politicians, I agree with McVey that it might be more helpful from an analytical point of view to look at the institutional constraints of the state. However, I propose to add another question: who actually 'inhabited' the Indonesian state in the early 1950s? Perhaps the answer can tell us more about the specific post-colonial nature of the state, which may have further marginalized the open-minded and future-oriented nationalism that characterized the early years of the new nation-state.

In his *History of modern Indonesia*, Vickers (2005:115-6) seems to provide a clear answer to my question: 'At the core of the citizenship of Indonesia was the new class that had emerged during the Dutch period [...]. The new class was the nationalist class that had received Western education and had rejected government service in favor of professional activities.' They took over politics and invaded the bureaucracy, and 'disseminated through the state and political parties the desire for the modern into the rest of Indonesian society and in so doing they gave meaning to the nation'. This looks very similar to what Geertz observed in Mojokuto, but the nature of the suppos-

edly new nationalist 'class' needs further qualification.

Since the late 1920s the Indonesian bureaucracy had grown from 115,000 to well over 400,000 officials by the early 1950s. Especially during the revolution both the Dutch-controlled federal states and the Republic had employed thousands of new government employees (Feith 1962:83; Evers 1987). Consequently, in 1950 Indonesia inherited 180,000 civil servants from the federal states, and 240,000 from the Republic.¹⁵ At first sight it looks as if this massive influx of new employees indeed constituted a new 'class' of nationalists. However, a closer look reveals that this picture is actually far more complicated. At least four comments need to be made here.

First, despite the massive expansion of the administrative apparatus and the influx of large groups of nationalists, more than 100,000 senior officials, who had been trained by the Dutch, moved upwards and occupied the strategic top echelon of the national bureaucracy. Consequently, Indonesia's colonial legacy consisted in a large part of a coherent and conservative bureaucratic elite concentrated in the Ministry of Interior. Their main interest was to maintain the stability of the state, and to a much lesser extent the mobilization of the nation.

Second, another aspect of the colonial inheritance consisted of laws, regulations, procedures, and a set of administrative practices and attitudes, which included amongst others distrust towards society, a centralist and patronizing administrative approach, giving priority to unity and the interests of the state. And this administrative habitus also affected the new generation of bureaucrats. Gerald Maryanov (1959:83-4) rightly remarks that patterns of administrative behaviour remained firmly rooted in Dutch traditional procedures:

Indonesianization meant more the replacement of Dutch officials with Indonesian citizens rather than any major break with bureaucratic form or pattern. [...] The Dutch forms could not be removed bodily for no substitutes were available, and there was no time for experimentation even if such had been desired.

So, if we want to identify how colonial elements moved into the new nation-state it is crucial to concentrate in detail on the transfers that took place between the late colonial state and the new nation-state, the outcome of which determined the post-colonial nature of the latter. These processes deserve more research.

Third, what was also inherited from the colonial period was a strong tradition of neo-patrimonial arrangements which had characterized most of the

¹⁵ More research needs to be done to trace in greater detail the growth of the Indonesian administrative bureaucracy during the Japanese occupation and the Indonesian Revolution.

indirectly ruled parts of the colony. These were now rapidly appropriated by the administrative apparatus of the new nation-state. In his *History of modern Indonesia*, Vickers explicitly applied Pramoedya Ananta Toer's Javacentric approach to Indonesian history during the twentieth century. As a consequence developments outside Java received less attention while the fact that the Outer Islands took a different historical trajectory is by and large ignored. Burhan Magenda (1989) has demonstrated that in many parts of these Outer Islands conservative aristocratic elites managed to survive well into the 1970s within regional administrative bureaucracies. Consequently these bureaucracies became 'bastions of local aristocrats' (Magenda 1989:892) and offered less space to the new nationalists. New research by Gerry van Klinken (2010) shows that, apart from these old aristocracies, in parts of Eastern Indonesia a new urban middle class, which was educated under the Dutch, firmly entrenched itself within the local bureaucracy.

Finally, the rapid expansion of the administrative apparatus also offered ample opportunities for people such as Tuan Kariumun to forge successful careers within the state. This had more to do with opportunism than with nationalism.

In sum, I fail to see how nationalists – as a supposedly homogeneous class – appropriated the administrative apparatus of the new nation-state, as Vickers argues. Instead, I suggest that the new nationalists were gradually absorbed into and socialized by the administrative habitus of the post-colonial state. In terms of social status this process was also identified by Geertz (1960:361) in Mojokuto, where, according to a young modernist *santri*, social hierarchy was as follows: at the top were government officials, followed by higher-ranked clerks, administrators and teachers, then petty clerks and 'lower' teachers, and only then followed by traders and landowners. Although class was becoming more important and upward mobility increased, proximity to the state was still decisive. Being a *priyayi* was what counted most.

Class did matter, but in a different way. Elsewhere (Schulte Nordholt 2011) I have argued that the linear development from urbanization to modernization (Wertheim 1956) or modernity (Vickers 2005), leading to nationalism, which features in many historical accounts of nationalism in Indonesia, obscures another important development. This concerns the rise of a substantial indigenous (lower) middle class of approximately half a million people, the majority of whom were either employed by the colonial state or earned a living in the key sectors of the colonial economy. For them modernity was an attractive lifestyle, but this was not automatically connected with nationalism, because any affiliation with nationalism might endanger their career within the colonial state. Here we see a link between modernity and the state, but not necessarily with nationalism. My hypothesis is that the Revolution and Independence took these people by surprise, and that they were still pri-

marily oriented towards the state and to a much lesser extent to the nation. Another hypothesis is that middle-class bureaucrats felt less comfortable with the elusive modernity propagated by Asrul Sani and his friends. Instead, they felt more at home with the call for national unity, rooted in the mythical past of Majapahit, in order to carve out a more authoritarian role for the state.

Gradually the political climate started to change. From 1952 onwards optimism about the future of the nation faced the grim realities of power struggles. Although identifying a specific point in time may be an arbitrary exercise, by 1956 the revolutionary honeymoon was definitively over. Dreams of a national cultural identity based on an open-minded modernity and projected into a promising future were overtaken by an alliance of state-oriented politicians and a post-colonial middle class which dominated the administrative bureaucracy. Or, to return to Greenblatt in the opening pages of this essay, mobility and a future-oriented modernity were defeated by rootedness and unity. This resulted eventually in a law of the rulers instead of the rule of law, causing the death of the Indonesian citizen.

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