An entangled affair STICUSA and Indonesia, 1948-1956

Liesbeth Dolk

Culture is never politically innocent. In retrospect, anyone with some knowledge of anti-Dutch sentiments in Indonesia after 1945 would not be surprised to learn that any official form of Dutch-Indonesian cooperation, be it cultural or otherwise, stood little chance in post-war Indonesia. Nevertheless, (economic and) cultural cooperation was included in the successive agreements made between the Dutch and Indonesian governments after 1945. Both the Linggarjati Agreement (1946) and the final agreement after the Transfer of Sovereignty at the Round Table Conference in The Hague (1949) made mention of 'cultural cooperation' between the two states.

DUTCH CULTURAL POLITICS IN INDONESIA AFTER 1945

In 1937 Sutan Sjahrir (1909-1966), writing about the Dutch colonizers, stated that 'they never ever, not even one single moment, have thought about conscious cultural politics on behalf of the people of Indonesia'.¹ After 1945 however, things were dramatically different on the Dutch side: with the proclamation of Indonesia's independence the preservation of Dutch cultural identity was now very much at stake. As a consequence, the necessity of sound cultural education – an indispensable instrument in the spreading of culture – received much attention. The view, even amongst the group of progressive Dutch (meaning those who agreed on the abolition of the colonial relationship after 1945), that the Dutch had a duty to fulfil, namely to work together with the Indonesians in order to create a new Indonesia after the western model, was still strong. 'For West-

1 '[...] dat ze nooit en nooit, zelfs maar één moment, aan bewuste, culturele politiek voor de bevolking van Indonesia hebben gedacht!' (Sjahrir 1945:74).

ern culture in general and, more in particular, for Dutch culture, there lays a chance and a task in these regions'.² 'The spreading of Dutch culture in the East will be indispensable. It is not too late to act upon that. Not yet', writes I.J. Brugmans (1896-1992), then Professor of History at the Nood Universiteit in Jakarta, in 1946.³

In February 1947, some three months after the initialling of the Linggarjati Agreement, a representative of the Dutch government was sent to Indonesia for a fact-finding visit.⁴

The idea was to establish an independent cultural institution in the Netherlands, subsidized however by the Dutch government, which was to work together with a likewise independent counterpart in Indonesia, subsidized by the Indonesian government. The institutions were to work as kind of agencies and would place Holland's cultural wealth to Indonesia's disposal and vice versa. The cultural activities of both establishments would extend to education, press, radio, film, books, exchange of art, the organization of congresses and the invitation of Indonesians to Holland and Dutch people to Indonesia.

What were the chances of cultural cooperation on the whole, and of establishing both an independent institute for cultural cooperation in Holland and a counter-institute in Indonesia in that period? On being asked, Prime Minister Sjahrir, Vice-Premier Moh. Hatta (1902-1980) and Soebandrio (1914-2004), Secretary-General of the Ministry of Information, all three western-educated intellectuals, appeared to be in favour of the idea, and promised to establish such an institute in Indonesia 'at the right time'. The so-called First and Second Police Actions in July 1947 and December 1948 respectively were, to put it mildly, not very helpful in providing the 'right time', if there ever was any, for such an undertaking. In this highly polarized political situation the Republik Indonesia refused any official interaction with the Dutch.

STICUSA

Seemingly unaware of the implications of the political situation on possible cultural cooperation, or under the impression that the

2 '[...] voor de Westerse cultuur in het algemeen en voor de Nederlandse zeer in het bijzonder in deze gewesten een kans en een taak [ligt]' (citation in Dolk 1993:108).

3 '*Verspreiding van de Nederlandsche beschaving in den Oost zal [...] onmisbaar zijn. Nog is het daarvoor niet te laat*' (citation in Dolk 1993:108).

4 The information on the early days of STICUSA is based on the articles of A. Helman en J. de Roo (1988) and G.J. Oostindie (1989).

tides would turn eventually as far as Indonesia was concerned, in 1947 the Dutch Parliament awarded subsidy to a Foundation for Cultural Co-operation between the Netherlands, Indonesia, and the Dutch colonies in the 'West' (Surinam and the Antilles).⁵ The Stichting voor Culturele Samenwerking, abbreviated as STICUSA, was established in Amsterdam in February 1948. Amongst the 16 members of the Board – the majority holding an academic title – was Prof J.H.A. Logemann (1892-1969), chairman and former Minister for Overseas Affairs. Most members had a good knowledge of 'Indies affairs' and almost none of the two other regions.

STICUSA's aim was roughly and rather vaguely to come, on a reciprocal basis, to 'a harmonic development in the democratic sense in the four regions'.⁶ In order to reach this aim and to avoid the risk of a one-way-traffic, STICUSA would support the establishment of autonomous counterparts overseas. Moreover it would stimulate knowledge of and contact with Western culture, specifically in its Dutch manifestations, in Indonesia, Surinam and the Netherlands Antilles. At the same time STICUSA would stimulate knowledge of and contact with the cultures of Indonesia, Surinam and the Netherlands Antilles in Holland.

In Surinam and the Netherlands Antilles counterparts of STICUSA were indeed established in 1948-1949. Indonesia was a different matter. For STICUSA it was crucial that cultural exchange would take place between independent foundations. After two police actions the Republik however once again feared the old colonial mentality: Dutch cultural penetration as a political manoeuvre.

OSCAR MOHR IN JAKARTA

In the middle of this political turmoil, the Dutch decided to send a local representative of STICUSA-Amsterdam to Jakarta in January 1949.⁷ His task was to temporarily establish an 'outpost' in Indonesia in order to try and persuade the Indonesian side to establish an independent foundation under Indonesian leadership in the Indo-

5 It was Prime-Minister L.J.M. Beel (1902-1977) of the Netherlands who insisted that Surinam and the Netherlands Antilles (the 'West-Indies') were included in the program. Surinam and the Netherlands Antilles were Dutch colonies until 1954, when they became autonomous partners within the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

6 '[...] om met een beroep op het gehele vermogen van Nederland en op basis van wederkerigheid te komen tot een harmonische ontwikkeling in democratische zin tussen de vier gebieden'. See Helman and De Roo 1988; Oostindie 1989.

7 For the information on Oscar Mohr see also Dolk 1996:130-42.

nesian capital. His name was Oscar Mohr, a cosmopolitan, born in 1907 in St Petersburg from a Russian mother and a Dutch father. Thirteen years and one revolution later, his family returned to the Netherlands where Mohr studied Mining Engineering at the Technical University in Delft. Before the war he was a journalist with *The Times* and *The London Times*. In 1942 he was arrested because of his activities for the resistance movement and deported to camps in Holland and Germany. After the war he worked for the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 1948 he was a member of the Dutch delegation to the Security Council in Paris. Mohr was an energetic, inspiring gentleman with almost unlimited interests and with knowledge of Slavic and Classic languages, science, art, music and politics. Above all, he was a man without a colonial past. His personal challenge: how to create a genuine understanding between people who were involved in what he formulated as a 'gigantic traffic accident', and how to find ways for them to socialize with each other as sensible human beings afterwards? He defined the situation in Indonesia as a 'profound human problem': how should East and West get along with each other?

'We can very well try to get rid of each other', he stated in one of his speeches,

We can put an end to this ambivalent relationship with all its complications and irritations. It must be possible to come to a correct indifference as is common amongst sensible human beings. Then we can do the best of businesses, and then we have the least arguments. Then we have peace as there exists between Iceland and Paraguay.⁸

For Mohr this was no real option:

Once we will all have to learn to co-exist with each other on this one planet, whether we like it or not. We have got to like it. There is no alternative.⁹

8 Address Oscar Mohr on the occasion of the departure to Europe of Asrul Sani and Ramadhan Kartamihardja on 11 March 1952. The Dutch original reads: 'We kunnen proberen helemaal van elkaar af te komen, eens en voorgoed een einde te maken aan de ambivalente verhouding met al haar complicaties en ergernissen. Het moet mogelijk zijn tot een correcte onverschilligheid te komen zoals dat gebruikelijk is onder verstandige mensen. Dan doen we de beste zaken, dan hebben we de minste ruzie. Dan hebben we de vrede die heerst tussen IJsland en Paraguay' (collection Daria Mohr).

9 'Eens zullen we het allemaal moeten leren om met elkaar te leven op één planeet, of we het willen of niet. *We have got to like it*. Er zit niets anders op'.

How to create a genuine understanding amongst groups of people full of sentiments and hard feelings? Mohr's answer to this question, completely within STICUSA-guidelines, but with a far more cosmopolitan, universal outlook, was: through contact via the peaks of both cultures, and, from the Dutch side: by keeping open a pure channel – that is without any political or economic ulterior motives – to the European world, by making sure that the best products of European culture are accessible in Indonesia. Het Stichtingshuis on Jalan Gadjah Mada no. 13 was to become a spiritual centre and meeting place for Dutch and Indonesians alike.

Het Stichtingshuis voor Culturele Samenwerking, Jl. Gadjah Mada no. 13, Jakarta. (*STICUSA Jaarverslag* 1953.)

His marriage to Daisy Arnold, an Indo-European lady from a planter's family in the Prianger, brought him into contact with the poet G.J. ('Han') Resink (1911-1997), the painter Ries Mulder (1909-1973), who initiated the I.T.B. Fine Art Academy in Bandung in 1947,¹⁰ and Sam Koperberg (1888-1958) a confidant of Soekarno. Through his charismatic personality, his energy and above all his integrity, Mohr succeeded in attracting (young) artists to his cultural centre like Amir Pasaribu (1915-2010), Baharuddin Marasutan (1908-2005), who became one of Mohr's employees, Hendra Goenawan (1918-1983), Mochtar Apin (1923-1994) and Soedjojono (1913-1986) and writers/poets like Rivai Apin (1927-1995), Bahrum Rangkuti (1919-1977), M. Balfas (1925-1975), M.R. Dajoh (1909-1975), H.B. Jassin (1917-2000), Pramoedya Ananta Toer (1925-2006), Toto Sudarto Bachtiar, employee (1929-2007) and Sitor Situmorang (1924). Other intellectuals like Sutan Sjahrir, Roeslan Abdoelgani (1914-2005), Haji Agus Salim (1884-1954), Moh. Said Reksohadiprodjo (of Taman Siswa) (1917-1979), Moh. Roem (1908-1983) and Mohr's personal friend Moh. Sjafei (1897-1969), Minister of Education in the Second Sjahrir Cabinet, come to meet Mohr in Het Stichtingshuis. Some of them become regular visitors of the cultural evenings, the exhibitions and the library, 'not *because*, but *despite* the fact that we are Dutch and therefore compromising'.¹¹

Through his college days in Delft Mohr befriended Poeroebojo, brother of the Sultan of Yogyakarta, Hamengku Buwono IX, which made him a welcome guest in the court-capital. He even became friends with Colonel Gatot Soebroto, whom he described as 'a war-horse, with the looks of a cheerful Italian bandit'. At President Soekarno's home Mohr had discussions of, as he states, a 'remarkable frankness'. But Soekarno is not in a position to visit Het Stichtingshuis himself, however curious he might have been: 'It would be unpleasant for me as well as for you, Mr. Mohr, if Parliament would start asking questions'. Mohr gave the impression of having succeeded in establishing a free communication with 'really important people here'. In 1951 he mentioned his 'untroubled friendship' with the Indonesian intellectuals visiting his centre (Dolk 1996:135-6).

10 Ries Mulder was a teacher at the ITB-Fine Art Academy from 1948-1958. See also Spanjaard 2003:111-9.

11 Letter Oscar Mohr to H.J. de Marez Oyens, Yogya, Easter Sunday 1951. Collection Daria Mohr.

In the garden of Het Stichtingshuis, Jakarta, around 1950. 1st row, 3rd from left: Daisy Arnold. 4th from left: Oscar Mohr. 2nd row, 4th from right: Willem Mooijman. (Collection Willem Mooijman, Velp)

DICHOTOMY

At this point it is important to note the dichotomy existing amongst groups of Indonesian intellectuals before the Transfer of Sovereignty in 1949.¹² Before the Round Table Conference, one current of feeling considered association and dialogue with the Dutch as an absolute taboo as long as the Netherlands formally refused to acknowledge Indonesia as an independent Republic. These Indonesians had for the greater part moved to Yogyakarta, heart of Republican territory. In Jakarta another group of Indonesian intellectuals had settled: people who were economically bound to Jakarta or who were directly or indirectly involved in the political negotiations between Indonesia and the Netherlands, and Indonesian writers and critics, who were all Republican no doubt, but who did not principally exclude contact with the Dutch side. It was mainly this group of intellectuals that was prepared to attend the activities in Het Stichtingshuis.¹³

¹² See also Dolk 1993:99-149.

¹³ The majority of Indonesian writers and critics of this group (the Angkatan '45), was gathered around the magazine *Siasat* (1947-1961) with its cultural supplement *Gelanggang*, and the digest *Gema* (1948-1950). Contacts existed also with the Dutch – Jakarta-based – cultural magazine *Oriëntatie* (1947-1954) (Dolk 1993:156-7).

Het Stichtingshuis, around 1950-1951. From left to right: Baharuddin, Asrul Sani and Amir Pasaribu. (Collection Willem Mooijman, Velp)

For all Indonesians concerned, however, every Dutchman, even Oscar Mohr, was fundamentally regarded as an exponent of the colonial system. The good personal contacts with Dutch intellectuals, which definitely existed, did not dispel the emotionally charged Indonesian views about these contacts. To think that the Indonesian government under the given political situation could have been persuaded to formally establish a Foundation for Cultural Co-operation with the Netherlands was naïve and unrealistic. The Indonesian government had never asked for such a cooperation, and had probably even, albeit in a *halus* (refined) way, already refused to do so ('at the right time').

Even after the Transfer of Sovereignty, when Indonesians felt freer to manoeuvre, Mohr recognized the unrealistic standpoint of STICUSA-Amsterdam and seems never to have discussed the establishment of a branch under Indonesian leadership with an Indonesian counterpart any further. This profound difference in understanding of what was feasible under the given circumstances was not the first point of controversy between the STICUSA Head office in Amsterdam and its representative in Jakarta. Mohr became extremely annoyed with the attitude of the STICUSA Board, whom he accused of paternalism and meddling. He found the members of the Board pedantic and indecent people without the slightest idea of how delicate his mission was. 'Every day it feels like balancing on a tightrope', he wrote in one of his letters.

By the end of 1951, after three years of hard work, his contract with Sticusa expired. Mohr decided to return to Holland, because he was tired, but above all because he could not stand any longer to represent the individuals in charge of STICUSA in Amsterdam. He died in Jakarta, very suddenly, in May 1952, one month before his planned departure for Holland. The journalist and writer Anton Koolhaas (1912-1992), a far less charismatic personality with hardly any knowledge of Indonesia, was appointed as his successor. Although Koolhaas did not feel at home in Indonesia, he represented STICUSA until 1954 when the relations between Holland and Indonesia deteriorated even further because of the New-Guinea affair. In the Netherlands itself, the parliament and press begin to express critical remarks about money (some two million guilders a year) reportedly spent 'ineffectively' in a country that regarded STICUSA as an unwelcome remnant of the colonial past. STICUSA as a foundation including Indonesia was eventually abolished formally in January 1956. A 'new' STICUSA arose, restricting its field of activity entirely to the 'West-Indies'.

JAARBOEKEN

One of the ways in which STICUSA tried to implement the formulated aims was through its publications. The *STICUSA Jaarboeken* (STICUSA Yearbooks) (Amsterdam, 1950-1954, five volumes) were presented as a gift to successful candidates of final examinations at secondary schools in the Netherlands (17.000 copies in 1952) and were therefore fully oriented towards informing youngsters in Holland on Indonesia, and towards stimulating 'cultural cooperation between you, the Indonesians and the people from the West-Indies'. Professor Logemann, STICUSA's chairman, wrote the introduction to the first volume in 1950. The focus in his foreword is specifically on the spreading of Dutch – not European – culture in 'those young nations'. 'Our Dutch culture is a world culture', writes Logemann. It must have been this sole focus on the achievements of Dutch culture, presented as Indonesia's basic 'outfit' for their new freedom, which, according to Rob Nieuwenhuys (1908-1999), chief editor of the Jakarta-based journal *Oriëntatie* (1947-1954),¹⁴ caused a stir among Indonesian intellectuals. 'Oscar Mohr has refused to distribute the *Jaarboek 1950* in Indonesia, and very rightly so', Nieuwenhuys wrote in a letter to G.J. Geers, Professor of Span-

14 For information on *Oriëntatie*, see Dolk 1993:150-76.

ish in Groningen, the Netherlands, 'It is absolutely infuriating!'¹⁵ The writer and journalist Beb Vuyk (1905-1991) in her review of this *Jaarboek* in the Jakarta newspaper *Indonesia Raya*, stated that STICUSA-Amsterdam 'does not really understand the political and cultural atmosphere in Indonesia, which is also the reason why they did not choose the right people'. She draws the sharp conclusion,

that three quarters of the contributions on Indonesia are written by people who in fact better should have kept their mouths shut about Indonesia, or by people who should have been replaced by others.¹⁶

In the successive volumes – the first two for the greater part filled with articles on Indonesian issues – we find contributions from, on the Dutch side, mainly academics in the field of Indonesian literature, language, and law, like Dr Hans Teeuw, Prof C. Hooykaas, and Prof C.A.O. van Nieuwenhuys. On the Indonesian side there are articles from Hurustiati Soebandrio (studying in the Netherlands at that time), Alisjah Arbi (a sister of Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana, journalist of *Warta Indonesia* and staying in the Netherlands at the invitation of STICUSA from 1951) and Takdir Alisjahbana, and translated literary work of Chairil Anwar, Siti Nuraini, Asrul Sani, Rivai Apin and Pramoedya Ananta Toer.

ACTIVITIES

Interesting sources of information on the nature and scope of STICUSA activities in Holland as well as in Indonesia are the *STICUSA Jaarverslagen* (Annual Reports) 1952-1955.¹⁷ The activities in Jakarta (and Makassar)¹⁸ extend to literature, music, film, exhibitions, press and radio. To mention only a few of the exhibitions and activities organized by STICUSA in 1952-1955: 'Westeuropean painting'; 'Ceramic art in Holland and Scandinavia'; 'Graphic Art'; 'History of European Theatre'; 'De gedekte tafel' ('The set table') – on European taste in table setting and how this taste had come into

15 Rob Nieuwenhuys to Prof Geers, Batavia, 7-4-1951 (Collection Rob Nieuwenhuys).

16 Beb Vuyk (1951). The original Indonesian reads: [...] tidak mengetahui betul suasana politik dan kebudayaan di Indonesia, yang menjadi sebab pula mengapa mereka memilih orang2 yang tidak tepat . [...] bahwa tiga perempat dari sumbangan yang mengenai Indonesia ditulis oleh orang2 yang sebenarnya lebih baik menutup mulutnya tentang Indonesia, atau ditulis oleh orang2 yang lebih baik digantikan oleh orang lain.

17 From the years 1949-1952 and 1956 no annual reports have been found so far.

18 At one point Dr C.J.W. van de Wetering was appointed in Makassar as STICUSA-representative.

being – (10,000 visitors in three and half days); commemorations of Henriette Roland-Holst, Multatuli, Vincent van Gogh, Albert Einstein, Thomas Mann; piano and violin concerts with Dutch and Indonesian musicians; opera concerts (record-playing) like *Porgy and Bess*, in the garden of Het Stichtingshuis; the broadcasting of Bach's *Matthäus Passion* on Radio Republik Indonesia on Good Friday; evenings on Danish film, 'the Swiss book and journal', 'the Austrian writer and poet Hugo von Hoffmanstal'; 'The influence of European architects on American architecture'; 'Modern trends in Philosophy' (*STICUSA Jaarverslagen* 1952-1955).

In 1952 STICUSA handed over to the Indonesian government an extensive Library of Political and Social History, compiled by the Dutch essayist Arthur Lehning.¹⁹ STICUSA's own library and reading room on Jalan Gadjah Mada enjoyed, according to its annual reports, growing attention from Indonesian readers over the years.²⁰ Het Stichtingshuis owned an extensive collection of classical records and organized record-concerts (Bach, Mozart) on a weekly basis in the capital.

'Our film collection', Willem Mooijman (1926), one of Mohr's closest co-workers, states,

consisted of two parts. Films from the collection of the Dutch Educational Movies (Nederlandse Onderwijsfilm): *Herring fishing on the North Sea*, that sort of thing. No use whatsoever, except when Kementierian Penerangan asked us if we could provide films they could show to the desa-people as an 'appetizer' for the educational films they really wanted them to watch on big screens in the village. STICUSA-Amsterdam had asked us specifically to register how many visitors attended our film showings for their annual reports. For us the request from Penerangan was a perfect opportunity to satisfy the people in Amsterdam: the officials of Penerangan filled in our forms with place, date and number of visitors. We received them back with wonderful numbers: 1000, 2000 visitors, more than enough! They were very happy in Amsterdam and for a while we did not have to react to their proposals for stamp-exhibitions or other 'crowd-pullers' to be organized at Gadjah Mada no.13. The other films in our collection were the more artistic films: Bert Haanstra, the experiments of Dali and Bunuel, Joris Ivens. We at STICUSA-Jakarta were more interested in *who* saw those movies, rather than in *how many*.²¹

19 An interesting account of the realization and handing over of this Library is to be found in Hunink 1984.

20 *Jaarverslag* 1954 makes mention of a monthly average of 1400 visitors and the lending of some 22,000, mainly Dutch and English, but also German, French and Indonesian books in 1953.

21 Willem Mooijman, personal communication, 1996.

Public performance of STICUSA films in a *desa* near Yogyakarta.
(*STICUSA Jaarverslag* 1953)

The *STICUSA Jaarverslag* 1953 makes mention of the arrival of a fully equipped film car for tours to isolated outposts on Java, and of the *Boekentrein* ('Book train'), also equipped with a film cabin.

Exhibiting original European paintings in Indonesia met with difficulties in the field of security. From the Indonesian side, painters from Yogyakarta like Soedjojono argued in favour of a big exhibition of European/French painting: Picasso, Braque, Matisse. Mooijman:

Sam Koperberg, confidant of Soekarno, would approach the President about this matter. Special military security was clearly needed on the train transporting the paintings to several places in the Archipelago. But Soekarno had no affinity with the idea and with modern art in general – 'why not just portray reality?' – and refused to support the plan. Soedjojono and other painters from Yogyakarta at that point undertook the journey from Yogya to Jakarta on their motorbikes in order to try and persuade Soekarno. They did not succeed, but it shows that these painters, the majority of whom were communists, were not opposed to STICUSA, or to be more specific: to what Oscar Mohr made of it.²²

22 Willem Mooijman, personal communication, 1996.

A STICUSA exhibition on 'World literature in Indonesian translation' was held in 1956 for which H.B. Jassin compiled the accompanying catalogue.²³

From the STICUSA activities in the Netherlands the meeting in 1950 of Dutch and Indonesian artists in Amsterdam is worth mentioning. The get-together intended to create 'mutual understanding of cultural values in both countries'. Participating in this meeting were, amongst others Sitor Situmorang, the composer B. Sitompoel, and the artist Serdjana Kerton. Three years later, in 1953, STICUSA-Amsterdam organized a symposium on Modern Indonesian Literature, meant as a 'discussion between friends'. Some hundred Dutch and Indonesians attended this event. Haji Agus Salim, on his way to Britain for the coronation ceremony of Queen Elizabeth II and a speaker at the Symposium, was present, as was Soewarsih Djojopoespito, Asrul Sani (speaker), St. Takdir Alisjahbana (speaker), Sam Udin, speaker (from Geneva), Pramoedya Ananta Toer, Aoh Kartahadimadja, Barus Siregar, Hazil Tanzil, Amal Hamzah (cultural attaché to Germany in Bonn), Siti Nuraini, Joke Moeljono, student at the University of Amsterdam, M. Rustandi Kartakusuma and from the Dutch side: writers and academics like Adriaan Morrien, Ed Hoornik, Alfred Kosmann, N.A. Donkersloot, Han Resink, Hans Teeuw (speaker), Annie and Jan Romein Verschoor, Wim Wertheim, the journalist Albert Besnard and translator Dolf Verspoor.²⁴

VERTAALBUREAU

STICUSA-Amsterdam had its own translation department, the 'Vertaalbureau' which selected and translated articles from the Dutch press and had them sent to, amongst others, H.B. Jassin in Jakarta for publication in Indonesian magazines like *Zenith* and *Mimbar Indonesia*. The Vertaalbureau also translated children's books and catalogues. Another activity of this department was the selection, translation and voicing over of Dutch film texts for Indonesia. Translators and correctors for STICUSA-Amsterdam were amongst others the writers Sitor Situmorang, Asrul Sani, Ramadhan K.H., M. Balfas and Pramoedya Ananta Toer, the journalist and writer of film scenario, Gaius Siagian, and Barus Siregar, co-worker of

23 H.B. Jassin 1956. See also Maya H.T. Liem in this volume.

24 Information from several Dutch newspapers, June 1953. Collection Pusat Dokumentasi H.B. Jassin, Jakarta.

the publisher Pembangunan in Jakarta. They stayed, in turns, for one or two years in the Netherlands as 'guests' of STICUSA-Amsterdam.²⁵ Most of them took this opportunity to travel to other European countries.

Apart from the *Jaarboeken en Jaarverslagen* STICUSA published two magazines, the Dutch language digest *Cultureel Nieuws Indonesië* (1950-1955) (2000 copies), printed in Amsterdam, and its Indonesian counterpart *Menara* (1953-1956), printed in Jakarta. Browsing through the pages of *Cultureel Nieuws Indonesië* and *Menara* one can draw the conclusion that both digests were useful contemporary sources of information on both Indonesian and Dutch/European modern cultural life. CNI (45 issues) informs the Dutch readers extensively on the Indonesian Cultural Congresses of 1951 and 1954 in Bandung and Solo respectively. The special issues on Indonesian Publishing (1952), Press (1953) and Film (1955), to mention only a few, provide interesting overviews from Indonesian-language sources that were not easily available to a Dutch readership at the time. *Menara* (21 issues) tends to focus more on Dutch/European literature rather than culture: its numbers contain works of Edgar Allan Poe, Dylan Thomas, Lorca, Baudelaire, Marsman, A. Roland Holst, M. Nijhoff, as well as articles on French, German, Russian and American literature, translated from Dutch language sources.

Selection and translation of the articles was also a task of the Vertaaltbureau in Amsterdam. In Jakarta *Menara*, meant as a "*djendela*" *Belanda jang diarahkan ke Eropah*' (Dutch window to Europe), was edited by Sitor Situmorang, Toto Sudarto Bachtiar and Ramadhan K.H. Articles in *Menara* were in Dutch and Indonesian (translated by Toto Sudarto Bachtiar, Trisno Sumardjo, Boejoeng Saleh and Ramadhan K.H.), but from the end of 1955 in Indonesian only.²⁶

ENTANGLED

STICUSA and Indonesia: an entangled affair indeed, determined by politics, policies and conflicting interests. STICUSA-Amsterdam was led by academics from the older generation, hardly able to think outside a paternalistic framework. Its chairman, Prof Loge-

25 Another 'guest' of STICUSA was Soewarsih Djojopoespito in 1953. The *Jaarverslagen* contain the following numbers of Indonesian guests (writers, journalists, musicians, painters) in the Netherlands: 1952:13; 1953:28; 1954:37; 1955:35.

26 Particularly interesting is *Menara*'s last issue in 1956, again in both Dutch and Indonesian. *Tana-rendah dan awan/Laag-land en wolken*, an anthology of new Dutch poetry, contains the personal preference of its editor, Asrul Sani.

mann, before the war a prominent member of the 'progressive' Stuw-group in Batavia, in 1945 as Minister of Overseas Affairs had refused to negotiate with the 'collaborator' Soekarno and had declared in Parliament these negotiations to be 'unworthy and fruitless'. Logemann's statement, typical for the atmosphere – even in 'progressive' circles – in the Netherlands at the time, did not make him the most suitable chairman for STICUSA from an Indonesian point of view. The paternalistic attitude and the fact that STICUSA-Jakarta was dependent on Dutch policymakers in Amsterdam who did not have a clue about what was really going on in Indonesia after 1948, made implementation of STICUSA guidelines in Jakarta a delicate undertaking. On an official level the Indonesian government was not prepared to cooperate. On a more personal (or even emotional) level, the western-educated Indonesians were very well inclined to stay in contact with Dutch language and culture or to get in touch with European culture via a '*djendela Belanda*'. For many Indonesian intellectuals, leaving aside for a moment the vernacular they might have spoken at home, Dutch was their first language; Indonesian came only later. Het Stichtingshuis was looked upon with a mixture of political scepticism and personal affinity. STICUSA representative Oscar Mohr succeeded in elevating the narrow-minded policy of STICUSA-Amsterdam to a more universal, cosmopolitan level just by being himself.²⁷

Indonesian 'guests' of STICUSA in Holland were sometimes criticized by their fellow-artists in Indonesia for accepting STICUSA-funded travel to Holland in the first place. Sitor Situmorang explained:

Before the Round Table Conference going to Holland at the invitation of STICUSA was an absolute taboo for me. But in 1950, after the Transfer of Sovereignty, I felt completely free to make this choice.²⁸

Although the laidback contact with 'normal' Dutch people in daily life came as a relief to some,²⁹ others were not happy in Holland. Pramoedya left for the Netherlands in June 1953, 'perhaps intending to escape the gloomy scene of Indonesia and look for inspiration

27 His colleague in Celebes was less successful: guerrillas reportedly abducted STICUSA-representative Mr. van de Wetering from his home in Makassar in 1954 and nothing was heard of this gentleman ever since. *Jaarverslag STICUSA* 1953, 1954 and 1955.

28 Sitor Situmorang, personal communication, 1988.

29 As Alisjah Arbi (1952:15) formulates: '*Nederlanders in hun eigen land te zien, dat is de revolutie in de gedachte van iedere Indonesier*'.

from the outside world' (Liu 1996:122) but did not like his stay at all, and left six months after his arrival. The lack of sufficient financial support to enable him to live and travel as he wished, seems to have been one of the main reasons for this early departure (Liu 1996:122, note 10). In an interview in *Kompas* shortly after his return to Indonesia he labelled STICUSA as a "colonial brain trust" aiming at importing Western culture to Indonesia'.³⁰ Ramadhan K.H. (1927-2006) in a letter to H.B. Jassin in 1953 wrote how *djengkel* (irritated) he often felt as a guest of STICUSA because there is so much quarrelling about financial matters. 'We are often in conflict here'.³¹ He showed distrust towards his own government and towards the STICUSA representative Anton Koolhaas in Jakarta. The latter wrote in 1952 to the head office in Amsterdam that through talks with the Indonesian Minister of Health, Leimena, he had been informed that in spite of the New Guinea-debacle there was a growing demand for Dutch expertise in Indonesia. Ramadhan K.H.:

Through Koolhaas's letter to the STICUSA Head office (a letter I have stolen from the stencil-room) we are informed little by little in which direction STICUSA is running. Through the same letter we are also informed in which direction our leaders are running.³²

STICUSA: A PHASE IN THE PROCESS OF DECOLONIZATION?

What, finally, can be said about the effect in Indonesia and the Netherlands of all this exchange of people, goods, information and services? The *STICUSA Jaarverslagen* give the impression that, in the absence of an independent Indonesian counterpart in Jakarta, the exchange largely remained a one-way-traffic; a fear STICUSA had already expressed in the early stages of its existence. The Indonesian artists educated within the Dutch educational system before the war had, needless to say, already been influenced by western thinking and culture long before the establishment of STICUSA. Their going to the Netherlands gave them the opportunity to travel

30 Liu 1996:123. On Pramoedya in Holland see also Teeuw 1993.

31 'Sering sekali kami bentrokan di sini'. Ramadhan K.H. to H.B. Jassin, Amsterdam 31-1-1953. Collection Pusat Dokumentasi Sastra H.B. Jassin, Jakarta.

32 Letter Ramadhan K.H. to H.B. Jassin, Amsterdam 31-1-1953. Collection Pusat Dokumentasi Sastra H.B. Jassin, Jakarta. The Indonesian reads: Dengan surat dari Koolhaas kepada kantor pusat STICUSA (jang saja tjuri dari kamar tempat stensilnja) sedikit demi sedikit kita tahu kemana STICUSA akan larinja. Dengan surat dari Koolhaas itu, kita mengetahui pula kemana pemimpin2 kita larinja'.

to other European countries and broaden their horizons; a new experience that no doubt influenced the individual artist in a number of ways. To determine the ultimate influence of these encounters on the artist's creative work is beyond the scope of this paper.

The effect of STICUSA as an institution on both Holland and Indonesia is probably best analysed within a broader context. In retrospect, STICUSA can be looked upon as an 'after-pain' of colonialism. It therefore might have played a role in the process of decolonization. After 1945, both parties had an interest in the opportunities STICUSA created. For most Dutch, it was indispensable to give prominence to the spreading of Dutch culture in Indonesia in order to fulfil what they regarded as a duty and responsibility: to help building a new Indonesia after the western model. The western-educated Indonesian intellectuals, culture builders of their time, were Republicans, but felt nevertheless a strong affinity with western/Dutch culture, its ideas and concepts. On an emotional level it must have been important for them to stay in dialogue with western culture, using primarily the Dutch language as a window to the West, and in one way or another make the connection with the new-born state.

Ultimately, cultural cooperation between the two parties had to die out due to lack of breeding ground. Before that happened, STICUSA – in total contrast to what it was aiming at – might have facilitated, so to speak, cultural disengagement by giving both parties the time to distance themselves from each other mentally, and get used to the new situation. Although culture is never politically innocent, by the mid-1950s STICUSA's role in Indonesia as an agency for Dutch culture would have come to an end anyway, even without the New Guinea controversy.

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