Performing Indonesia abroad¹

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In 1954, Sutanti was a young woman of twenty five.² Her education had spanned three eras. She attended primary school during the Dutch colonial period, and when she was twelve had started studying Javanese classical dance at Kridha Beksa Wirama, the dance school established in 1918 by princes from the Yogyakarta palace.³ Sutanti attended junior high school in Yogyakarta during the Japanese occupation, was sixteen in 1945 when Indonesia declared its independence, and completed her schooling during the turbulent 1945-1949 revolutionary period. In the 1950s, she became a member of the newly established dance association Perkumpulan Kesenian Irama Tjitra where she studied classical and contemporary adaptations of Javanese dance.⁴

In early 1954, Sutanti began working at the national government's subdirectorate for the arts (Kantor Djawatan Kebudayaan

1 In 2010 I directed a 90 minute video documentary, titled 'Menggelar Indonesia; Misi kesenian ke manca negara 1952-1965' ('Presenting Indonesia: Cultural missions abroad 1952-1965') made up of extracts from interviews with 30 participants of the cultural missions of the 1950-1965 period, and illustrated with photographs from the interviewees' personal collections. Copies of the documentary have been deposited in libraries of major centres of Indonesian/Southeast Asian studies. Readers are encouraged to refer to the documentary.

2 There is some discrepancy on the date of Ibu Sutanti's birth. Her employment records noted 1929, whereas her parents thought she was born in 1927.

3 Kridha Beksa Wirama was founded by P.A. Tejukusumo, P.A. Suryodiningrat, P.A. Joyokusumo, P.A. Hadiwinoto, P.A. Suryowijoyo, R.W. Suryomurcito, R.W. Puspodirjo, R.W. Atmodijoyo, R.T. Puspodiningrat, R.T. Wiroguno, R.M. Joyodipuro, RP. Joyopragolo, R.W. Sastrosuprpto and P.A. Hadikusumo. From 1945-1948 its activities stopped. The school reopened in March 1948 with new organization (Soedarsono 1976:89).

4 The Irama Tjitra Association, or Perkumpulan Kesenian Irama Tjitra was established in December 1949, with Ismandji Kartakusuma as its head, and had open membership. Dance, gamelan and singing (*tembang*) were taught. It differed from the existing school Kridha Beksa Wirama in that it taught both palace and non-palace styles, experimented by taking 'folk' legends and even non-Javanese stories as basis for performance, and took as its guiding principle the aim to develop 'national culture' (*kebudayaan nasional*) (Soedarsono 1976:97). The association was run by young dancers the majority of whom had studied at Kridha Beksa Wirama. Wisnoe Wardhana was one of its members.

Yogyakarta group from Indonesian Cultural Mission before departure for the People's Republic of China in 1954. Crouching at front Kuswardji Kawendrasusanto (left) and Bagong Kussudiardjo (right). Standing left to right Wisnoe Wardhana, Karjono, Basuki Kusuworogo, Sutanti, Imam Nur Suwidah, Sutambo Djokobroto, Noek Siti Soenarti, F.B. Suharto.
(collection of Bagong Kussudiardjo family)

Urusan Kesenian), which was then located in Yogyakarta. The office of the Directorate of Culture (Djawatan Kebudayaan) within the Department of Education, Training and Culture (P. P. & K., Pendidikan, Pengamatan dan Kebudayaan) had already moved to Jakarta. Shortly after beginning work at the subdirector for the arts, Sutanti was selected by her workplace to participate in Indonesia's first high-level official cultural mission abroad, a tour to the People's Republic of China (PRC).⁵

Sutanti was one of around eleven dancers from Yogyakarta chosen from various dance associations. The Yogyakarta group included both classically trained dancers and those beginning to

5 In the early 1950s, the term 'cultural mission' was also used for delegations of officials sent on familiarization tours (for example a 'Missi Kebudayaan' to Thailand in 1953 led by Ki Mangensarkoro as mentioned in the editorial of the journal *Budaya* 3-1 (January 1954):1). The term 'Missi (later 'Misi') Kesenian' (and occasionally 'Muhibah Kesenian' or 'Misi Persahabatan') became common for groups of artists rather than officials. The term most commonly used for groups of performers sent abroad was 'misi kesenian'.

experiment with modern adaptations, particularly Bagong Kussudiardjo and Wisnoe Wardhana.⁶ The Yogyakarta contingent – led by Sutanti's superior Suharmanto, the head of the dance section of the office where she worked and himself a dancer from the Mangkunegaran in Solo – left by train for Jakarta for a period of training before departure. This was only the second time in her life that Sutanti had been to Jakarta. Her first trip had been as a dancer in a *wayang wong* performance as part of a student group from the Mantrijeron area of Yogyakarta, which was a branch of the Indonesian Association of Students (IPI, Ikatan Pelajar Indonesia).⁷

In Jakarta, the training sessions were held at Jalan Pegangsaan Timur 56, the Gedung Proklamasi and former home of President Soekarno. There she met the other tour participants, who were from Solo, Bandung, Makassar, Medan, Padang and Jakarta. This was the first time in her life that she saw dance and heard music from other parts of Indonesia, other than from Solo. At the training sessions, she observed the performances from other regions and worked with her Yogyakarta colleagues on her own dance repertoire, which consisted of short duos. The artists watched each other, and got to know each other. Together with the other performers, she learnt national songs, songs from other regions, and even some other dance movements such as the Malay social dance, *serampang duabelas*, which she went on to study more intensively after the tour to China.

The entire group including officials numbered 60, made up of 25 women and 35 men. Sutanti remembers there were eleven performers from Yogyakarta, eight from Solo, nine from Sunda (West Java), and the rest were from Medan, Padang and Sulawesi. But the group also included an official photographer, and visual artist Henk Ngantung who was in charge of an accompanying exhibition of visual art. The overall leader of the mission was Mangatas Nasution, from the central office of P. P. & K., Jakarta. Bachtiar Effendy was in charge of the performance section.⁸

6 Bagong Kussudiardjo (also spelt Kussudiardja) and Wisnoe Wardhana later both went on to establish their own dance schools in 1958 after they returned from Rockefeller Foundation funded study in the United States from mid-1957-1958. Bagong established his Pusat Latihan Tari Bagong Kussudiardja on 5 March 1958, (Bagong Kussudiardja 1993:175). Wisnoe Wardhana set up his Contemporary Dance School Wisnoewardhana (CDSW) in the same month, as mentioned in 'Sekolah tari modern jang pertama di Jogjakarta' in the cultural section 'Berita Kebudayaan' of *Budaya* 7-6 (June 1958):251.

7 I have been unable to trace the organization with this exact name, but Sutanti says it was not IPPI (Ikatan Pemuda Peladjar Indonesia, which was linked to the Communist Party, PKI).

8 Bachtiar Effendy also joined the mission to East Pakistan the following December representing Perusahaan Film Negara (PFN, State Film Corporation). Presumably he acted in the same capacity on this first mission. Bagong Kussudiardjo's account (1955:24) of this tour mentions that Bachtiar Effendy's wife performed a Balinese dance with tape accompaniment in Beijing.

The group left Jakarta by ship (the Tjiwangi) on 21 July 1954 for Hong Kong. This was Sutanti's first trip abroad, as it was for the other participants, and she held an Indonesian passport for the first time. In Hong Kong, the group was met by Indonesian Consulate officials. She remembers vividly the border crossing from Hong Kong into the PRC, sensing the mutual suspicion of the guards on either side, and the warm greeting the group was given on entering the PRC.⁹ The journey by train to Beijing took five days and nights. There were floods at the time, and the train travelled slowly, often crawling through the water. By the time they arrived in Beijing, they were all tired and desperate for a good meal. She recalls that they arrived around two in the morning and were met at the railway station by the Indonesian Ambassador, taken to the hotel, given time to change, and then were immediately taken out to eat.¹⁰ The group performed in Beijing for Indonesia's Independence Day celebrations, and the Embassy arranged an official reception for them at a hotel, and a reception to meet Embassy staff at the home of the cultural attaché, Willem Tampi, who was from Sulawesi.¹¹ For the next two months the group travelled by train around China, performing in huge venues at major cities. The reception was always enthusiastic. There were huge crowds, and Sutanti remembers how the Indonesian performers were amazed that audiences clapped for so long. The group had to perform many encores, and Sutanti recalls once having to go back on stage for five curtain calls after her own duet (with male dancer Kuswadji).

Sutanti remembers that when the group arrived in Beijing in mid-August, the stadium used for the October 1 National Day celebrations was not yet finished. The hotel where they were staying was near the stadium, and they watched builders and labourers working round-the-clock shifts. When the group returned to Beijing two months later, they were astounded to see the brand new building complete. The group was part of Indonesia's official delegation at the October 1 celebrations and parade marking the fifth anniversary of the founding of the PRC. Sutanti felt immensely proud to be representing her nation. At one official dinner, she remembers sit-

9 Bagong Kussudiardjo (1955:2, 12) also commented on the impact of crossing the border on entry and exit to the PRC. Hong Liu (1995:305), writing about Indonesian perceptions of China at this time, notes how Indonesian intellectuals and artists experienced a 'border crossing syndrome' as they travelled from the British Colony of Hong Kong into the exciting, progressive PRC.

10 The group left Hong Kong on 3 August and arrived in Beijing on 7 August late at night. See Bagong Kussudiardjo 1955:3.

11 Willem Tampi is mentioned in Nalenan's biography of Arnold Mononutu (Ruben Nalenan 1981:219).

ting between a representative from Japan on one side and Holland on the other. She revelled in the irony of sitting as an equal now between two previous 'masters', and she could speak both their languages.

While in Beijing, the group visited the dance academy. Sutanti was most impressed with the academy, and particularly with the fact that the students learned so many different styles of dance. They also exchanged classes, teaching some Indonesian dance and songs, and learning Chinese dance. When she returned to Yogyakarta, the Department of Education, Training and Culture organized a meeting to discuss setting up a national dance academy in Yogyakarta. Sutanti spoke at this meeting, and of her favourable impressions of the dance academy in Beijing.¹²

The group returned to Jakarta by ship and arrived on 21 October. They had been away for three months.¹³

Sutanti's memories of the tour to China in 1954, as she related them in mid-2008, were still fresh in her mind at the age of eighty and reveal many aspects of Indonesia's official cultural missions of the Soekarno period. Like others who took part in these tours, she remembers the excitement of meeting and forging friendships with fellow artists from all over Indonesia, of learning and sharing with them new dances and songs, of travelling together to new places, of witnessing the speed of progress of another new nation, of feeling part of the potential for similar progress in Indonesia, of being appreciated as an artist and treated with respect, and the deep pride she felt at representing her country. In short, the excitement of being young, of being part of something new, and of having meaning in the larger world. Like the nation of Indonesia itself.

Indonesia's cultural missions of the Soekarno era were an expression of this national confidence and pride. Even before this first cultural mission, in 1952 the government of the young nation had sent a group of artists from Bali and Java to Ceylon, to represent Indonesia at the Colombo Exhibition.¹⁴ The group also performed in Singapore on its way home. The difference between this delegation and the 1954 cultural mission to China was that the Indonesian artists performed at the Colombo Exhibition as one country among many. The official cultural missions that were sent and sponsored by the Indonesian government, of which the 1954

12 Bagong Kussudiardjo (1955) was also deeply impressed by the arts academies for dance, music and visual art in Beijing.

13 *Harian Rakjat*, 21-10-1954.

14 I am grateful to I Nyoman Darma Putra for drawing my attention to this tour, and to Ibu Jero Puspawati (formerly Ni Made Rupawati) for sharing her memories of this tour with me.

mission to China was called the first, were designed as tours to promote Indonesia with Indonesia the sole performer.

There were various levels of cultural missions, depending on (as far as information can now be gathered) whether the tour was fully an initiative of the Indonesian government, or responding to an official invitation at government level (compared to an invitation from a fair or festival, for instance); the level of diplomatic representation accompanying the tour (whether there was a Minister as tour leader); whether the tour was a student mission; and whether the tour had a commercial element, for instance the selling of tickets or any level of commercial sponsorship.

The highest level of cultural mission was called a Presidential Mission, a term that was used from 1957. These were missions sent by Indonesia, funded by Indonesia, and led by a Minister (namely Minister Prijono, from 1957 Minister of Education and Culture).¹⁵ The artists were sent as representatives of the president, and received at the highest diplomatic level. It is difficult now to ascertain the precise financial arrangements for these tours, but it appears that the Indonesian government footed the bill for at least all preparation, travel and performance costs, as well as food, dress and generous daily allowance for the artists. The less prestigious tours were those with some commercial input, less financial support from the Indonesian government, or where Indonesian artists appeared alongside performers from other nations.

After the first official cultural mission abroad to the People's Republic of China in 1954, Indonesia continued to send cultural missions abroad, with increased frequency after 1957, and with dizzying regularity in the early 1960s. Over the next decade until 1965 there were at least another ten high-level official missions, which involved large groups of performers often touring for long periods of time. Their destinations included Pakistan, Czechoslovakia, the USSR, Poland, Hungary, North Korea, North Vietnam, the United States, Singapore, Cambodia, Japan, Thailand, the Philippines, France, the Netherlands, Egypt and Tanzania.

Furthermore, these official cultural missions were only one aspect of Indonesia's cultural promotion abroad involving performing artists at this time. Apart from the presidential-level missions and other less prestigious official cultural missions, there were also at least four other kinds of tours by Indonesian per-

15 Prijono's title was initially Menteri Muda Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan (Junior Minister) but he became full Minister of Education and Culture in 1962 with the title Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan until the Cabinet overhaul in early 1966 when General Suharto formally assumed power.

formers representing their country: cultural missions that were not curated by Indonesian government authorities but were given government assistance and official sanction (for instance a 1960 tour to Malaya of popular radio stars);¹⁶ performers who toured as part of other larger events, particularly the biennial socialist World Youth Festivals organized by the World Federation of Democratic Youth; LEKRA-sponsored cultural delegations; and tours of Indonesians who were based overseas, particularly students and Embassy staff (one striking aspect of the time is that Indonesian students abroad were all expected to be able to sing and dance and thus represent their country in cultural performances). The volume of traffic is striking. Indonesian performers were everywhere.

UNEARTHING STORIES

One essay cannot do justice to the breadth of this activity, and of course all this movement of performing artists was only one part of the even broader traffic that included delegations of writers and visual artists. I will focus on the official government-sponsored cultural missions of performing artists, which, like other performance activity of the 1950s and early 1960s, have attracted virtually no attention to date, perhaps because unlike literature or visual art, live performance left fewer traces. My writing focuses on the sending side of the equation – the Indonesian promotion of itself abroad, at an official level. It does not intend to focus on the reception of the tours, which would be the topic of another essay. My restriction of the following discussion to the government promoted tours of performing artists abroad was initially determined by the fact that my research into the broader picture of cultural activity abroad in the Soekarno period unearthed such a wealth of activity, far too much for one essay. However, focussing on the official government cultural missions of this period has the advantage of allowing for a particular picture to emerge – namely the way the Indonesian government saw and fashioned an official image of the nation to portray abroad at this early period of the nation's history,

16 A 'Misi Muhibah Kebudayaan Indonesia' toured Malaya in December at the invitation of the Malayan government. The tour was planned by Radio Malaya with the assistance of the Information Section of the Indonesian Embassy in Kuala Lumpur. The group of 65 Indonesian artists included popular singers Bing Slamet, Titik Puspita, Effendi, and Tuty Daulay. See the Indonesian Embassy Kuala Lumpur's newsletter, *Berita Indonesia* 21 (1960):10-12; 2 (1961):5-7, 11, 19; 4 and 5 (1961):10-2.

and a time of heightened international cultural diplomacy within the context of the Cold War.

In 2008, I had the opportunity to interview some of the artists who went on these tours. I had known many of them personally for many years and yet we had never before discussed in any detail their activities during the Soekarno period.¹⁷ During the intensely communist-phobic Soeharto regime this had been a sensitive topic, when even participation in official presidential cultural missions to the socialist bloc could be reason enough for suspicion of leftist sympathies. When these performers generously shared their memories with me, I was struck by the interaction between these tours and the sense of being Indonesian in the 1950s and early 1960s, both as something the artists experienced and in the image of Indonesia that they staged abroad. Irawati Durban Ardjo, who was a participant in many official cultural missions from 1957, discusses the impact of these tours on the artists themselves in shaping them and their artistic practice in Indonesia in her essay in this book. My essay discusses the context and content of the official international touring, namely the events and political and artistic calendars that hosted it, and the performance programs designed for it.

In thinking about how these specific questions relate to larger ones, I have found Nicolai Volland's writing (2008) on the People's Republic of China's cultural exchange with the socialist world over the same period helpful. Volland's discussion of the PRC's cultural diplomacy as a means to foster an identity with both national and international components, and the tensions intrinsic to this process, has resonance with Indonesia at this same period. Although Indonesia was not a communist nation forging its international cultural identity solely within the socialist bloc, as China was, it too was a young nation, concerned with developing a national cultural image of itself, and culturally was linking internationally to both the socialist and the non-socialist worlds. We can also see Indonesia's cultural missions not as touristic displays of something already known and fixed, but rather as a part of the actual process of forging and expressing an identity that was simultaneously national and international.

17 I thank Bp. Kris Sukardi, Ibu Sutanti and the late Bp. Sudarmo Sostrowidagda; also Irawati Durban Ardjo, Bulantrisna Djelantik, Rahayu Supanggah, Sardono Kusumo, Theresia Suharti, Menul Robi Sularto, Runi Palar and Edi Sedyawati. Thanks too to Butet Kartaredjasa and the family of the late Bagong Kussudiardjo; Bambang Tri Atmaja, son of the late Pak Ngalmian; and Bambang Pudjaswara, son of Ibu Sutanti and the late Pak Sudharso Pringgobroto. For information on LEKRA delegations I thank Hersri Setiawan and the late Oey Hai Djoen; and on the World Youth Festivals, particularly the participation of the Gembira Ensemble, I thank Koesalah Toer and R. Badhry Djani.

NEW MISSIONS FOR NEW PURPOSES

The 1954 tour to the People's Republic of China was Indonesia's first official cultural mission. Prior to independence, arts of the Netherlands East Indies had been regularly presented beside the cultural trophies of other colonial powers at the large World Fairs, where static displays of arts and crafts together with live performances conveyed an image of timeless tradition and innocence juxtaposed to the technological development and forward-moving modernity of the West (Mrázek 2002; Bloembergen 2006). After independence, a large group of Balinese dancers and musicians went to the United States and Europe in 1952 on a tour instigated, negotiated and curated by the Englishman John Coast who had worked for the republican government. The tour was later adopted (or as Cohen tells it, co-opted) by Indonesian cultural authorities anxious about the way Indonesia was represented abroad.¹⁸ The 1954 Cultural Mission, however, was fundamentally different, for it was the first time the new nation of Indonesia curated itself, so to speak. Furthermore, unlike the Indonesian participation two years earlier at the 1952 Colombo Exhibition in Ceylon, in 1954 Indonesia toured as a solo act. From 1954, the young republic managed the cultural self image it would portray abroad and projected that image alone, often at its own initiative.

DESTINATIONS

An important aspect of this self-management was that Indonesia now chose its own destinations for cultural missions. These were wide-ranging, but the government gave highest priority to newly independent nations, socialist countries, and to allies in the anti-imperialist cause.

Between 1954 and 1959 there were (at least) four official cultural missions abroad, but the two largest, most prestigious, and longest were to socialist countries. These were the three-month 1954 mission of 60 artists to the PRC, and a three-month tour in 1957 of around 30 artists to Czechoslovakia, the USSR, Poland,

18 Cohen 2007. John Coast (2004) wrote his own account of this tour, titled *Dancing out of Bali*. The tour was attacked in the leftist press as an exploitation of Indonesian artists. See the coverage in *Harian Rakjat* 'Rubrik Kebudayaan', 6-12-1952; 'Protes terhadap John Coast', 23-10-1952; 'Lekra gugat J. Coast', 29-10-1952. I am grateful to I Nyoman Darma Putra for drawing my attention to this coverage.

Hungary, and also Egypt which was Indonesia's ally in the African Asian Movement and leader of the Non-Aligned Movement. Between 1960 and 1965, of Indonesia's five largest missions abroad, two were presidential missions to socialist countries: a three-month tour of 28 artists to the USSR, followed by a tour to PRC, North Korea and North Vietnam in 1961, (this group was expanded for the PRC and North Korea segment of the tour by another 32 artists from Indonesia); and a two-month tour in mid-1965 of 60 artists to the PRC and North Korea, which also toured Japan. Apart from the cultural missions representing Indonesia, there were also three other missions to the PRC; a group of Balinese performers in 1956, a group from Maluku in 1957, and an all-Sumatran mission in 1959, all sent at the invitation of the China-Indonesia Friendship Society.¹⁹

However, despite the high profile tours to socialist countries, it is notable that during the Cold War in the early 1960s, Indonesia sent cultural missions to both the USSR and the United States and to countries aligned with both camps. And while Indonesia became increasingly allied to the PRC, even denying visas to athletes from Nationalist China wishing to participate in the Games of the New Emerging Forces (GANEFo) in Jakarta in September 1962, just eight months later in May 1963, Indonesia sent a student cultural delegation to Taiwan.²⁰

The other two large government cultural missions between 1960 and 1965 were official components of larger events and both went to the United States. The first of these was in early 1961, when performers were part of a 'Floating Fair' that toured Honolulu, Japan, Hong Kong, Manila, and Singapore. The novel aspect of this tour was that it took place on a ship converted as an exhibition and performance space, on which the performers travelled, and where Indonesian handicraft, produce, manufacturing, and models of town planning were also on display. At the various ports of call, people visited the ship to view the exhibitions and watch the performances. The other major cultural delegation was in 1964 when a large group of more than 60 artists was sent to the United States for seven months, as Indonesia's contribution to the New York World's Fair.

19 I am grateful to I Nyoman Darma Putra for drawing my attention to the Balinese mission. It is also mentioned in the 'Berita Kebudayaan' section of *Budaya* 5-12 (December 1956):609. Information on the all-Sumatran mission was provided by two participants, Cut Mayang Murni and Dahlia Karim, (interview Jakarta 16-8-2009). The Maluku mission is mentioned in 'Rom-bongan kesenian Maluku ke RRT' in the 'Berita Kebudayaan' section of *Budaya* 6-6 (June 1957):446.

20 On GANEFo, see Pauker 1965.

The ship 'Tampo Mas' refitted as Indonesia's Floating Fair to carry performers and exhibitions to Hawaii, Japan, Hong Kong, the Philippines and Singapore in 1961. (collection Kris Sukardi)

Indonesia's energetic cultural exporting at this time should be seen within a wider context that included the traffic of artists within the country. The government also promoted tours of artists and familiarization tours within Indonesia at this time, for instance a tour of Javanese artists to Kalimantan in 1956.²¹ Cultural exporting should also be placed within the context of the flow of visits by foreign heads of state and dignitaries to Indonesia, which provided opportunities for Indonesian performers to meet each other, and another important ceremonial frame for creating performance. These performances also interacted closely with the cultural missions, as many of the artists and program items were the same.

Visits by foreign dignitaries were frequent: in 1959 alone, there were visits by the Prime Minister of Cambodia Prince Norodom Sihanouk, and North Vietnam's President Ho Chi Minh, both in February and within three weeks of each other; President Rayendra Prasad of India visited in September, and President Tito of Yugoslavia in December. They all were entertained with official performances in Jakarta at the Istana Negara, and all but Tito also in Bandung.

21 See Bagong Kussudiardjo's article (1956) about this tour.

Indonesia also hosted many visits by foreign artists at this time, both at an official government level and tours hosted by LEKRA or smaller ensembles sponsored by foreign embassies and cultural organizations. Many of Indonesia's official cultural missions abroad either initiated return missions by artists from the countries they visited, or were themselves return visits after tours by overseas artists. A survey of 'cultural news' sections of cultural journals from the 1950s and early 1960s shows a constant stream of such visits by foreign missions, but all this remains the topic for another essay.

Indonesia's smaller or shorter official missions abroad were often reciprocal tours following a visit to Indonesia by foreign performers or heads of state, or to participate in international cultural events.²² Indonesia's second official cultural mission, for instance, which also took place in 1954, was a delegation of around 30 performers to East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) to participate in the two-week-long International Festival of Dance and Music held in Dhaka. Kris Sukardi, a gamelan musician from Solo who went on that mission (and many others subsequently), wrote of his experience in East Pakistan, and noted that the other countries that participated in the festival were the Philippines, Thailand, Malaya and Burma (Kris Sukardi 1956). He also joined the 1959 student delegation to Singapore of 39 performers selected from various arts associations in Indonesia, which toured for two weeks in August at the invitation of the Singapore government to mark the celebration of Singapore's self-government.²³ Other destinations for tours between 1960 and 1965 included Thailand (Bangkok, December 1962-January 1963, and a student delegation in 1965), the Philippines (1963), Pakistan (March 1964) and Cambodia and Japan (May-June 1964).

Notably, none of the cultural missions abroad toured any colonial power. The group sent to the New York World's Fair in 1964 performed in Paris and the Netherlands during a stopover on their way home to Indonesia after seven months in the United States, but this was not the focus of the tour. In fact, the group was only told of this add-on to their US sojourn and the consequent delay to their return to Indonesia about one month before they left New York. Their Paris 'tour' consisted of 2 or 3 performances at the Chaillot Theatre, and coincided with a visit to Paris

22 Irawati Durban Ardjo (2008:132-49) lists performances for visiting dignitaries in Bandung and the Istana for which she and other Sundanese dancers participated.

23 See further the Indonesian Embassy Kuala Lumpur's newsletter, *Berita Indonesia* 20 (1959):7-9.

by President Soekarno with his newest wife, Dewi.²⁴ In the Netherlands, the group performed in Rotterdam, Eindhoven, Scheveningen and Amsterdam (Nicolai 1964). This tour, which took place just after the arrival of Indonesia's ambassador, Soedjarwo Tjondronegoro (following the normalization of diplomatic relations between Indonesia and the Netherlands after settlement of the West Irian issue in 1963) and at the time of bilateral talks on technical assistance and credit loans,²⁵ was hailed as the largest Indonesian cultural event in the Netherlands since Indonesia's independence, and the first tour of performers to take place in 25 years (Nicolai 1964).²⁶ The group presented a performance before Queen Juliana at the Soestdijk Palace where Indonesian artists now performed as Indonesian nationals before the Dutch Queen, not as her colonial subjects. Unlike performances in pre-war Holland, their performance of songs and dance was representative of their nation, rather than a single palace or place within the Netherlands East Indies, and the 'new, modern look' of the performances compared to the image of 'twenty-five years ago' was commented upon in Dutch newspaper coverage.²⁷ The performers' cosmopolitan confidence and experience at including local songs in their repertoire meant that there was no hesitation in including a Dutch song; the program presented before the Dutch queen included an *angklung* rendition of *Daar bij die molen*.

TIMING

Cultural missions that were sent abroad at Indonesia's initiative rather than to participate at a festival, world fair or international event, were frequently timed to support other Indonesian diplomatic activity. In the 1950s, Indonesia was opening embassies abroad and appointing and giving special training to cultural attachees.

24 Runi Palar, a dancer in the group, recalls that the Paris trip was hastily organized because of Soekarno's visit, which was in fact a honeymoon for Soekarno with his newest wife, Dewi. I have found no confirmation of this.

25 See 'Overleg met Indonesie', *de Volkskrant*, 24-10-1964.

26 On the bilateral talks see 'Overleg met Indonesie', *de Volkskrant*, 24-10-1964. On the arrival of Indonesia's ambassador, see 'Benoeming Ambassadeurs', *de Volkskrant*, 28-10-1964.

27 Nicolai 1964. There was one region-specific performance in Holland. The Balinese dancers from the group performed at the Tropen Instituut in Amsterdam on 6 November. See 'Prachtige Expositie in Tropen Instituut', *de Volkskrant*, 7-11-1964.

chés.²⁸ Cultural missions were often part of this diplomatic statement of presence, particularly in the New World of socialist and newly independent nations. National days also provided a new calendar for timing tours between new nations. It is significant that Indonesia's first official cultural mission in 1954 was to the People's Republic of China and coincided with the year the Indonesian Embassy opened in Beijing.²⁹ The visiting artists arrived in time to perform there on Indonesia's independence day of 17 August, and after touring the country by train, they were back in Beijing in time to watch the parades for the PRC's celebration of five years of nationhood on 1 October.³⁰

Immediately following the successful 1954 tour to China, the USSR issued an invitation to Indonesia for a cultural mission. The Indonesian Embassy in Moscow had also opened in 1954 with Soebandrio as the first ambassador, but the mission did not take place until 1957 when the tour was timed for the opening of the Indonesian Embassy in Czechoslovakia. By then, long distance air travel made such a tour feasible, and the entire tour of five countries (Czechoslovakia, USSR, Hungary, Poland and Egypt) including travel to and from Indonesia took just under three months.

The calendar of national days and embassy openings around which cultural missions were arranged, also intersected with the busy socialist cultural calendar, particularly the biennial World Festivals of Youth and Students that were organized by the World Federation of Democratic Youth. Beginning with the first World Festival of Youth and Students held in Prague in 1947, Indonesia had a presence at every one of these festivals through to 1962, which was the last to be held during the Soekarno era. Initially, as in Prague in 1947, Indonesia was represented by students who were already abroad, but by the mid-1950s Indonesia was sending large contingents that included performing and visual artists, writers and athletes, and which were further augmented by Indonesian students resident in Europe. The northern summer tim-

28 See the editorial in *Budaya* 3-3 (March 1954):1-2, which praises the government initiative of training cultural attachés in the promotion of Indonesian culture abroad, and quotes the Minister of Education, Training and Culture's announcement that cultural attachés would be placed in Indonesian Embassies in the United States and Europe, Egypt, Pakistan, India, Thailand, and the People's Republic of China.

29 The Ambassador, Arnold Mononutu, had arrived the previous October, and presented his credentials to Mao Tse Tung on 28 October, 1953 (information kindly provided by Mr Santo Darmosumarto, Second Secretary Indonesian Embassy, Beijing, email 17-12-2008).

30 On the Indonesian group's participation in the 17 August events, see *Harian Rakjat*, 22-8-1954.

ing of this biennial event, which was usually held in early August, happily coincided with Indonesia's own national day, and visiting singers and performers could be involved in local Embassy-sponsored celebrations. In 1957, when the World Festival of Youth and Students from 28 July-11 August was held at the socialist world hub of Moscow – and was thus the largest Festival ever – the contingent from Indonesia numbered around 60, including performers from Aceh, West Sumatra and West Java, visual artists and writers (including a young Rendra), dancers from the Jakarta-based leftist student group *Persatuan Peladjar Indonesia* (PPI, Association of Indonesian Students) whose members were predominantly Indonesians of Chinese descent, and the leftist choral group, *Gembira* (about which Rhoma Yuliantri writes further in this volume).³¹

Cultural missions were timed to bolster political alliances, but they were also sent when Indonesia's political relations with the destination country might be fragile. In early 1963, when Indonesia was fostering its links with the Philippines in the short-lived *Maphilindo* alliance to jointly oppose the formation of Malaysia, a cultural mission toured Manila, Cebu and Davao. On the other hand, early the following year, after Indonesia had swerved decidedly left in its political allegiance and withdrawn from the US stabilization plan (with Soekarno's famous retort 'To hell with your aid!'), one of the largest and longest cultural missions was sent to the New York World's Fair. A cultural presence could be a statement of alliance or a statement of defiance.

After 1957, and particularly in the early 1960s, cultural missions became more frequent. By this time, air travel was easier and the tours could be shorter. They were also becoming routine, as many of the artists were now seasoned participants; they returned for subsequent tours and presented the same or similar programs. The era of months of long preparation prior to departure, as Sutanti experienced back in 1954, had passed. The rehearsal periods were shorter and more streamlined as experienced artists shared their skills with new recruits.³² Yet the fact that the missions were now easier to send abroad does not in itself explain the volume of Indonesia's official cultural missions at this time, or the imaginative scale of grandiose tours like the 1960-1961 Floating Fair. That took will.

31 The cultural mission group was in the USSR from 18 September to 10 October, 1957 (Gidasov 1959:82).

32 They could still be intensive. The training session for the 1961 tour to the USSR, PRC, North Korea and North Vietnam was held at Tugu (Puncak) for one month prior to the group's departure. See Edi Sedyawati 1961.

One influential person exercising that will was the Minister of Basic Education and Culture, Professor Prijono, who became minister in the Djuanda Cabinet in 1957 and remained in that position through six subsequent cabinets until March 1966. A Javanese from Yogyakarta, Prijono was a trained Javanese classical dancer himself, held a doctorate in literature from Leiden University, and was Dean of the Arts Faculty at the University of Indonesia from 1950 until he was appointed Minister in 1957.³³ He was awarded the Stalin Peace Prize in 1955 for activities as a member of Indonesian Committee of the World Peace Movement and was Chairman of the Indonesia-China Friendship Association from the year of its establishment in 1955 to 1957.

Prijono's chairmanship of this Association began the year after the 1954 Cultural Mission, which it seems he accompanied for at least for some of the time. On 21 October 1954, the day the mission arrived back in Jakarta, he published an article in *Harian Rakjat* on his impressions of nationalism in a socialist country (Prijono 1954). His favourable impressions of his visit were also reported elsewhere.³⁴ Liu (1995:122-3) notes that Prijono seemed attracted by the balanced growth of Chinese culture, namely the way the PRC maintained both Marxist cultural principles and traditional classical culture, and that he saw the rationale for this coexistence as the fact that court arts and classic literature in the PRC were appreciated as the products of 'creative Chinese artisans'.

Elegant, urbane, and polyglot, Prijono was close to Soekarno. He was a member of Murba, the proletarian party of 'national communists' and the Communist Party's rival for leadership of the left.³⁵ In his speeches and writing he supported socialist realism in the arts but was also a fervent cultural nationalist. He was a strong supporter of regional arts, as long as they were harnessed to national consciousness. 'National consciousness must become stronger than consciousness of any other kind, stronger than consciousness of *suku*', he stated in 1959 (Feith 1970:328-9).

As Minister, Prijono accompanied the 1963 mission to the Philippines, the 1964 mission to Cambodia and Japan, the 1965 mission to the PRC, North Korea, North Vietnam and Japan, and possibly

33 His 1938 doctoral dissertation, titled *Sri Tanjung: Een oud Javaansch verhaal*, was a philological study of an Old Javanese text.

34 'Kesan2 Prof. Dr. Prijono tentang kundjungannya ke RRT', *Merdeka* 21-10-1954 (part I) and 22-10-1954 (part II).

35 Prijono's position as Minister was immediately tenuous after the 1965 coup and he was demoted in 1966. Following the official transfer of power to Suharto on March 11 1966, Prijono was kidnapped on March 16 by activists of the Islamic students movement KAPPI and Laskar militia and taken to army headquarters.

others as well. Prijono's support and enthusiasm for Indonesia's cultural missions was probably because he saw for himself how cultural exposure abroad fostered a strong sense of national cultural identity among the participants, and also because, like Soekarno, he recognized that culture was an integral part of the vocabulary of international diplomacy of the time. While this might have been driven by 'the cultural Cold War' at least through the development of the vigorous calendar of cultural events in the socialist world that stimulated much touring activity, the fact was that in the late 1950s and early 1960s, cultural tours and exchanges were a way that nations talked to each other, eyed one another, and, through displaying what they were to various others, came to know that for themselves.

PARTICIPANTS AND PROGRAMS

Indonesia's self-display in its cultural missions was relatively consistent from 1954 through to 1965. When Sutanti went to the PRC in 1954, the program consisted of short dances from different regions danced by duos or small groups with live musical accompaniment, some contemporary choreography using traditional movement, and Indonesian songs performed together by the whole touring ensemble. Over the following decade, the programs became more sophisticated (less simplistic, more demanding in terms of expertise) and the regions presented varied, but the missions always included both regional traditional dance, and often some modern dance as well, plus national songs and regional songs with contemporary arrangements, sung either by the whole performing ensemble, or by professional singers touring with the group. The programs portrayed Indonesian culture as part of a new, young and moving world, not (as in the colonial world fairs) in contrast to it.

REGIONS

The performers in the first mission to China in 1954 came from Central Java, West Java (Sunda), Sumatra and Sulawesi, with each regional group made up of performers from various places, associations or schools. The performers represented a region and the nation, and never any single school, palace or association. This

basically remained the pattern in all subsequent missions, (even the selection of artists for the region-specific missions sent to China at the invitation of the Indonesia-China Friendship Association, namely from Bali (1956), Maluku (1957) and Sumatra (1959) were widely inclusive, with performers chosen from all Sumatra, and from both North and South Bali rather than any single area, association, *banjar* or *pura*).³⁶ The Central Java group in 1954 included traditional dancers from Yogyakarta and gamelan musicians from Solo, and two Yogyakarta dancers who were just beginning to experiment with choreography, Wisnoe Wardhana and Bagong Kussudiardjo. The Sundanese group consisted of dancers and one musician, a drummer who led the Javanese musicians to accompany the Sundanese dance.³⁷ The Sumatra performers came from Medan and Padang, and the Sulawesi dancers and musicians, including the famous *pakarena* dancer Andi Nurhani Sapada, (about whom Barbara Hatley writes further in this book), were from Makassar. The second mission to East Pakistan in the same year involved only Javanese, Sundanese and Balinese artists. The musicians on this tour were staff and the first group of graduate students from Solo's new conservatory (Konservatori Karawitan), which had been established in 1950 and where the curriculum was Javanese, Sundanese and Balinese music.

Central and West Java remained a permanent core fixture on all subsequent cultural missions, with Sumatra the region next most consistently featured. Bali made a sporadic appearance, becoming more regularly included only in the 1960s. After 1954, Sulawesi seems to have disappeared from the missions until 1963. The inclusion of performers from Sulawesi in the first mission to China is probably linked to the fact that Indonesia's first ambassador in Beijing, Arnold Mononutu, was from Sulawesi. He had been active promoting performance from Sulawesi in Jakarta before he left for the PRC.³⁸ By the time of Indonesia's next large mission

36 Bp. Ida Bagus Oka Wirjana recalls that he performed abroad in 1956 with the Gong Bedulu ensemble on an all-Balinese tour of performers to Holland, Czechoslovakia and India, but I have yet to find further information about this tour.

37 This mixing attracted strong criticism from the MSDR, (Masjarakat Seniman Djakarta Raja, Jakarta Society of Artists) as reported in *Harian Rakjat*, 16-7-1954. The pre-departure performance at the Gedung Kesenian was described as 'amateur', and criticized: 'iringan musik seperti trompet dan gitaar foxtrot terhadap tari Torton, gamelan Djawa terhadap tari2 Sunda adalah korupsi terhadap alam tari2 itu sendiri.'

38 On Mononutu, who was originally from Manado, and was Minister of Information before serving as Ambassador in China from 1953-1955, see further Nalenan 1981. Mononutu was head of the committee that brought a group of students from Sulawesi to Jakarta to perform dances and a drama titled 'Pahlawan Hasanuddin' at the Gedung Kesenian for 17 August celebrations in 1953. President Soekarno attended the performance (BMKN, *Warta Kebudayaan* 2, 3 (August/September 1953).

abroad in 1957, Sulawesi was embroiled in separatist rebellion and therefore perhaps less likely to be chosen to represent the nation. Similarly, West Sumatra, also party to separatist rebellion, was not included in the 1957 tour. Usually Sumatra was represented on the cultural missions by performers from both Padang and Medan, and occasionally also from Aceh. A relatively small mission to Australia in 1958 seems to be the only occasion Eastern Indonesia was represented, with 16 artists from Timor (performing dances from Belu, Rote, Alor and Timor) who were joined by Balinese performers.³⁹

The regional part of the cultural missions' program was made up of short, varied performances, with each region allotted relatively equal stage time. The development of choreography at this time was clearly influenced by the need for new short performances with simple narrative, or traditional dances condensed and adapted with new narratives. Many dances were created or recreated to fit the 'folk dance' frame that was particularly promoted in the socialist world. Thus a 'fisherman's dance', 'weaving dance', 'rice harvest dance', 'youth courtship dance' or 'batik dance' could relate to dances of similar theme in Vietnam or China. A traditional dance, for instance one that featured Javanese movement of a choreographed fight between the ogre Cakil and the female warrior Srikandi, could be given new 'progressive' interpretation, if necessary, as the force of progress defeating old powers of feudalism or imperialism.⁴⁰

The Javanese section of the regional program included short duets of contrasting dance styles, (for instance male with female, or refined *alus* style with boisterous *gagah*) often choreographed as fighting sequences, or an extract of *srimpi* or *bedhaya* dance choreographed for fewer dancers. The Sundanese section of the program featured new choreography such as the butterfly dance, or Sulintang, a dance composed of movement from various parts of Indonesia. Irawati Durban Ardjo has documented the Sundanese programs, and discusses ways the development of Sundanese dance and costume at this time was linked to the demand for state performances both at home and abroad (Irawati Durban Ardjo 1989, 2008, and in this volume). The Balinese section included short versions of *legong* and *janger*. The Sumatran component included

39 The only reference of this tour I have found to date is the brief mention of a forthcoming tour in the 'Berita Kebudayaan' section of *Budaya* 7-2 (February 1958):105.

40 See the comment in *Harian Rakjat's* (2-9-1954) reporting of the 1954 program in PRC where the author mentions that a performance of a dance between Srikandi and Cakil was given a 'progressive' interpretation.

Minang, Batak and Malay dance, including a new choreography of a medley of movement from Aceh, East Sumatra, Tapanuli, West Sumatra and South Sumatra (the 'Ragam Andalas' dance), as well as the obligatory *serampang dua belas* which was endorsed by Soekarno as an Indonesian social dance and an alternative to western-style dancing. Occasionally the Sumatran set also featured *seudati* dancers from Aceh.

Other regions of Indonesia, such as North Sulawesi and Kalimantan, also appeared in the program, but a distinction must be made – one that was not necessarily made at the time – between performances featuring the regions, and performances by regional performers. Many performers lived in Jakarta, and it seems that the further the region presented was from the Java-Sunda-Bali hub, the more liberties were taken with what we now would call 'authenticity'. Kalimantan, for instance, was represented by the 'Giring Giring' dance, which was an imagined 'rice-harvest' dance choreographed by Ismet Mahakam, a member of a dance association run by singer and entertainer Yuni Amir in Jakarta which trained performers for dinner shows at the Ramayana restaurant at Hotel Indonesia.⁴¹ Yuni himself went on many of the cultural missions and often managed the 'dances from Sumatra, Kalimantan and the Celebes' section of the program, if necessary augmenting the Jakarta-based dancers with performers brought in from Sumatra or Sulawesi. It was also common for the performers on the missions to don other costumes and take part in performances from regions not their own.

Their 'own'? Indeed, this appears not to have been a major concern. The image the cultural missions presented of Indonesia made up of various different regions was not one of mutual exclusivity. Rather, being Indonesian allowed for an embracing of other regions of Indonesia as one's own. This was the sense of liberation from one's own '*suku*' and the leap to national consciousness that Prijono described – the regions were not denied, but they now belonged to all. As mentioned earlier, performers spent the training sessions prior to departure learning dances and songs from other areas of Indonesia, and even if some of these dances and songs were contemporary imaginings, participants were made to feel part of the large and varied nation of Indonesia. The sense of the regions belonging to all was emphasized by the wearing of regional dress. In the musical section of the program when performers sang popular Indonesian songs together, and outside of

41 Information from Menul Robi Sularto (formerly Retno Siti Prihatin) who participated in many cultural missions (interview, 16-10-2008).

the actual performances when attending official events, the artists wore traditional regional costume from various regions. This was not necessarily always their 'own' dress. What was important was to convey diversity, not necessarily exclusive loyalty to the costume from one's home region.⁴²

NATIONAL UNITY

National unity was demonstrably enacted in the other section of the cultural missions' performance program – Indonesian songs. The missions often included radio musicians and well-known singers such as the Western-classical style (*seriosa*) singer Eveline Tjiauw, *keroncong* singers like Sampan Ismanto and Mariyati, or the popular Batak singer and guitar player Gordon Tobing, who gave their own performances and led the ensemble in song.

This section of the program featured regional songs in regional dialects or languages, and modern Indonesian compositions called 'national songs'. The former provided an opportunity to present regions not represented in the dance section of the program, and included western musical arrangements of traditional songs and newly composed songs. Batak songs – especially Beni Siahaan's 'Sing Sing So' which was immortalized by Gordon Tobing – , songs from Eastern Indonesia such as the popular 'Ayo Mama' and 'Rasa Sayange', Irian ('Yamko Rambe Yamko') as well as Javanese *keroncong* numbers (like 'Suwe Ora Jamu') and Malay songs ('Salam Alaikum') were program staples. The national songs were recent patriotic compositions in Indonesian, such as Ismail Marzuki's 'Rayuan Pulau Kelapa' and 'Halo Halo Bandung', accompanied by guitar (particularly if Gordon Tobing was on the tour), piano, accordion (there was usually an accordionist on the tour to accompany the Malay dances from Sumatra), or by members of the ensemble playing *angklung*.

Interestingly, the majority of songs performed on the cultural missions were identical to those sung by the youth groups attending the World Festivals of Youth and Students, where choral singing was the main cultural event and medals were awarded to choirs for categories such as 'best folk song'. The choral ensemble Gembira, about whom

42 In the cultural missions, at least, there seems to be no evidence of any 'sea change' in the way that regional cultures were seen and treated post-1957, which Jones (2005:120) mentions in his dissertation on Indonesia's cultural policy.

Curtain call in Prague, 1957. Gordon Tobing stands centre with guitar.
(collection Irawati Durban Ardjo)

Rhoma Dwi Aria Yuliantri writes in her contribution to this volume, won a bronze medal in the 'folk song' section of 1957 World Youth Festival in Moscow (Koesalah S. Toer 1998:57). 'Rayuan Pulau Kelapa' sung by the entire group always featured on the cultural missions, but it was just as popular if not more so on the socialist World Youth Festival circuit. Rose Kusumabrata, the *seriosa* singer who became a prominent member of LEKRA (and later became the second wife of artist Sudjojono), won a gold medal singing this song at the first WFDY in 1947 (Mia Bustam 2006:170-1). Gordon Tobing sang it at the 1953 World Youth Festival in Bucharest, before recording it in the USSR where the song became popular (Koesalah S. Toer 1998:57). Indeed, socialist festivals and events, where singing together was intrinsic to the expression of a sense of the international community of youth, particularly fostered the development of folk songs and national songs. Group singing was their common vocabulary of performance, and 'folk songs' together with 'progressive' compositions of socialist ideology were shared between countries and languages.

The general popularity of choral singing in Indonesia in the 1950s and 1960s and the boom in western arrangements of local songs, owes much to the opportunities for their performance that

the socialist world of the time provided. The supply of this material answered demand by both international and national audiences. Furthermore, this was one area where performers seem to have moved fluidly between more ideologically neutral cultural activity, such as the cultural missions, and that clearly associated with the left, including LEKRA. Gordon Tobing, for instance, who, as mentioned above, attended the World Youth Festivals and recorded in the USSR, was a frequent participant on cultural missions, including the 1964 New York World's Fair. Singer Eveline Tjiauw (a *seriosa* singer) toured China on a LEKRA-sponsored delegation in 1963, but also joined the cultural mission to China, North Korea, and Japan in 1965.⁴³ While the choral groups of the far left like Gembira performed ideological songs composed in praise of the Communist Party, the People's struggle, Asia Africa and socialist solidarity, there was also an extensive middle repertoire that was shared with others not of communist leaning. The image of national unity that the performance of Indonesian songs on the cultural missions was intended to convey, was at the same time a deeper performance of national identity, as a shared activity within the group itself across ethnicities and political ideologies.

BRINGING IT ALL BACK HOME

Edi Sedyawati, who went as a dancer on the 1961 cultural mission to the USSR, PRC, North Korea and North Vietnam,⁴⁴ and who was Indonesia's Director-General for Culture from 1993 to 1999 during Soeharto's 'New Order', wrote in 2006 of the cultural missions of the Soekarno period:

The main purpose was to strengthen ties between nations, which at that time was driven by the spirit of the emergence of the African Asian nations. The content of the Indonesian cultural missions was an assortment of regional art, as was common for Indonesian independence day at the presidential palace, and often supplemented by songs, for example *keroncong* songs sung by well known singers.

43 Eveline Tjiauw (also spelt Chauw) can be seen performing with Gembira singers on the LEKRA sponsored cultural delegation to PRC in 1963 in the photo reproduced in Rhoma Dwi Aria Yuliantri's contribution to this volume.

44 She filed a long letter for the youth column (*Taman Remadja*) of the Jakarta magazine *Trio* while still en route to the USSR, about the training session prior to Jakarta and the journey of those who went first to the USSR before joining the rest of the group in China (Edi Sedyawati 1961).

One thing important to note about these national art activities is that behind the scenes the artists met each other and exchanged skills and ideas. It was truly 'becoming Indonesia' through the process of getting to know one another and show respect for each other's region, even though this was on a mini scale, namely between dancers and musicians. Nonetheless, the strong impression that they took back home from this experience of friendship between ethnic groups had an impact on the wider arts community. People became more aware of differences between art styles.⁴⁵

Edi Sedyawati's comment speaks of the important way that the national and international were interacting in these tours of performing artists, namely the sense of being Indonesian that was fostered through their exposure to each other when representing the nation in an international context. They were experiencing what it was to be part of Indonesia, and how their own regional culture fitted within it. They were young. They were proud of being chosen to represent their nation. They were curious about each other, and they were impressionable.

Their experience also fed into cultural developments in Indonesia, and to the discussion about the role of culture in the nation. Edi Sedyawati studied dance in Jakarta at the Ikatan Seni Tari Indonesia (ISTI), a school that was headed by Sampoerno, a Javanese who later in the New Order worked for the Ministry of Education and Culture.⁴⁶ Various forms of dance were taught at ISTI, and Edi Sedyawati was one of many of its students invited to join cultural missions. Other performers were chosen from similar groups and associations, or had associations and training centres of their own, like Bagong Kussudiardjo, who founded his dance school in Yogyakarta in 1958. Four Balinese artists (Wayan

45 'Tujuan utama adalah guna mengeratkan kerjasama antarnegara, dan ketika itu didjivai oleh semangat kebangkitan negara-negara Asia-Afrika. Isi dari misi-misi kesenian Indonesia itu adalah aneka kesenian daerah seperti halnya pada acara Tujuh belas Agustusan di Istana Presiden, dan sering disertai pula dengan nyanyian-nyanyian jenis kroncong oleh penyanyi-penyanyi terkemuka.

Yang patut dicatat dari kegiatan-kegiatan seni kenegaraan itu adalah bahwa di belakang pentas, para seniman bersilaturahmi dan bertukar ilmu. 'Menjadi Indonesia' melalui proses saling kenal dan saling menghargai antar suku bangsa benar-benar terbentuk walau dalam skala mini, yaitu hanya di antara para seniman tari dan musik. Namun, gema yang dibawa pulang dari persahabatan antar suku bangsa itu cukup terasa pengaruhnya di kalangan seni yang lebih luas. Perbedaan gaya seni semakin disadari.' Edi Sedyawati 2006:167-8.

46 Colonel Sampoerno SH was Direktur Kesenian in the late 1970s. He was also Kepala Rumah Tangga (head of household) for the presidential palaces, General Manager of Taman Mini Indonesia, and created a performance group Rombongan Kesenian Pelangi Nusantara.

Likes, Ni Nyoman Artha, Wayan Badon and Wayan Mudana) taught Balinese dance at the Dance Academy in Beijing for a year from 1956-1957.⁴⁷ These performers all brought their experience abroad back into these schools, centres and associations in Indonesia, which then developed repertoire appropriate for future tours and national events. This is an important and little recognized aspect of the development of performing arts in Indonesia at this time, which Irawati Durban Ardjo discusses further in this book.

Their experience abroad led many of the performers to take a fresh look at what was happening in the arts in their own country. They began to articulate concerns about finding a role for traditional art, whether this was linking it to Indonesia's revolutionary present or injecting it with national consciousness, or both. One could mean the other, but not necessarily so.

The first cultural mission to China in 1954, for instance, was clearly a deeply stimulating experience for many of its participants, most of whom were travelling abroad for the first time, and some of whom were already moving into leadership positions in the cultural world in Indonesia. Henk Ngantung, the artist in charge of the visual art exhibition, and who became a member of LEKRA's Secretariat and was later deputy governor and then governor of Jakarta (1960-1964 and 1964-1965), wrote in *Harian Rakjat* on his return about how impressed he was to see that the arts in China were 'educating the people' (Henk Ngantung 1954). Prijono, who was then already Dean of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Indonesia, and who the very next year became head of the Indonesia-China Friendship Association, also wrote about his favourable impression of the socialist form of nationalism, and the PRC's balancing of Marxist cultural principles with Chinese traditional culture (Prijono 1954).⁴⁸ Younger artists also spoke or wrote about their experience of this tour. As mentioned earlier, Sutanti, on her return from China, spoke of the Chinese dance academy as a model for the proposed national dance school to be opened in Yogyakarta. Both Bagong Kussudiardjo and Wisnoe Wardhana wrote articles about their impressions of the PRC, noting how impressed they were at the high status and salaries of artists, the attention given to preserving and protecting traditional

47 See the 'Berita Kebudayaan' section of *Budaya* 7-7 (July 1958):296.

48 His impressions were also reported elsewhere, see *Merdeka*, 21-10-1954 and 22-10-1954. Other members of the Friendship Association (Lembaga Persahabatan Indonesia-RRT) were Prof Dr Tjan Tju Som, Ir. Taher Tajib, Henk Ngantung and Mangatas Nasution, see the 'Berita Kebudayaan' section of *Budaya* 4-2 (February 1955):116.

arts, and the fact that artists who studied at the academies were paid by the state to perform in factories, towns and villages all over China, and had future employment guaranteed as teachers. They were clearly intrigued by what they saw as the easy coexistence of regional traditional cultures and more contemporary expression, and that regional expression could indeed be national, which were both issues of concern at home as the new republic dealt with its colonial past and regional cultural identities (Bagong Kusudiardjo 1955; Wisnoe Wardhana 1955).

Exposure abroad on the cultural missions, in both the socialist and non-socialist worlds, gave artists a common experience that provided them with a way to talk to each other about arts and the nation, and a comparative experience that stimulated them to think about the arts in Indonesia in national terms. It also gave models for developments at home, both as to what might be emulated, and what should be avoided, and in this artists became increasingly divided.

CONCLUSION

Writing of the PRC's programs of cultural exchange in the 1950s, Volland raises the core question: What is the nature of the relationship between nationalism and internationalism? He considers this question specifically in terms of the Sino-Soviet relationship, and the inherent tension between the centrifugal impulse of the international cultural relations of socialism, and the centripetal impulse of China's need to construct among its citizens a sense of national distinctiveness that resisted socialist internationalism. Volland's core question, however, about the relationship between nationalism and internationalism, is also pertinent to Indonesia's cultural activity in the 1950s and early 1960s. Indonesia also linked into the internationalist socialist world, although certainly not exclusively so. The cultural frame of the socialist world offered a touring circuit and a framework for cultural activity that stimulated Indonesia's cultural promotion also beyond that world. Links with the socialist world gave Indonesia's cultural internationalism a shot in the arm.

But at the same time, Indonesia was a new nation that had recently emerged from revolution against a colonial past. Artists were trying to find new meaning in their own country for arts that were associated with the pre-revolutionary, pre-national past. Tours

abroad encouraged their questioning of what was happening in the arts at home. For some, this could lead to a sense that, in comparison to the PRC for instance, Indonesia was not moving quickly enough away from its past to find a new role for artists and new styles of national expression.⁴⁹ For others, experiences in China or North Korea might sharpen their resolve that this was not the direction they wanted Indonesia's culture to follow. But whether they were impressed or not by such models, for artists who went on the cultural missions, this experience was part of the forging of a sense of being 'Indonesian' and proudly performing that to the world. And part of that sense of being Indonesian was precisely the tension that cultural internationalism fostered, the tension between the image they were presenting abroad, and the ongoing questioning about what a culture that represented their national consciousness should be.

The cultural missions of the Soekarno era took place as the new republic was establishing itself at home and abroad, at a time of intense questioning about the nation and culture. This was also the Cold War era, and the cultural missions were stimulated by the internationalism of that context. The question that arises is a hypothetical one, but nonetheless fundamental to this research into Indonesian cultural history of 1950-1965, namely, whether there would have been such an emphasis in Indonesia on internationalism had the Cold War not existed. And without that emphasis, how would the formation of national culture have played out in the 1950s and early 1960s?

Indonesia's cultural missions of the 1950s and early 1960s exude a sense of enormous cultural confidence. The vision was often bold, the tours extensive, the artists young, energetic and curious. After 1966, with Indonesia now firmly aligned to the United States, there were no more official tours to socialist countries. The shape of tours changed, with artists sourced from fewer places, and the image presented less nationally representative. State-sponsored missions dwindled. And within Indonesia, one part of the discussion about national culture, namely the debate about the political role of art in the nation, a debate that had by then become bitterly politicized, was silenced.

49 Hong Liu's 1995 dissertation and his more recent article in *Critical Asian Studies* (2006) are excellent discussions of the image of PRC held by Indonesian intellectuals (including writers and artists) from 1949-1965.

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AUDIO VISUAL

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2010 ‘*Menggelar Indonesia; Misi kesenian ke manca negara 1952-1965*’ (Presenting Indonesia; Cultural missions abroad 1952-1965). 90 minute documentary. Director: Jennifer Lindsay. Assistant Director: Henny Saptatia Sujai. Interviewer-researchers: A Bulantrisa Djelantik; Irawati Durban Ardjo; Menul Robi Sularto; Jennifer Lindsay. [Indonesian with English subtitles.]