A. Nagazumi

Japanese studies on Indonesia


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Editors' Introduction

The idea of devoting a special issue of Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde to a survey of scholarly work on the Indonesian region done in Japan was born a number of years ago. The need for more information on the results of research by Japanese Indonesians was obvious. On the one hand there was a steadily growing international— and thus presumably also Japanese— academic interest in Indonesia, and on the other hand the products of Japanese scholarship enjoyed limited accessibility in the rest of the world as a result of the language barrier.

The Editors of this journal therefore decided as a first step to approach Professor Akira Nagazumi of the University of Tokyo, as the best-known Indonesian historian in Japan, with the request to supply the overview of Indonesian Studies in Japan they had in mind. As the task of writing a survey of publications in all the areas of Indonesian Studies covered by Bijdragen was too great for one person, however, Prof. Nagazumi invited several Japanese colleagues to write contributions on subjects outside his own field of specialization (history), namely political science, economics, and anthropology.

While the preparations for the planned ‘Japan issue’ were in full progress, Prof. Nagazumi most tragically died. The Editors were fortunate enough, however, to have a copy of his own contribution, as well of Dr. Akira Oki’s on economics and Prof. Masashi Nishihara’s on political science, at their disposal at the time of his death. The planned surveys of Japanese studies in Indonesian literature and anthropology or on Indonesian Islam, on the other hand, were not forthcoming. Luckily, they then found Dr. Jan van Bremen of the University of Leiden prepared to write an account of Indonesian anthropology in Japan. The upshot of all this was that the present survey of Indonesian Studies in Japan is not the complete one they initially hoped it would be. Nor was it possible, as a result, to devote an entire issue of Bijdragen especially to Japanese Indonesian Studies.

The Editors wish to thank all of the scholars concerned for the work they have put into the preparation of this survey. Special thanks are due to Drs. G. L. Koster of the Indonesian Studies Bureau at Leiden for first suggesting the idea of such a survey and initiating the first contacts in Japan, and to Drs. W. G. J. Remmelink of the Japan-Netherlands Institute in Tokyo for this valuable advice and other assistance, particularly in the latter stages of its preparation. It is hoped that this survey, like the abstracts of recent Japanese publications in the field of Indonesian Studies published in the Royal Institute’s Excerpta Indonesica, will give Indonesian scholars the world over an adequate insight into what is being done in their field of interest in Japan, and will foster closer contact and cooperation between Indonesians in Japan and the rest of the world.
Scholarly activities in Japan in any subject have always had to face the problem of the language barrier. Today, the situation is much improved over that obtaining in the 1950s and 60s, in that one can now take for granted a reading proficiency in Japanese on the part of Japanologists. But this is not the case with Indonesianists, who have so many other languages to master. It has long been one of the key tasks for Japanese Indonesianists to have their own work and that of their fellow-country-men evaluated by other scholars in a more internationally understandable language than Japanese. The task of translating Japanese articles on Indonesia into English was frankly a tedious and thankless one until around 1970 because so few of the Japanese contributions to the field were truly original. Most depended very heavily on the theories and research of Western scholars, so that the effort of translating these Japanese-language articles simply led the reader back to the original works in Dutch or English.

By the mid-1980s, all this had begun to change. An increasing number of Japanese Indonesianists now have done field work in Indonesia, often in collaboration with Indonesian scholars. They now also tend to publish their final results in English. Despite this, however, it has to be admitted that many valuable scholarly contributions by Japanese Indonesianists escape the attention of their overseas colleagues mainly because of the limited circulation which these works enjoy – they are often published in obscure Japanese journals or are brought out in limited monographic editions by local Japanese publishing houses. Furthermore, it should be recognized that Japanese authors tend to express their ideas in Japanese first before translating them into English. One might conclude from this that the English version would be the more mature and convincing version. But this is often not the case. Despite these drawbacks, I will give priority in this survey to the English versions of recent Japanese publications, so that these can be made better known and more readily accessible to non-Japanese scholars. In the few cases where an English translation of a particular Japanese book or article is not yet available, I will have to refer to the original Japanese titles. Although some of these, published in key Japanese journals dealing with Southeast Asia, have already been furnished with English titles and summaries of the text, I
have added such titles and summaries where these were lacking.

As regards the field of history in its broadest sense, anyone can easily get in touch with Japanese Indonesians via the office of the Japan Society for Southeast Asian Studies at Kyoto University, 46 Shimoadachicho, Yoshida, Sakyo-ku, Kyoto, 606 Japan. The current Director of the Center, and 11th President of the Society, is Professor Yoneo ISHII. As of 1986, the Society boasts 276 members. Among these, Indonesians form by far the largest group, counting on a country basis. Coming to 51 individuals, their disciplines range from archaeology, ancient and modern history, anthropology and linguistics, to economics, political science, the science of religion and architecture. Only those with a postgraduate degree or higher are accepted as members of the Society, which now has two major branches, in Kyoto and Tokyo. These branches hold monthly meetings, to which they usually invite some scholar (often, but not always, a member of the Society) to speak on a particular Southeast Asian topic. The Society itself holds two conferences a year – the first around May-June, and the second around November-December, one in Tokyo, the other somewhere else, usually in one of the major university cities. Since 1971, the Society has published a prominent journal, Tonan-Ajia: Rekishi to Bunka [Southeast Asia: History and Culture]. This has come out on a more or less annual basis, its 15th issue appearing in early 1986. Although the bulk of its articles are written in Japanese, there are also some in English and Chinese. Furthermore, the Japanese articles are always accompanied by a useful English summary. There is one other Japanese periodical in which articles on Indonesian history appear very frequently. This is the Nampo-bunka [Tenri Bulletin of South Asian Studies], which has been published annually since 1974 by the Tenri University, Tenri, Nara Prefecture.

Indonesian studies nowadays are attracting an increasing number of undergraduate students in Japan because of the importance of that country in the Southeast Asian region. Unfortunately, Japanese universities are still not geared, in terms of their curricula and language-teaching facilities, to the admission of all of them. Ever since the Meiji Restoration in 1868, the Japanese Government has been concentrating all its efforts on modernizing the nation through the skilful adaptation of Western institutions. Naturally, in this adaptation policy, a knowledge of English (especially a reading knowledge of the language) has been given first priority, followed by other important European languages such as French and German. Tuition in non-European languages was all but neglected. In the pre-War years there were only two national institutions giving formal courses in Malay/Indonesian. These were the Language Training Schools in Tokyo and Osaka, which today have been expanded and renamed the Tokyo and the Osaka University of Foreign Studies.
respectively. In the years immediately prior to World War II, very few of the graduates of these institutions ventured into the academic field. This trend has continued right up to the present day. There are still no regular Malay/Indonesian language courses given at any of the other national universities in Japan, where the linguistic focus is principally on English, German, French, Russian, Spanish, Italian, Chinese, and (a recent addition here) Arabic. When one of my students in the Department of Asian History at Tokyo University, for example, evinces an interest in Indonesia, I usually direct him or her to one of the Indonesian language courses at a private language school.

Although it is not impossible to study Malay/Indonesian, there are very few opportunities for studying local Indonesian languages. As for Dutch, the key language for studying Indonesian history in the pre-War period, the only institution at which this is regularly taught is the Japan-Netherlands Institute in Tokyo. This runs two courses, at three different levels, each year, but only provides two hours of tuition each week, which is inadequate for acquiring a reading knowledge of the language in a short space of time. This language handicap badly discourages undergraduate students, who often conclude that it is not feasible for them to choose an Indonesian history topic for their BA or MA theses.

In general, those who are determined to carry out research on Indonesian history proper usually select one of the following departments, where they can proceed more easily to the junior grade in the undergraduate course: archaeology, anthropology, and history, in which they can gain a methodological grounding in ancient history, indigenous culture and society, and modern history and international relations respectively. There are also students in other disciplines, e.g. political science or economics, who later choose Indonesia as their area of interest. But the market for Indonesians is very small in Japan even today: Asian history departments in most universities, both national and private, still tend to prefer specialists in Chinese history, which continues to occupy a central place in their curricula.

Although conditions are somewhat more flexible with regard to curriculum demands at private institutions, their demand for Indonesians is very limited. For these reasons, Japanese Indonesians are finding it easier to obtain a research post than a full teaching appointment. There are two major institutions which offer opportunities in the research field. The first is the afore-mentioned Center for Southeast Asian Studies of Kyoto University; the other is the Institute of Developing Economies, or I.D.E., in Tokyo. The latter, which is affiliated to the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), was established in 1960 under the name Institute of Asian Economic Affairs. The Kyoto Center was founded three years later. The foundation of both these institutions reflected the rapid growth of the Japanese economy and the increasing Japanese interest in Asia, particularly Southeast Asia, in the early 1960s.
Since it was impossible for me to tackle such an extensive subject as Indonesian studies in Japan on my own, I decided to ask two of my colleagues, who are specialists in political science and economics respectively, to share the burden. The names of my two co-contributors are: 1) Professor Masashi NISHIHARA, of the National Defence Academy of Japan (political science); and 2) Dr. Akira OKI, former Professor at the Nagoya University of Commerce (economics).

As for myself, who am currently Professor of History at the University of Tokyo, I have taken the history field. In my own area, I was determined to discuss all the Japanese works on the Indonesian past up to the end of World War II, which put an end to the short-lived Japanese occupation of Indonesia. Works dealing with events after 1945 I left to my co-contributors. Obviously, in a survey such as this each separate field in the social sciences overlaps with certain others, and it is quite possible that some works have attracted more attention than others. Our scope has been restricted to Indonesia, and therefore works on other areas, however valuable, have been omitted except where they touched on Indonesia. Surnames of authors have been capitalized on first citation, and readers will find these names arranged in alphabetical order in the bibliography at the end of each article.